

Coire Mashie Substation

Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

Screening Request

February 2026



Your ref:
Our ref: 123021-R-SCR-CMS-1.0.0

17 February 2026

The Highland Council
ePlanning Centre
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX

To Whom It May Concern,

Coire Mashie Substation

THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND)

REGULATIONS 2017 - REQUEST FOR AN EIA SCREENING OPINION (REGULATION 8)

1.1 Overview

Please find enclosed a formal request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017¹, hereafter referred to as the 'EIA Regulations'.

This screening request has been prepared by ASH design+assessment Limited ("ASH") on behalf of 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.

The Applicant is developing proposals for a new 400 kV substation near Laggan, in the Highlands of Scotland, hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'. The Proposed Development is required to connect the consented Earba Pumped Storage Hydro (PSH) scheme to the electricity transmission network (ECU ECU00005062)².

The Proposed Development is anticipated to comprise a platform³, which could accommodate 24 bays of an Air Insulated Substation (AIS) at 400 kV⁴. The location and site boundary of the Proposed Development is shown on **Figure 1** and described in further detail in **Section 1.3** of this letter (see also **Figure 2**). To facilitate the Proposed Development, a site of up to 1 km² would be expected to be required to accommodate the platform, cut and fill requirements, temporary construction laydown areas, drainage (including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)), and any immediate landscaping around the substation boundary.

The site boundary also extends to include areas that may be needed to facilitate the upgrading of access tracks, and for the construction of temporary and permanent access tracks. These accesses would be required to serve the Proposed Development, and also to facilitate the installation and operation of a 400 kV underground cable (UGC) that would connect into it (referred to as Associated Works, see below).

¹ Scottish Government (2017) *The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017*. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/102/contents> [Accessed: January 2026].

² ECU (2024) *Earba 1,800MW Pumped Storage Hydro Scheme*, [online] Available at: <https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx?cr=ECU00005062> [Accessed: December 2025].

³ Area of stone platform required for the substation infrastructure.

⁴ The technology and the number of additional bays is currently being assessed.

This letter acts as a formal request for a Screening Opinion under the EIA Regulations to determine whether the Proposed Development should be considered EIA Development in the context of the EIA Regulations¹, and be subject to the production of an EIA Report.

In order to assist the screening request for the Proposed Development, this letter includes:

- A plan identifying the site of the Proposed Development;
- A description of the nature and purpose of the Proposed Development;
- Factual information regarding the sensitivity of the site and the surrounding area; and
- A description of the potential for environmental effects based on the information reviewed and knowledge held by the Applicant at this time.

1.2 Associated Works

Other works would be required to facilitate operation of the Proposed Development. These works, referred to as Associated Works in this screening request, would be subject to separate consenting regimes and would comprise:

- The reconfiguration of approximately 1.15 km of the existing Beaully-Denny OHL and the installation of downleads to connect the substation to the existing Beaully-Denny OHL, subject to a separate application to Scottish Ministers under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (Screening Letter submitted to Scottish Ministers January 2026⁵); and
- The installation of a 400 kV UGC between the consented Earba PSH Scheme's powerhouse and the Proposed Development. The UGC works would be expected to fall under SSEN Transmission's permitted development rights under Class 40 1(a) of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992.

1.3 EIA Screening

The Proposed Development is not covered under the developments listed within Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations¹.

The Proposed Development is not directly identified within Schedule 2 of the relevant EIA Regulations; however, due to the Development Boundary being over 0.5 hectares (ha) in area and the nature of the development it could be considered as development of a nature which could fall within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations¹.

Schedule 3 sets out the criteria that must be taken into account during EIA Screening, as required by Regulation 8 of the EIA Regulations¹. These are:

- Characteristics of the development;
- Location of the development; and
- Characteristics of the potential impact.

1.4 Characteristics and Location of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development would be located predominantly within the Cairngorms National Park (CNP), in the local authority area of the Highland Council (see **Figure 1**). The site boundary comprises a total area of approximately 1,028 ha and includes potential areas for access associated with both the Proposed Development and Associated Works. The substation platform itself would be centred approximately at National Grid Reference NN 58952 89467.

⁵ Energy Consents Unit. *LT505 Coire Mashie 400kV Substation - Reconfiguration of Beaully - Denny 400 kV Overhead Line* [online] Available at: <https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx?cr=ECU00006315> [Accessed: February 2026]

The Proposed Development works would comprise the following elements (see also **Figure 2**):

- A substation platform (anticipated to be approximately 25.9 ha in total, approximately 645 m x 318 m) and associated electrical plant;
- The substation would accommodate the operation of up to 24 bays;
- A control building (approximately 51 m in length, 26 m in width and up to 20 m in height);
- Upgrades to existing forestry and estate access tracks as well as the creation of new permanent and temporary access tracks along the route of the UGC and into the substation;
- Fencing including an access gate;
- Lighting (for security, safety, and for use during periods of inspection and maintenance);
- Site drainage, water management and watercourse/field ditch/drain diversions;
- Landscape mitigation and biodiversity enhancement;
- Temporary construction laydown areas; and
- Associated site clearance, vegetation removal and earthworks.

To facilitate construction of the substation, the main elements associated with the construction phase are anticipated to include:

- Enabling works and site clearance;
- Establishment of a temporary construction compound;
- Establishment of suitable laydown areas for materials;
- Construction of necessary access to the substation site and UGC areas, including upgrades to the local road network as required;
- Ground works to achieve a level area at the site;
- Construction of perimeter and site drainage, including sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), where required;
- Delivery of components and materials to site;
- Construction and installation of the substation components and control building;
- Installation of electrical plant;
- Erection of a palisade security fence up to a minimum of approximately 2.4 m in height;
- Remedial works to reinstate the immediate vicinity; and
- Inspections and commissioning.

Construction Access

Access to the Proposed Development would be taken via the A86. Currently there are a number of options being explored in relation to suitable access points along the A86. Upgrade works to junctions and tracks leading from the A86, as well as the establishment of new temporary and permanent access tracks to reach the Proposed Development, are expected.

The site boundary has been developed to include all access options that are currently under consideration (see **Figure 2**).

Programme

It is anticipated that construction of the Proposed Development would take place over a 4-year construction period. Working hours are anticipated 6 days a week between approximately 07:00 to 19:00 on weekdays.

Saturday working hours would be 07:00 to 13:00 with no working on Sundays anticipated at this stage. Working hours would be confirmed by the Principal Contractor and agreed with the Highland Council.

Use of Natural Resources

It is not anticipated that the Proposed Development would require any notable water consumption. Borrow pits are likely to be required, but their location and consenting path are not known at this stage.

Construction Environmental Management

It is assumed that all works would be carried out in accordance with industry best practice construction measures, guidance, and legislation, together with the procedures set out within the Applicant's General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) and Species Protection Plans (SPPs).

In addition, a contractual management requirement of the Principal Contractor would be the development and implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This document would detail how the Principal Contractor would manage the site in accordance with identified mitigation measures, statutory consents and authorisations, and industry best practise and guidance. The CEMP would also reference the GEMPs and SPPs.

Operation

The Proposed Development would be anticipated to become operational in December 2032. The Proposed Development would be unmanned, with operations largely being controlled remotely from SSEN Transmission's control centre in Perth.

The design life of the individual components of the Proposed Development is approximately 45 years or more. Regular inspections of substation equipment would be undertaken to identify any deterioration of components, and these parts would be replaced if needed. Routine inspection and maintenance would be performed at regular intervals, likely a monthly inspection, with some maintenance undertaken annually. Other visits would be undertaken as required for operational duties and occasional repairs. Landscape and habitat (including any woodland areas) may also require maintenance by operational staff to ensure operational safety clearances are maintained according to the relevant SSEN Transmission standards. Traffic flows associated with operation of the substation are anticipated to be very low.

