

**Netherton Hub 400 kV OHL Connection to
New Deer and Peterhead: Tie-In
Environmental Appraisal Report
Volume 1 Chapter 10: Forestry and Land
Use**

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10. FORESTRY AND LAND USE

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 This chapter identifies the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on forestry and land use. Based upon the receptors identified in the EIA Screening Request (see **Appendix 1.1 (Volume 3)**) and the EIA Screening Opinion issued by the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) (see **Appendix 1.2 (Volume 3)**), this chapter considers forestry in the context of impacts on Native Woodland and commercial forestry, and land use in the context of impacts on agricultural land at a national scale.

10.2 Information Sources

10.2.1 The following sources of information have been reviewed:

- Scotland's Environment website - Scotland's soils maps¹;
- Scottish Forestry open data²;
- NatureScot Maps – Ancient Woodland Inventory³;
- Aberdeenshire Council GIS⁴ - Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)

10.3 Methodology

Study Area

Forestry

10.3.1 The study area used for Forestry is defined by the Site plus a 15 m buffer beyond the Site boundary which includes any forested areas which could be potentially affected. The purpose of this 15 m buffer is to ensure compliance with BS 5837:2012: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations⁵ which recommends that all arboriculture features whose Root Protection Areas (RPAs) and crowns may be impacted are identified within a maximum RPA radius of 15 m.

Land Use

10.3.2 The study area used for Land Use is defined as the Site. No buffer has been applied because the assessment of land use only considers the impacts of temporary or permanent land take relating to agricultural land.

Policy and Guidance

Forestry

10.3.3 The Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018⁶ places a duty of Scottish Ministers to promote sustainable forest management including through the implementation of a forestry strategy (as described below).

¹ Scottish Government (2026). Scotland's soils - National scale land capability for agriculture. Available at: <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/capability-maps/national-scale-land-capability-for-agriculture/>

² Scottish Forestry (2026). Native Woodland Survey Data Explorer. Available at: [Scottish Forestry Open Data](#)

³ NatureScot (2026). NatureScot Maps Ancient Woodland Inventory. Available at: [Ancient Woodland Inventory | NatureScot Spatial Data Hub](#)

⁴ Aberdeenshire Council (2026). Aberdeenshire Council GIS HES Conservation Areas and Tree Preservation Orders. Available at: [Aberdeenshire Map Layers - TPOs](#)

⁵ BSI Standards Publication (2012). Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations. Available at: <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/BS5837%202012%20Trees.pdf>

⁶ Scottish Government (2018). Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018

10.3.4 Scotland's Forestry Strategy⁷ 2019-2029 highlights the importance of protecting forestry land due to a decline in softwood availability set against a backdrop of predicted increased future demand. The decline is considered to have been caused in part by woodland loss as a result of development. Part of the Strategy's aim is to expand areas of forests and woodlands while recognising wider land-use objectives.

10.3.5 Policy 6 (Forestry, woodland and trees) of the National Planning Framework 4⁸ (NPF4), states the following:

'Development proposals involving woodland removal will only be supported where they will achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits in accordance with relevant Scottish Government policy on woodland removal. Where woodland is removed, compensatory planting will most likely be expected to be delivered'

[and]

'Development proposals on sites which include an area of existing woodland or land identified in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy as being suitable for woodland creation will only be supported where the enhancement and improvement of woodlands and the planting of new trees on the site (in accordance with the Forestry and Woodland Strategy) are integrated into the design.'

10.3.6 Deforestation in Scotland is considered under the Scottish Government's "Control of Woodland Removal Policy" (2009)⁹. The purpose of the policy is to provide direction for decisions on woodland removal in Scotland.

10.3.7 Policy E3 'Forestry and Woodland' of Aberdeenshire Council's Local Development Plan (LDP)¹⁰ 2023 states:

"Aberdeenshire's forests and native and semi-natural woodland areas are valued and enjoyed by both residents and visitors and must continue to be resilient to the effects of climate change. They must be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced to safeguard the environment, habitats, species and local culture, whilst benefitting and supporting the local and national economy."

Land Use

10.3.8 Policy 5 (Soils) of the NPF4 states the following:

'Development proposals on prime agricultural land, or land of lesser quality that is culturally or locally important for primary use, as identified by the LDP, will only be supported where it is for... [t]he generation of energy from renewable sources or the extraction of minerals and there is secure provision for restoration...'

10.3.9 Policy PR 1.5 'Prime Agricultural Land' of the Aberdeenshire LDP 2023 states that:

'Prime agricultural land is defined as classes 1, 2 and 3.1 of the Soil Survey for Scotland, Land Capability of Agriculture Series. Land falling within this classification should not be developed unless it is essential, allocated in the Local Development Plan or an independent assessment of the site confirms a lesser quality of land. For clarity, time-limited proposals for renewable energy generation or mineral extraction may be acceptable on prime agricultural land providing the site will be restored and returned to its original status.'