Access for routine inspection and maintenance traffic during operation would be via the established access roads. Periodic inspection and maintenance of the track would be undertaken as required during the operation of the substation.

Toilets and showers would be provided at the proposed substation for welfare facilities.

Lighting within the substation compound will include floodlights and sensor activated low level lighting. Floodlights would only be used in the event of a fault during the hours of darkness; during the over-run of planned works; or when nighttime access is required within the substation compound. The floodlights would be hinged to allow them to be retracted when not in use (the likely height when extended in use will be about 5 m). The design of the lighting (including lumières) will be in accordance with current best practice standards to reduce potential impacts of light pollution. No new lighting is proposed along the existing accesses to and from the public highway. Information on lighting design will be provided in the subsequent planning application.

Reinstatement

Following commissioning of the Proposed Development, all temporary work areas would be reinstated and this would form part of the contract obligations for the Principal Contractor.

1.5 **Review of Proposed Development against Environmental Sensitivities as identified within Schedule 3 of the Regulations**

Table 1 overleaf provides a summary of the baseline findings and considers the potential for the Proposed Development to give rise to significant environmental effects.

Figure 3a and **Figure 3b** shows the Proposed Development in relation to statutory and non-statutory designations. **Figure 4** shows the peat depth within the vicinity of the Proposed Development as established during Phase 1 peat probing undertaken in September 2024.

Table 1: Review of Proposed Development against Environmental Sensitivities as identified within Schedule 3 of the Regulations

Environmental Issue	Baseline Findings	Potential for Significant Environmental Effects
<p>Landscape Character and Visual Impact</p>	<p><u>Designated and Protected Landscapes:</u></p> <p>Part of the Proposed Development including the proposed substation and some access tracks would be located within the CNP which, amongst other reasons, is designated for its valued landscapes. Forty-two Special Landscape Qualities have been identified for the CNP and include elements such as trees and woodlands, glens and straths and visual and sensory qualities⁶.</p> <p>The proposed substation site also lies on the boundary of the Rannoch, Nevis, Mamores Wild Land Area (WLA 14).</p> <p>The majority of the Proposed Development would also be located within the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Bachor Special Landscape Area (SLA). Designated and protected landscapes are shown on Figure 3a.</p>	<p>The area of the Proposed Development is characterised by a mosaic of forest plantation and does not strongly evoke the CNP or SLA Special Qualities. However, there is the potential for some effects to occur.</p> <p>The location of the Proposed Development on the edge of the WLA 14 also reduces the potential for wider effects on the Wild Land Qualities of this area. However, there is some potential for localised effects.</p> <p>The potential for effects to be significant cannot be ruled out at this early stage of the design process, although the forested location also provides good potential for mitigation measures.</p>
	<p><u>Landscape Character:</u></p> <p>The Proposed Development would be situated on the southern containing slopes of Strath Mashie and Loch Laggan. The overriding character of this area comprises a broad mosaic of forest plantation and moorland with open water and fields on the valley floor and scattered rural dwellings.</p> <p>Within the CNP, parts of the Proposed Development fall within the Ardverikie: Pattack Glen / Strath Mashie 'Glens and Straths' Landscape Character Area (LCA0 from the CNP Landscape Character Assessment (CNP, 2009)⁷. The proposed substation also falls within the transitional area of the Ardverikie Hills 'Upland' LCA.</p>	<p>The broad forest mosaic within which the Proposed Development would be situated is considered to have some sensitivity to development of the type proposed although offers opportunities to mitigate impacts. It is likely that some landscape effects within the immediate and wider landscape context would occur in relation to the Proposed Development although with mitigation it is considered that these effects could be contained within a relatively localised area.</p>

⁶ Scottish Natural Heritage / Cairngorms National Park Authority (2010) The Special Landscape Qualities of the Cairngorms National Park. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-commissioned-report-375-special-landscape-qualities-cairngorms-national-park> [Accessed: January 2026]

⁷ Cairngorms National Park Authority (2009) Cairngorm National Park Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/our-work/landscape-character> [Accessed: January 2026]

Environmental Issue	Baseline Findings	Potential for Significant Environmental Effects
	<p>Outwith the CNP, proposed tracks would fall within the following Landscape Character Types (LCTs) from NatureScot's National Landscape Character Assessment (NatureScot, 2019)⁸ as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCT 86: Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch and Strathspey; • LCT 87: Small Craggy Knolls and Hills; and • LCT 89: Broad Loch and Glen. <p><u>Visual Amenity:</u></p> <p>Potential visual receptors within the surrounding area include residents of local properties within Feagour, Strath Mashie and Kinloch Laggan areas, local road users on the A86 and those undertaking recreation in the surrounding area.</p> <p>The area is popular for recreation with the Laggan Wolfrax mountain bike centre situated to the immediate north of the proposed substation area and popular walking and cycling routes following other paths and tracks through the forest and moorland areas. Key recreational receptors include those following the unofficial 'East Highland Way' and accessing the Falls of Pattack which both follow some of the proposed track routes past Kinloch Rannoch and Feagour, and Core Paths around Feagour woods through Strath Mashie and to the Dun da Lamh fort. A Scottish Hill Track⁹ passes through the proposed substation site but is unmarked on the ground.</p>	<p>Some visual effects are likely as a result of the Proposed Development, particularly during construction.</p> <p>Effects from residential properties would be likely to be limited due to the forested character of the landscape. However, there is potential for some effects, particularly during the construction phase.</p> <p>There would be likely to be views from parts of the Laggan Wolfrax bike trails overlooking the proposed substation and from other elevated locations such as Dun da Lamh fort.</p> <p>Various tracks which form part of the Proposed Development (including those tracks proposed as part of the UGC works) are regularly used by recreational users who would also gain visual effects during construction activities, in combination with Associated Works.</p> <p>With effective mitigation it is considered that any potential significant visual effects of the Proposed Development would be limited to the construction phase or early during the operational stage before vegetation has fully established.</p>
Ecology and Nature Conservation	<p><u>Designations:</u></p> <p>The Proposed Development is located partly within the CNP. The CNP is the largest such park in the UK and is designated for a unique range of</p>	<p>In relation to the potential for impacts on the CNP, there could be some limited potential for the loss and / or fragmentation or degradation of designated habitats. Subject to control measures, good practice and appropriate mitigation, though, the works and associated construction are unlikely to impact the designated features of the CNP within close proximity to the access</p>

⁸ NatureScot (2019) National Landscape Character Assessment. [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions> [Accessed: January 2026]

⁹ Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways) (2024) Scottish Hill Tracks. Scottish Mountaineering Press

Environmental Issue	Baseline Findings	Potential for Significant Environmental Effects
	<p>environments, including the largest area of arctic mountain landscape, hosting 25% of Britain's threatened birds, animals, and plants.</p> <p>The River Spey Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the River Spey Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lie approximately 3.5 km north of the Proposed Development (see Figure 3a). The River Spey SSSI / SAC is a river corridor, with both sites designated for the internationally important species assemblage this river system supports, comprising Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>), freshwater pearl mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>), otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>), and sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>).</p> <p>The southern end of the Proposed Development site boundary is approximately 3 km southeast of the Creag Meagaidh SSSI, SAC and National Nature Reserve (NNR) and approximately 4 km southeast of the Creag Meagaidh Special Protection Area (SPA). The SSSI is designated for its breeding bird assemblage, rocky slopes, upland assemblage, upland birch woodland, and vascular plant assemblage. The SAC and NNR are designated for a range of habitat types, and the SPA is designated as a dotterel (<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>) breeding ground.</p> <p>Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) parcels are present within the site boundary, classified as being of both plantation and semi-natural origin, and there is some designated Native Woodland as well (see Figure 3b).</p> <p><u>Protected Species:</u></p> <p>The presence of moorland and watercourses within the site boundary and in the vicinity of the Proposed Development, may present the possibility of otter and water vole (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>) being present. However, the abundance of rocky sediments and banks over long stretches of the watercourses, provides limited opportunities for water vole burrow creation; viable opportunities, however, remain for otter holt creation.</p> <p>The presence of woodland and woodland edge habitats, including ancient and semi-natural woodlands in the vicinity of watercourses, provides suitable habitat for bats, badger (<i>Meles meles</i>), wildcats (<i>Felis silvestris</i>), pine marten (<i>Martes martes</i>), red squirrel (<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>), hedgehog</p>	<p>tracks elements of the Proposed Development. For the proposed substation, the key CNP habitats would be avoided and the potential for significant environmental effects would therefore be minimised.</p> <p>In relation to the River Spey SSSI / SAC and the Creag Meagaidh SSSI, SAC and SPA, the implementation of good practice construction, pollution prevention and water quality control measures would ensure any indirect effects on nearby designated sites are avoided. Subject to control measures, good practice, and appropriate mitigation, the works and associated construction are unlikely to impact the designated features of both the Creag Meagaidh and the River Spey designated sites.</p> <p>In relation to AWI and Native Woodland, some parcels can be avoided through considerate design. However, as targeted clearance of the surrounding non-designated woodland would be required to facilitate the proposed works, increased fragmentation of these designated parcels would be generated even where works are subject to control measures, good practice and appropriate mitigation. Some localised effects may occur.</p> <p>The Applicant has developed a suite of Species Protection Plans (SPPs) that would be implemented during the construction phase, to mitigate and minimise any significant negative effects on protected species. With these mitigation measures in place, there are unlikely to be significant negative effects on protected species.</p> <p>An Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be appointed to undertake pre-construction surveys for protected species and non-native invasive species, providing advice throughout the construction phase and monitoring the compliance of the project in line with environmental policy, legislation and documentation (including General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs), SPPs and the CEMP).</p>

Environmental Issue	Baseline Findings	Potential for Significant Environmental Effects
	<p>(<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>), amphibians such as palmate newt (<i>Lissotriton helveticus</i>), common toad (<i>Bufo bufo</i>) and a number of invertebrates species.</p> <p>In relation to wildcats, the area is known by the Applicant as a key area for the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) - Scottish Wildcat Action (SWA) project, and a release pen is known to be in the general vicinity of the Proposed Development.</p> <p>Areas of open moorland and heathland are also considered to provide suitable habitat resources for mountain hare (<i>Lepus timidus</i>) and Odonata species (dragonfly and damselfly) of conservation importance, including those on the Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL). Areas of open moorland habitat may also display presence of bog pool communities, which have the potential to host national important, SBL dragonfly assemblages.</p> <p>Opportunities for reptiles such as common lizard (<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>), slow worm (<i>Anguis fragilis</i>), and adder (<i>Vipera berus</i>) can exist within patches of heath and acid grassland; however, they are likely limited overall throughout the site boundary.</p> <p>Allt Mor is a tributary of the River Mashie, which itself is a tributary of the River Spey, where populations of freshwater pearl mussel, Atlantic salmon and sea lamprey can be found. Beavers are also being reintroduced in the River Spey; however, currently there are no recorded population of wild beavers within the River Spey catchment.</p>	<p>The Applicant is in close correspondence with RZSS – SWA to ensure impacts on wildcat populations / territories are minimised. Wildcat specific mitigation will be considered as part of the design process, in discussion with RZSS – SWA.</p>
	<p><u>Habitat:</u></p> <p>The Proposed Development would pass over upland heathland habitats comprising dry heaths and wet heathland, as well as areas of blanket bog. Wet heath is classified as an Annex 1 (H4010) Priority Habitats and is therefore considered to be of International importance.</p> <p>Internationally important Annex 1 blanket bog (H7130) has also been found to be present inside the site boundary, with small pockets of Annex 1 Dry heath also found in localised areas of the site. Degraded blanket</p>	<p>During the construction phase, it is likely that localised areas of Annex 1 wet heathland with cross-leaved heath and Annex 1 blanket bog, both present within the proposed substation footprint and along the access track, may be lost as a result of vegetation removal to facilitate the works.</p> <p>Through detailed design, potential impacts to Annex 1 habitats will be minimised where practicable. Temporary disturbance of habitats during the construction phase would be minimised by adherence to the site-specific</p>

Environmental Issue	Baseline Findings	Potential for Significant Environmental Effects
	<p>bog is also present, which is a constituent part of the upland heathland mosaic as a subset of Annex 1 blanket bog and, depending on its level of degradation and presence of specific botanical indicators of peat, could be considered to be of a level of importance ranging from Regional to International.</p>	<p>CEMP, which will include detailed methods of soil management and reinstatement.</p> <p>The project will be subject to a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment, and the Applicant will commit to achieving a 10% biodiversity net gain target. The Applicant will also explore further opportunities for compensatory actions that would support biodiversity enhancements as necessary, particularly in relation to the loss of any Annex 1 habitats.</p>
Ornithology	<p>The new substation elements of the Proposed Development are located at the moorland/forest edge within an area of new plantation woodland. The adjacent extensive woodland habitat could provide suitable habitat for nesting Schedule 1 species.</p> <p>The southern extent of the site boundary where the UGC access tracks would be proposed includes some woodland habitat which could provide suitable habitat for nesting Schedule 1 species such as Goshawk (<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>) and Crossbill (<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>). In addition, several woodland species including Song Thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>), Spotted Flycatcher (<i>Muscicapa striata</i>), Tree Pipit (<i>Anthus trivialis</i>), Bullfinch (<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>), Lesser Redpoll (<i>Acanthis cabaret</i>) and Mistle Thrush (<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>) are likely to be present within woodland habitats.</p> <p>Scattered woodland and upland scrub habitats provide suitable nesting opportunities for Song Thrush, Spotted Flycatcher, Tree Pipit, Bullfinch, Lesser Redpoll and Mistle Thrush. The neighbouring open moorland habitats and immature plantation also provide opportunities for breeding and foraging Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>), Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>) and Short-eared Owl (<i>Asio flammeus</i>).</p>	<p>During construction, any potential disturbance effects could be reduced or eliminated by adopting appropriate mitigation to minimise disturbance, which would be outlined within the Applicant's SPPs and GEMPs. With mitigation measures in place, there are unlikely to be significant effects on birds.</p> <p>An ECoW would be appointed to undertake pre-construction surveys for ornithology, provide advice throughout construction and monitor compliance with environmental legislation and documentation GEMPs, SPPs and the CEMP.</p>
Forestry	<p>The new substation elements of the Proposed Development sit predominately within clear fell or commercial forestry that is privately owned and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS). To the south, the site boundary covers areas of commercial plantation on both FLS and privately owned land.</p>	<p>Felling of commercial conifer would be required to facilitate the construction of the Proposed Development, albeit the site is located at the eastern extent of the plantation which should serve to reduce wider impacts on the forest resource (i.e. through management felling).</p> <p>The positioning and detailed design of the substation platform and the access tracks would seek to minimise interaction with forestry where practicable.</p>