⁷ Scottish Government (2019). Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029. Available at: [PDF_About_Scotland's_Forestry_Strategy_2019-2029.pdf](#)

⁸ Scottish Government (2023). National Planning Framework 4. Available at: [National Planning Framework 4 - gov.scot](#) [Accessed 9 June 2026]

⁹ Scottish Forestry (2026). Control on Woodland Removal – Policy. Available at: <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/control-woodland-removal-policy> [Accessed 9 June 2026]

¹⁰ Aberdeenshire Council (2023). Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 – Introduction and Policies. Available at: [Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023 - Aberdeenshire Council](#) [Accessed 9 June 2026]

10.3.10 The latest national statistics show that agricultural land use in the United Kingdom (UK) decreased by 1.5% in 2024 (16.8 million hectares) compared to 2023 (17 million hectares). The fall can be mainly attributed to a 1% decrease in England and a 3.2% decrease in Scotland¹¹. This forms part of a wider trend toward a decline in the availability of agricultural land¹². The Scottish Government introduced the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025¹³ to address the challenges of land use and agriculture.

Desktop Study

10.3.11 A desktop study was undertaken in February 2026 (and updated in May 2026) to identify the following forestry and land use features within the Site and surrounding area:

- Native Woodland;
- Commercial forestry;
- TPOs;
- Ancient Woodland
- Land capable of supporting agricultural uses; and
- Recreational areas.

10.3.12 Recreational areas, TPOs and Ancient Woodland are not considered in this assessment due to the limited number of receptors, distance, scope for impacts and the outcome of the EIA Screening Opinion.

Site Visit

10.3.13 No site visits or on-site surveys have been undertaken to inform this assessment.

Appraisal Methodology

10.3.14 Publicly accessible information, including aerial imagery and mapped data (as outlined in **section 10.2**), was used to determine the baseline conditions across the study area. Impacts were assessed based on proximity to areas of Native Woodland, and scale of agricultural and commercial forestry land take. Impacts are typically considered to produce a greater effect where the Proposed Development is situated closer to Native Woodland or where agricultural or commercial forestry land take is higher.

10.4 Baseline Environment

Forestry

10.4.1 Scottish Forestry records indicate that there is one parcel of Native Woodland (0.76 hectares) located within the Site, approximately 100 m from the location of the proposed temporary tower located in the east of the Site. There are no further parcels of Native Woodland located within the Forestry study area.

10.4.2 There are two parcels of Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme (SFGS) commercial forestry within the Site; the proposed overhead line (OHL) alignment and proposed tower IN5 intersect with one parcel in the west of the site, and the other parcel is located approximately 150 m west of tower OT2, as shown on **Figure 10.1: Forestry and Land Use (Volume 2)**.

¹¹ UK Government (2025). Agricultural Land Use in United Kingdom at 1 June 2024. Available at: [Agricultural Land Use in United Kingdom at 1 June 2024 - GOV.UK](#) [Accessed 9 June 2026]

¹² Zayed, Y. and Loft, P. (2019). House of Commons Briefing Paper. Agriculture: historical statistics. Available at: [Agriculture: historical statistics](#) [Accessed 9 June 2026]

¹³ Scottish Government (2025). Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2025

Land Use

10.4.3 The Site is located within the following land classification areas as classified by Scotland Soil's National Scale Land Capability for Agriculture¹:

- Class 3.1 – 'Land capable of producing a moderate range of crops with high yields of cereals and grass; parts of the Site where the 'in' leg is located falls within this type of land classification;
- Class 3.2 – 'Land capable of average production though high yields of barley, oats and grass can be obtained. Grass leys are common'; the Site mainly falls within this type of land classification;

10.4.4 Prime agricultural land is considered to constitute classes 1, 2 and 3.1. These classes are described as land capable of producing a wider range of crops with higher yields compared to the lower classes (classes 3.2 - 7).

10.4.5 The majority of the Proposed Development, as shown on **Figure 10.1: Forestry and Land Use (Volume 2)**, is located on Class 3.2 agricultural land which is not classed as prime agricultural land.

10.4.6 A review of Google Earth imagery of the Site, indicates that the area predominantly comprises arable farmlands with hedgerows. The Proposed Development crosses mainly through these farmlands.