Environmental Issue	Baseline Findings	Potential for Significant Environmental Effects
		Further discussion will be held with forest owners to mitigate the impact on long term forest plans, and the Applicant also commits to compensatory planting for any woodland loss in line with the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal.
Cultural Heritage	<p><u>Designations:</u></p> <p>There are no designated cultural heritage sites within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development site boundary. The closest Scheduled Monument is Dun da Lamh Fort, SM4361 approximately 2 km to the north (see Figure 3a). This large hillfort of late prehistoric date is strategically located to control two significant east-west land routes: along the Spey and through Strathmashie / Loch Laggan, these two routes converging just east of the fort. The monument occupies a dominant position on a spur rising steeply over 250 m above the valley floor.</p> <p><u>Assets:</u></p> <p>Within the site boundary of the Proposed Development there are some records of cultural heritage assets, typically of local significance and low sensitivity to damage.</p> <p>The closest asset of Regional significance is approximately 250 m to the north and is Druim an Aird Township (see Figure 3a). This site consists of eleven buildings, three enclosures, a corn drying kiln and an enclosing dyke while a larger area is enclosed by a head dyke to the south and west. The township is considered to have local historical associations, has been exposed by sensitive felling and has been provided with an interpretation panel and access paths.</p> <p>The potential for further archaeological features, not previously noted and recorded, is considered to be very low.</p>	<p>No direct effects would be expected to occur on any designated heritage asset. There is potential for a substation at this location to intrude in views from Dun da Lamh Fort, SM4361, albeit it is anticipated these would be limited due to intervening topography and existing vegetation which would serve to screen views. Assuming appropriate siting, design and mitigation, it is anticipated that potentially significant effects on setting could be avoided.</p> <p>With appropriate mitigation in place to avoid, minimise or safeguard any archaeological remains unearthed as part of excavation works, it is anticipated that significant effects on cultural heritage assets within the vicinity of the Proposed Development could be avoided.</p>
Traffic and Transport	Construction access is expected to be taken via the A86, with a number of options being explored in relation to accessing the Proposed Development from the A86 (see Figure 2).	There will be an increase in traffic on local roads during construction. An assessment will be carried out to determine the significance of this increase, and identify suitable mitigation measures to be put in place. This would include consideration of Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AIL) and their likely route to site.

Environmental Issue	Baseline Findings	Potential for Significant Environmental Effects
		<p>A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) would be developed to ensure road safety for all other road users during construction works. The CTMP would be developed in consultation with Transport Scotland and the local road's authority.</p>
<p>Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils</p>	<p><u>Geology, Peat and Soils:</u></p> <p>The proposed substation elements of the Proposed Development are underlain by Class 2 priority peatland, which is considered nationally important, and Class 5 priority peatland whereby no peatland habitats are typically found but soils may be carbon rich with areas of deep peat. To the south-west, the proposed access tracks could pass over some Class 1 and Class 2 priority peatland, which is considered nationally important.</p> <p>Phase 1 peat probing has been undertaken to confirm the presence and distribution of peat across the majority of the Proposed Development site boundary. The areas proposed for the new substation elements of the Proposed Development would typically be at a peat depth of 0.0 - 0.5 m, with limited small pockets up to 1.0 m deep (see Figure 4). To the south-west, where the access track elements of the Proposed Development are proposed, deeper peat is present of up to 3 m in depth or more in some pockets (see Figure 4).</p> <p>The north-east of the Proposed Development of the site boundary is situated on Strathspey Granite (granitic rocks). The bedrock is predominantly overlain by glacial till superficial deposits. The south-west of the Proposed Development site boundary is underlain by several metamorphic bed rock units comprising psammities, semipelites, metacarbonates and quartzites. Igneous intrusions of the Scottish Highland Ordovician Minor Intrusion Suites (pegmatites) and North Britain Siluro-Devonian Calc-Alkaline Dyke Suite (microdiorite) are noted.</p> <p>Kinlochlaggan Boulder Beds Geological Conservation Review (GCR) and SSSI are situated approximately 200 m north of the Proposed Development site boundary to the east of Loch Laggan. These sites are designated for Dalradian geology. GRC sites for Dalradian geology include Rubhan a Magach GCR, situated on the south-western shoreline</p>	<p>With the exception of peat, neither the superficial or bedrock geology are rare and do not pose a development constraint.</p> <p>The peat across the new substation elements of the Proposed Development is not considered to be deep. Where access tracks are proposed though, deeper pockets are present (see Figure 4). The design of any new permanent access track will seek to avoid these pockets as far as possible and floating tracks will be used for any temporary construction access tracks if possible. Additional peat probing will be undertaken along the access tracks to inform the design of the proposed access tracks.</p> <p>A Peat Management Plan will be prepared and, if deemed appropriate, a Peat Landslide Hazard Risk assessment will be carried out.</p> <p>Excavated soil would be stored adjacent to the proposed works during construction, and this would be used to restore and reinstate disturbed areas once works are complete.</p> <p>With the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, it is anticipated that any potentially significant effects could be avoided for geology, peat and soils.</p> <p>Effects on the Kinlochlaggan Boulder Beds GCR and SSSI and the Dalradian geology GCR sites are not expected.</p>

Environmental Issue	Baseline Findings	Potential for Significant Environmental Effects
	<p>of Loch Laggan, and Allt Mhainisteir GCR, situated approximately 3 km north-east of Loch Earba as well.</p> <p><u>Hydrology:</u> The Proposed Development lies within the River Spey Catchment to the north and within the River Spean surface water catchment, including the River Pattack sub catchment to the south-west. Several tributaries of the River Mashie would be crossed by the access track elements of the Proposed Development, including the Allt Doire nan Sgiath and River Pattack.</p> <p>SEPA floodplain mapping shows a floodplain associated with River Mashie and Allt Tarsuinn to the north-east and a floodplain associated with Allt Doire nan Sgiath and River Pattack to the southwest, however, flood extents largely remain confined to the watercourse channels in all areas. The tributaries of the River Mashie are too small to have been mapped by SEPA and therefore the flood extents of these are not known.</p> <p>There is no known private water supply infrastructure in the vicinity of the Proposed Development, however, properties not included in The Highland Council database may be present within or in proximity to the site.</p>	<p>Construction works would be carried out in line with the Applicant's GEMPs and a site-specific CEMP. This document would detail how the successful Principal Contractor would manage the works in accordance with the Applicant's GEMPs, statutory consents and authorisations, and industry best practise and guidance, including pollution prevention guidance. With the implementation of these mitigation measures, no significant effects on hydrological receptors are anticipated.</p> <p>The presence (or otherwise) of private water supplies, licensed water abstractions and Drinking Water Protected Areas (DWPA) will be confirmed as part of further assessment, and if needed mitigation measures to safeguard these confirmed.</p>
Noise and Vibration	<p>Noise sensitive receptors within the vicinity of the site are comprised of properties within the site boundary at Gallovie and Feagour, and those adjacent to the A86.</p> <p>The daytime noise climate in the vicinity of the site is primarily of noise associated with periodic forestry works and Estate activities. Sources of noise in the wider area include traffic on the A86 and noise from watercourses such as the River Pattack. No sources of vibration have been identified at this stage.</p>	<p>An appropriate CEMP would be put into practice during construction and would include a Construction Noise and Vibration Plan (CMPV) for the Proposed Development.</p> <p>Working hours are anticipated 6 days a week between approximately 07:00 – 19:00 on weekdays. Saturday working hours would be 07:00 to 13:00 with no working on Sundays anticipated at this stage. Working hours would be confirmed by the Principal Contractor and agreed with the Highland Council.</p>

Environmental Issue	Baseline Findings	Potential for Significant Environmental Effects
Air Quality	<p>The Proposed Development is not located within an Air Quality Management area (AQMA). The closest AQMA is the Inverness City Centre AQMA, which is declared for Nitrogen dioxide NO₂ levels¹⁰. There is no representative data on the local background air quality but air quality in the Highlands is generally very good with the latest Air Pollution Levels in the highland area being recorded as low¹¹.</p>	<p>On-site plant, construction traffic and construction activities have the potential to generate and disperse dust and airborne particulate matter, which could impact nearby receptors during construction. In addition, there would be an increase in construction traffic on the local road network during the construction period.</p> <p>Subject to the implementation and adherence of best practice measures, as would be set out in a CEMP, it is anticipated that any potentially significant effects on air quality could be avoided.</p>
Land Use and Recreation	<p>As classified by The Macaulay System of Land Capability for Agriculture¹², the Proposed Development is located on low value agricultural land suited for rough grazing (class 6.2) and land suited to grassland with some limited potential for other crops (class 4.2).</p> <p>There are some recreational routes within the forestry in the surrounding area. A Core Path and forest trails at Feagour lie to the west of the Proposed Development, and a long-distance Scottish Hill Track route identified by the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (ScotWays) passes through the north-east of the site boundary, but is unmarked on the ground (see Figure 3a).</p> <p>Laggan Wolfrax mountain bike centre is situated to the north-east of the Proposed Development.</p>	<p>The agricultural land within the vicinity of the Proposed Development is generally deemed to be of low sensitivity.</p> <p>For recreational interests, impacts are likely to be limited to disruption at the construction stage, which would be temporary and appropriately managed through the CEMP. The long-distance Scottish Hill Track which passes through the north-east of the site boundary is not considered to be a major constraint as it is likely it could be accommodated and rerouted by the development.</p> <p>There would be likely to be views from parts of the Laggan Wolfrax bike trails overlooking the proposed substation. With effective mitigation it is considered that any potential significant visual effects of the Proposed Development would be limited to the construction phase or early during the operational stage before vegetation has fully established.</p>
Population and Human Health	<p>Properties within the vicinity of the site are comprised of properties within the site boundary at Gallovie and Feagour, and those adjacent to the A86.</p>	<p>Potential effects relating to population and human health have potential to arise from Electric and Magnetic fields (EMF), Electromagnetic Interference (EMI), air quality, water quality, noise and / or vibration effects, light disturbance or residential amenity effects.</p> <p>Subject to the adherence to best practice measures and the implementation of a CEMP it is not considered likely that there would be any significant effects on</p>

¹⁰ DEFRA (2024), *AQMA Details*. Available [online] at: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/details?aqma_ref=1580 [Accessed: January 2026]

¹¹ Air Quality in Scotland (2021), Latest Air Pollution Levels. Available [online] at: <https://www.scottishairquality.scot/> [Accessed: January 2026]

¹² The James Hutton Institute (n.d.). *Land Capability for Agriculture in Scotland*. [online] Available at: <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/learning/exploringscotland/land-capability-agriculture-scotland> [Accessed: December 2025]

Environmental Issue	Baseline Findings	Potential for Significant Environmental Effects
		human health arising from the construction or operation of the Proposed Development.
Radio and TV Interference	There are some residential properties within the site boundary of the Proposed Development and the wider area with potential for radio or TV signal interference resulting from developments of the type proposed.	Potential effects from OHLs on TV signals are due to physical obstruction of the signal. It is not anticipated that the Proposed Development would represent a significant obstruction, and it is not anticipated that any adverse effects on TV reception would be experienced. No significant effects are likely.
Major Accidents and Disasters	Potentially significant effects which can arise in relation to accidents and disasters from developments of this type include severe weather events and structural damage, as well as the potential for risks during the construction phase.	<p>Given the nature of the Proposed Development, the potential for effects related to the vulnerability to accidents and disasters are likely to be limited to those associated with unplanned power outages, due to extreme weather or structural damage.</p> <p>Crisis management and continuity plans are in place across the SSE Group. These are tested regularly and are designed for the management of, and recovery from, significant energy infrastructure failure events. Furthermore, the Principal Designer would need to fully assess risks and mitigate as appropriate during the construction stage as part of the requirements of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2015).</p>
Material Assets	The Proposed Development would include areas of commercial forestry plantation.	<p>Felling of commercial conifer would be required to facilitate the construction of the Proposed Development access tracks and some parts of the substation platform. Furthermore, the potential need for management felling is relevant to commercial forestry areas and should be considered.</p> <p>The positioning and detailed design of the substation platform and the access tracks would seek to minimise interaction with forestry where practicable. Where there is interaction, the Applicant will continue discussions with forest owners to ensure the Proposed Development minimises impacts on long term forest plans. The Applicant also commits to compensatory planting for any woodland loss in line with the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal.</p>

1.6 Description of Measures to Avoid or Prevent Significant Adverse Effects

Regulation 8(3) allows the developer to include a description of any measures envisaged to avoid or prevent potential significant adverse effects on the environment. As discussed above, the potential for significant adverse effects from this proposal are considered unlikely.

SSEN Transmission is also proposing the following measures to further minimise any potential effects as part of its standard working procedures:

- Undertaking pre-construction environmental surveys;
- SSEN Transmission has developed SPPs for construction works that may negatively impact upon protected species, including birds. The SPPs outline the procedures that must be followed where there is a potential for protected species to be present. Each SPP outlines the responsibilities of the Applicant and its Contractors, legislative protection for the protected species, best practice measures to follow and an approved methodology for carrying out certain mitigation activities. This suite of SPPs has been approved by NatureScot and would be adopted where relevant to the project;
- SSEN Transmission has developed GEMPs relating to activities and issues likely to be encountered. These plans contain both generic and specific guidance and should be incorporated into Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) where appropriate;
- A CEMP would be developed by the appointed contractor during the pre-construction phase. The principal objective of this document is to provide information on the proposed infrastructure and to aid in avoiding, minimising and controlling adverse environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Development. The CEMP would form part of the contract documents between SSEN Transmission and the appointed construction contractor;
- Advice from an ECoW on site specific issues during the construction of the Proposed Development, as required;
- The timing of construction activities would in general be undertaken during daytime periods to limit disruption to the local residents; and
- Site restoration measures specific to the proposal to ensure that disturbed ground is reinstated as quickly as possible on completion of the works.

Your response to this formal request for an EIA Screening Opinion is welcomed in line with the statutory provisions as per Regulation 9 of the EIA Regulations.