10.5 Appraisal

Forestry

10.5.1 As outlined in **section 10.4**, the closest area of Native Woodland is situated approximately 100 m from the proposed temporary tower located in the east of the Site. Although part of this Native Woodland is located within the Site, which includes the Limit of Deviation, careful micro-siting of the temporary tower and associated compound will ensure that there is not a requirement for tree felling within the Native Woodland land parcel and therefore, from a forestry perspective, the Proposed Development is not expected to impact on Native Woodland and replacement planting as such would not be required. Any potential disturbance to species present within the Native Woodland is appraised in **Chapter 7: Ecology (Volume 1)**.

10.5.2 The Proposed Development will impact up to 1.7 hectares of commercial forestry. Based on the current proposed OHL alignment, it is likely approximately 0.5 hectares of forest will be removed. Following a review of satellite imagery, it appears a section of the SFGS parcel located in the west of the Site has already been removed. Careful micro-siting of towers and associated compounds will limit the amount of commercial forestry removal required.

10.5.3 Any removal of sections of commercial forests will be undertaken in consultation with Scottish Forestry and affected landowners. After felling, any timber removed that is commercially viable will be sold and the remaining forest material will be dealt with in a way that delivers the best practicable environmental outcome and is compliant with waste regulations. Any woodland removal and management of timber will be undertaken in line with The UK Forestry Standard¹⁴ guidance. The Proposed Development will also seek to adhere to Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy⁹ and provide compensatory planting, in agreement with landowners within the local authority area. A detailed compensatory planting & management plan will be submitted to Scottish Forestry and the Planning Authority. Further details are described under mitigation measure FOL1 in **Table 10.1**.

10.5.4 As such, given the scale of expected commercial forestry loss and the implementation of mitigation outlined above, any impact on commercial forestry is expected to be negligible.

Land Use

¹⁴ The UK Forestry Standard 5th Edition (2025); The Governments' approach to sustainable forestry. [online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard> [Accessed 9 June 2026]

10.5.5 The majority of the Proposed Development, as shown on **Figure 10.1: Forestry and Land Use (Volume 2)**, is located on Class 3.2 agricultural land which is not classed as prime agricultural land.

10.5.6 The northern extent of the proposed 'In' leg predominantly covers Class 3.1 agricultural land which is considered to be prime agricultural land. While the Proposed Development will inevitably require some minor land take of Class 3.1 agricultural land to accommodate the tower foundations of five of the proposed towers in addition to certain access tracks and construction compounds, this land take is expected to be very minimal, to the extent that any fields in which the towers, access tracks and / or construction compounds will be located can continue to be used for agricultural purposes once the Proposed Development is operational. Given the minimal land take (approximately 0.03 hectares of Class 3.1 agricultural land and approximately 0.1 hectares of Class 3.2 agricultural land) and the opportunity to continue to use most of the agricultural land within the extents of the Site boundary for agricultural purposes once the development is operational, the Proposed Development is expected to have a negligible contribution to the decline of agricultural land on a national scale.

Summary

10.5.7 The Proposed Development is anticipated to have negligible to no impact on forestry and a negligible impact on agricultural land.

10.6 Cumulative Effects

10.6.1 There are no anticipated cumulative effects in relation to native woodland as there will be no native woodland removal as part of the Proposed Development. Due to the negligible land take expected for commercial forestry, cumulative effects will be negligible. Agricultural land take caused by the Proposed Development is very minimal, therefore any contribution to the decline of agricultural land on a national scale is negligible.

10.7 Recommendations & Mitigation

10.7.1 **Table 10.1** presents mitigation measures to ensure compliance with the Applicant's General Environmental Management Plans (GEMP).

Table 10.1: Additional Mitigation Measures

Reference	Title	Description
GE1	Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)	A CEMP will be prepared and implemented by the Principal Contractor for the Proposed Development. This document will detail how the Principal Contractor will manage the site in accordance with all commitments and mitigation detailed in this EAR, statutory consents and authorisations, and industry best practice and guidance. The CEMP will include GEMPs. Applicable ones to Forestry and Land Use include: • Soil management; • Forestry; • Biosecurity (on land); and • Restoration
FOL1	Compensatory planting	A detailed compensatory planting & management plan will be submitted to Scottish Forestry and the Planning Authority to ensure any commercial forest lost through felling is replaced. This plan shall include: • details of the location(s) of the area(s) to be planted; • the nature, design and specification of the proposed woodland(s) to be planted;

		• the phasing and associated timescales for implementing the replanting strategy; • proposals for the maintenance of the replanting strategy, including annual checks, replacement planting, fencing, ground preparation and drainage; and • proposals for reporting to the Planning Authority on compliance with timescales for obtaining the Necessary Consents and implementation of the replanting strategy.
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10.7.2 No further recommendations nor mitigation is required, given the limited potential for impacts on forestry and land use.