Yours sincerely,

Marta Ibáñez García (she/her) MSc MA PIEMA
Consents and Environment Manager

SSEN TRANSMISSION

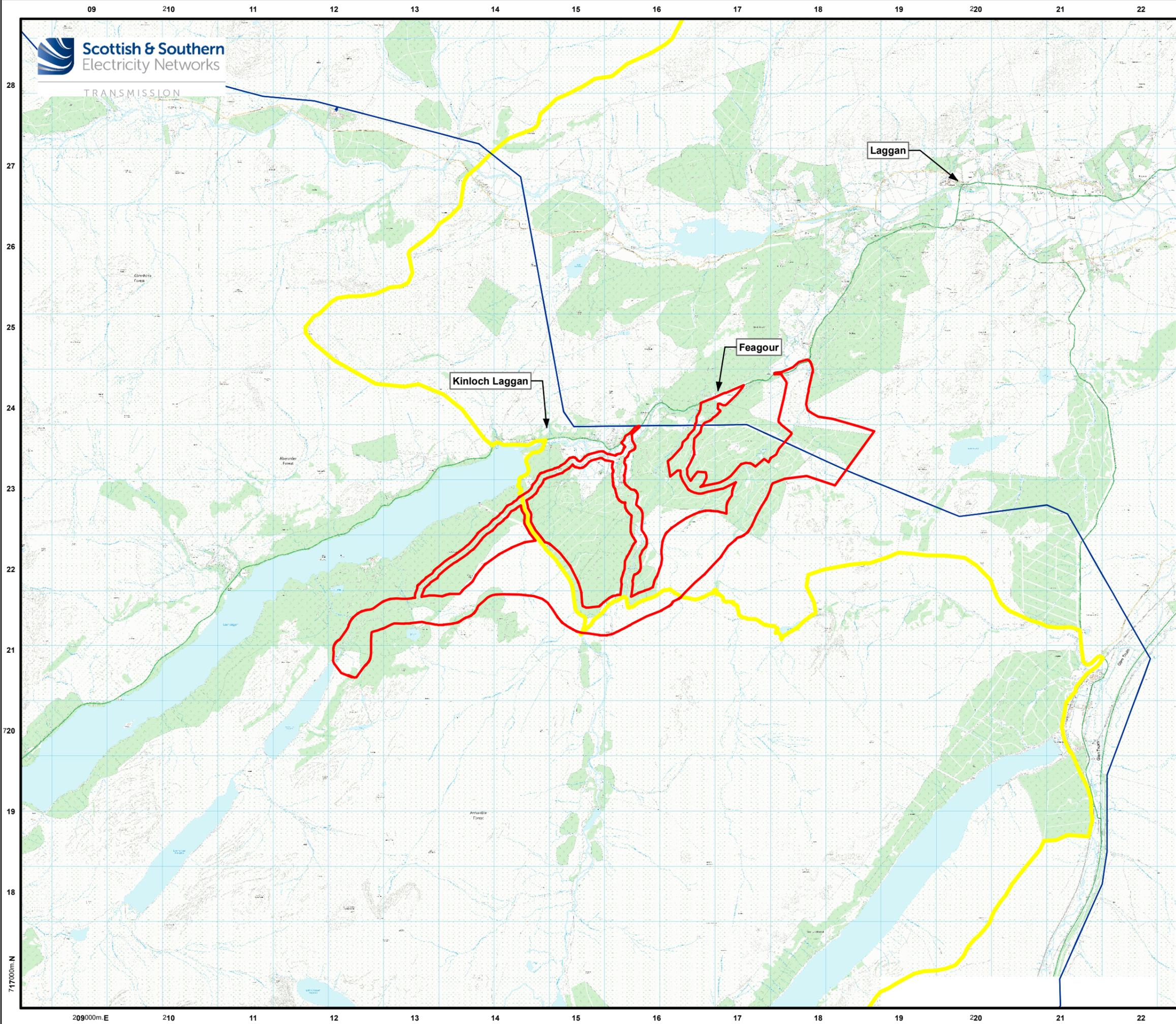
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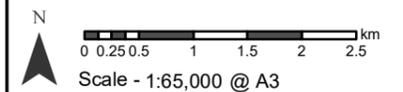
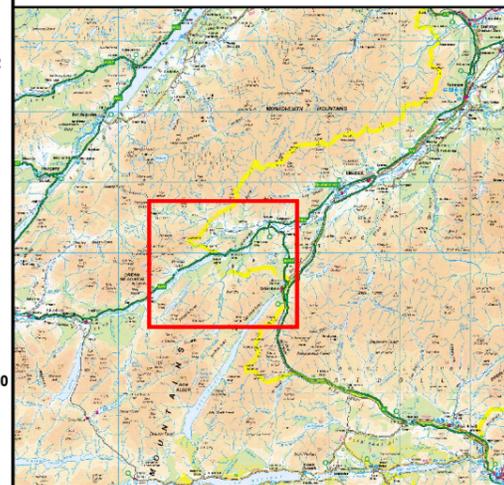


Key

- Site Boundary
- Cairngorms National Park (CNP)

Existing Infrastructure

- 400 kV Beaulieu - Denny Overhead Line (OHL)



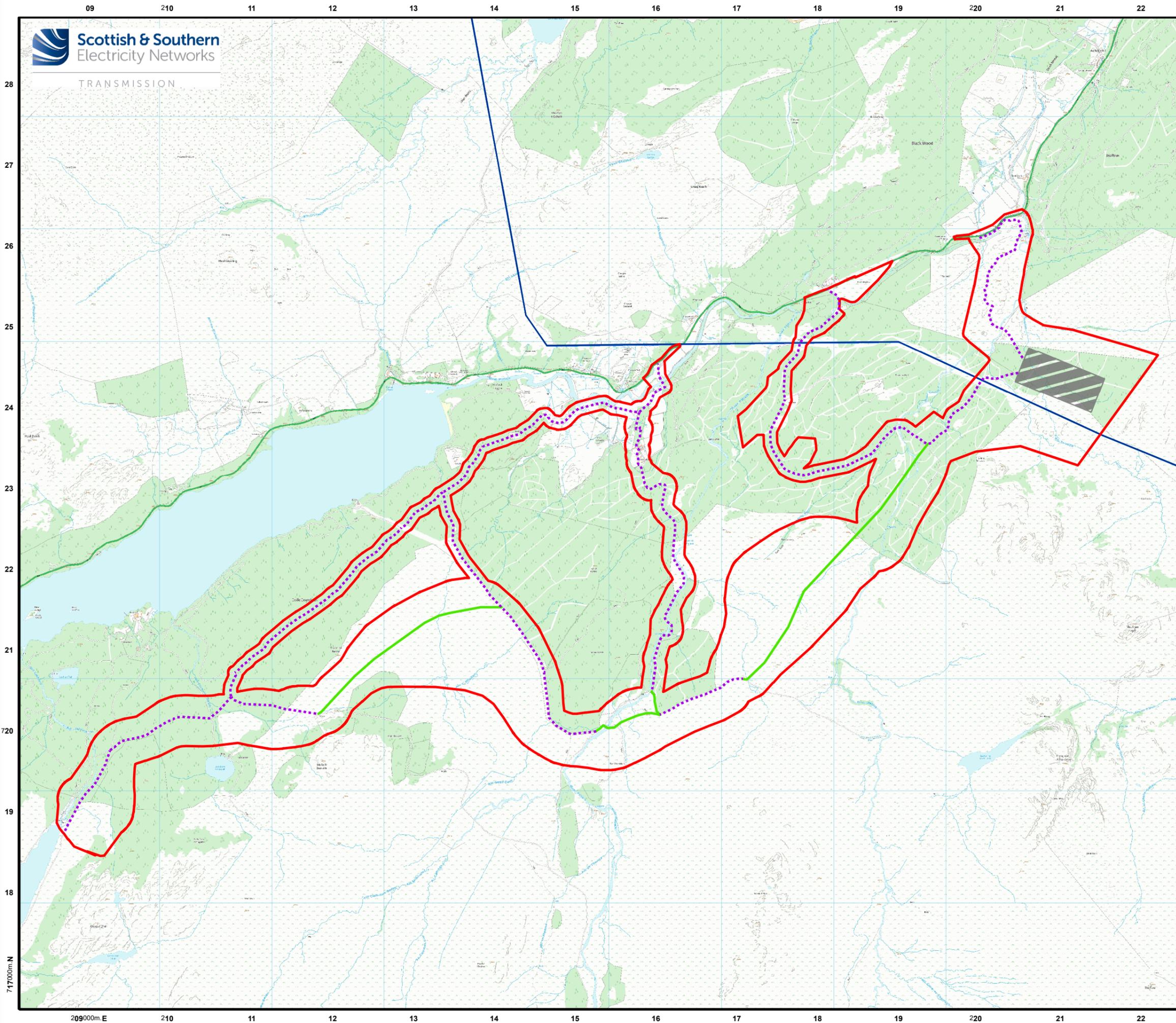
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Project: LT00505 - Coire Mashie Substation Screening Letter

Title: Figure 1: Location Plan

Drawn by: RJ/CG Date: 17/02/2026

Drawing: 123021-D1-SCR-CM-1.0.0



Key

Site Boundary

Existing Infrastructure

400 kV Beaulieu – Denny Overhead Line (OHL)

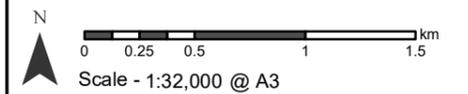
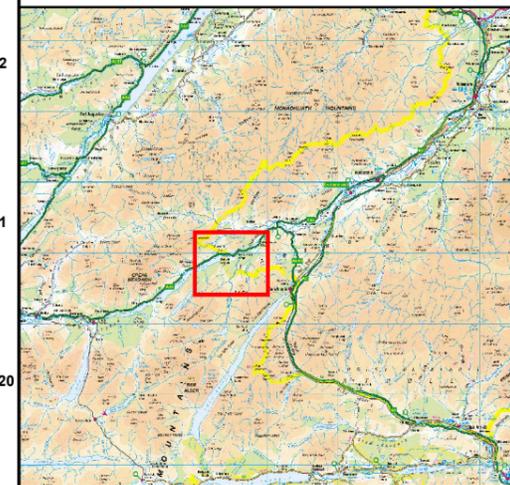
Proposed Permanent Infrastructure (Indicative)

Coire Mashie Substation Location

Coire Mashie Substation and Earba Pumped Storage Hydro Underground Cable Proposed Access Under Consideration

New Proposed Permanent Tracks (Indicative)

Existing Track (Will likely require upgrading if utilised)



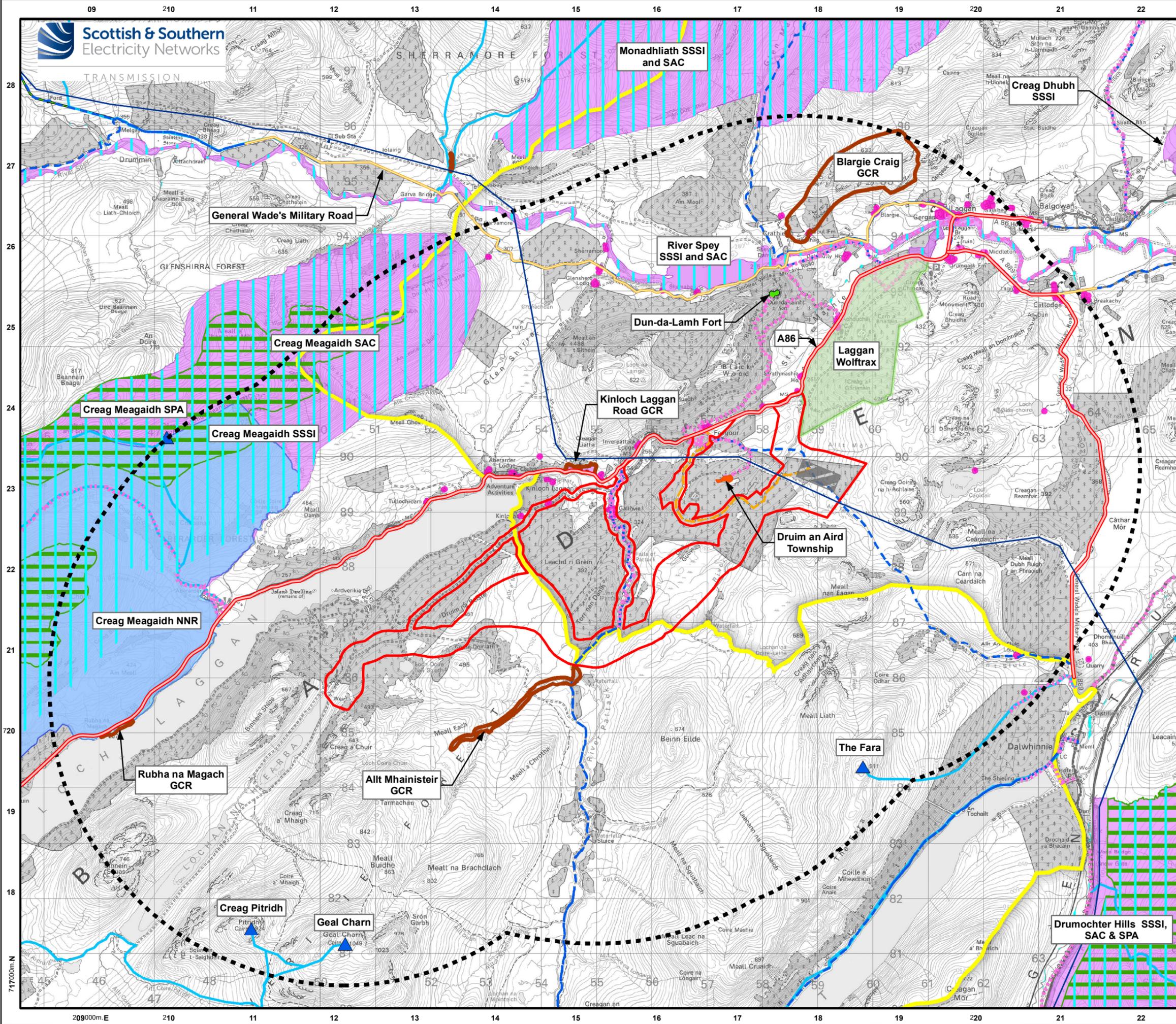
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Project: LT00505 - Coire Mashie Substation Screening Letter

Title: Figure 2: Site Plan

Drawn by: RJ/CG Date: 17/02/2026

Drawing: 123021-D2-SCR-CM-1.0.0



N

Scale - 1:65,000 @ A3

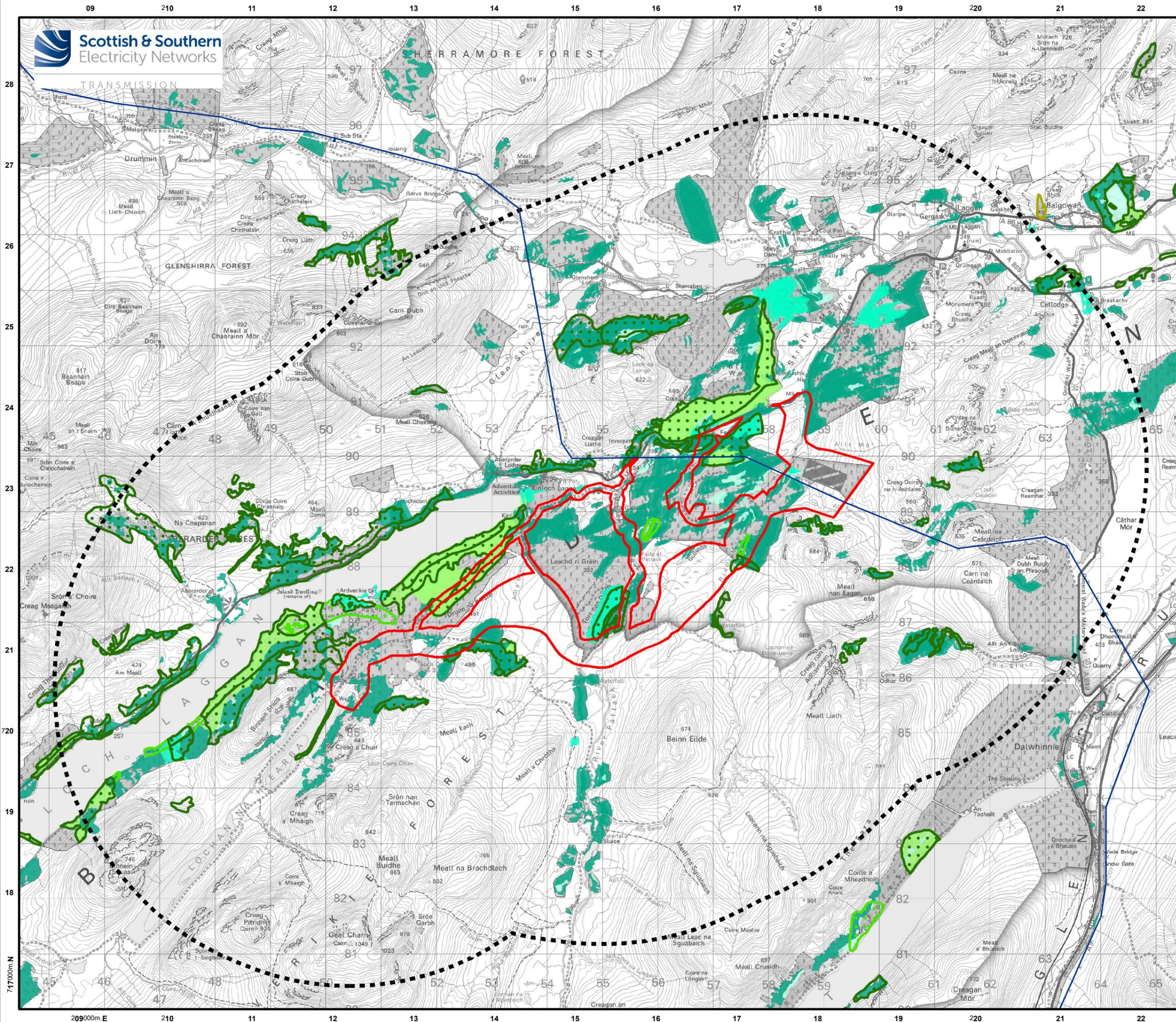
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Project: LT00505 - Coire Mashie Substation Screening Letter

Title: Figure 3a: Designations and Constraints

Drawn by: RJ/CG Date: 17/02/2026

Drawing: 123021-D3a-SCR-CM-1.0.0



Key

5 km Radius

Site Boundary

Existing Infrastructure

400 kV Beaulieu - Denny Overhead Line (OHL)

Proposed Permanent Infrastructure (Indicative)

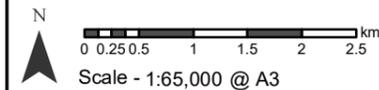
Coire Mashie Substation Location

Native Woodland

- Native woodland
- Nearly-native woodland
- Open land habitat
- Planted Woods on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

Ancient Woodland

- Ancient (of semi-natural origin)
- Long-Established (of plantation origin)
- Other (on Roy map)



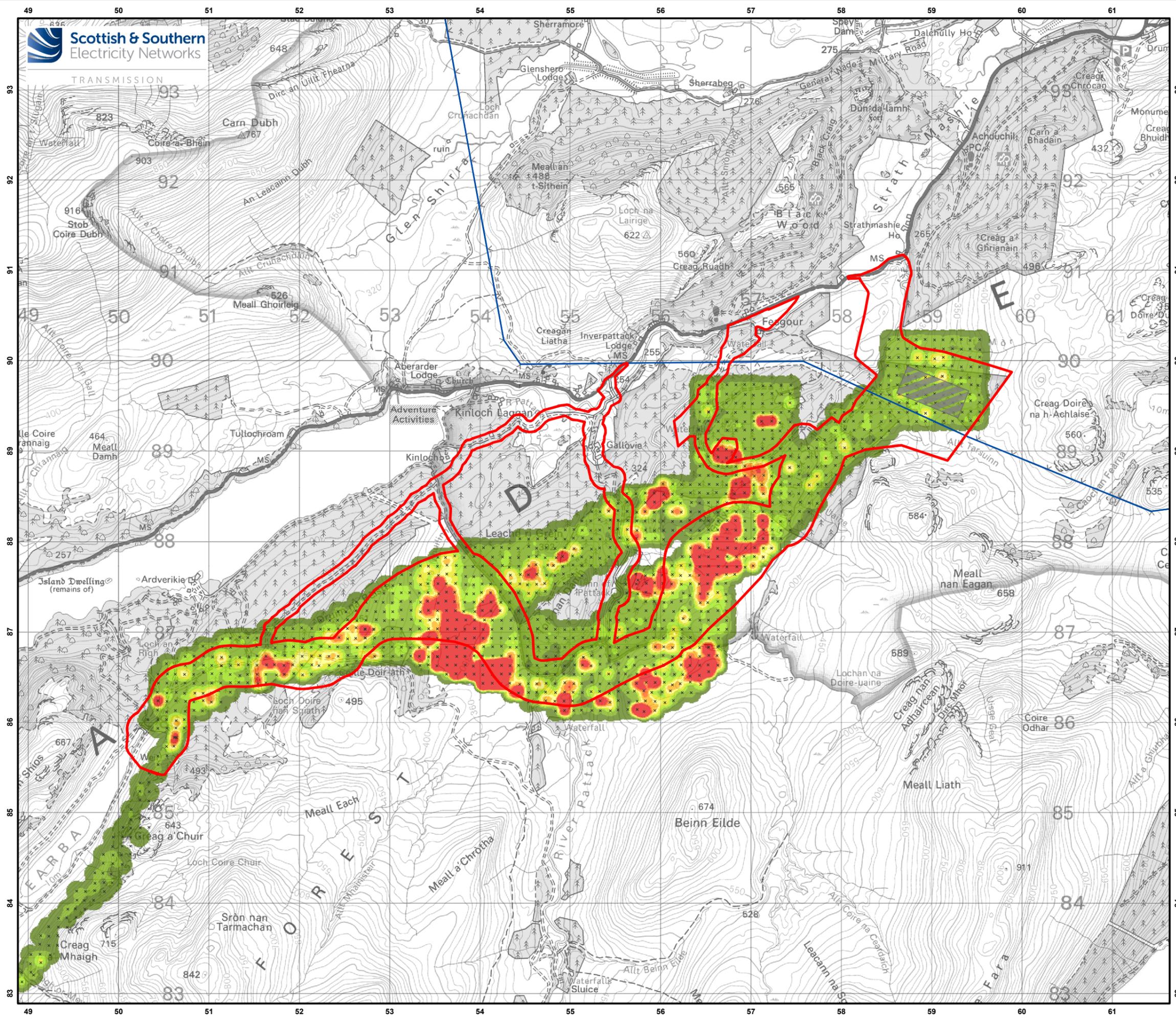
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Title: Figure 3b: Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) and Native Woodland

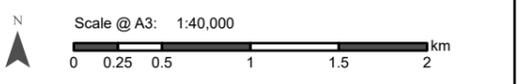
Drawn by: RJ/CG Date: 17/02/2026

Drawing: 123021-D3b-SCR-CM-1.0.0



Key

- Site Boundary
- 400 kV Beaulay - Denny Overhead Line (OHL)
- Existing Infrastructure**
- Proposed Permanent Infrastructure (Indicative)**
- Coire Mashie Substation Location
- Interpolated Peat Depth (m)**
- 0-0.5
- 0.5-1
- 1-1.5
- 1.5-2
- 2-2.5
- 2.5-3
- >3
- x Peat Probing Location



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Project: LT00505 - Coire Mashie Substation
Screening Letter

Title: Figure 4: Peat Depth

Drawn by: RJ/CG Date: 17/02/2026

Drawing: 123021-D4-SCR-CM-1.0.0