Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks
TRANSMISSION

Coire Mashie Substation and Earba Pumped Storage Hydro (PSH) Scheme Grid Connection Project

Environmental Impact Assessment: Scoping Report

September 2026

CONTENTS

Figures

Appendices

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) substation	Air Insulated Switchgear substation uses air insulation in a metal clad system.
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 Inventory (AWI)	The AWI is a provisional guide to the location of Ancient Woodland. It contains three main categories of woodland, all of which are likely to be of value for their biodiversity and cultural value by virtue of their antiquity: Ancient Woodland (1a and 2a); Long-established woodlands of plantation origin (LEPO) (1b and 2b); and other woodlands on 'Roy' woodland sites.
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	A process intended to leave nature in a better state than it started using good practice principles established by the Business and Biodiversity Offset Programme (BBOP) and organisations including CIRIA, CIEEM and IEMA.
Cairngorms National Park (CNP)	A national park and statutory designation in north-east Scotland, established in 2003. The Cairngorms National Park stretches 4,528 km^2 and includes the towns of Aviemore, Kingussie, Grantown-on-Spey and Ballater. The planning system within the park is managed by the Cairngorms National Park Authority.
Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)	A site-specific environmental management plan setting out the environmental management procedures, legislation and requirements for a particular project and site.
CNIA	Construction Noise Impact Assessment
CNMP	Construction Noise Management Plan
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.
CPI	Caledonian Pinewood Inventory
CTMP	Construction Transport Management Plan
DIA	Drainage Impact Assessment
ECU	Energy Consents Unit
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A formal process for identifying, assessing and reporting the likely significant environmental effects of a proposed development, undertaken in accordance with the relevant EIA Regulations. For this project, the relevant Regulations are The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.
EcIA	Ecological Impact Assessment
EHO	Environmental Health Officer
FLS	Forestry and Land Scotland
FRA	Flood Risk Assessment
General Environmental Management Plan (GEMP)	Developed by the Applicant to document general procedures, legislation and requirements for a variety of processes, typically during the construction phase of a project.

Term	Definition
GCR	Geological Conservation Review
Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) Substation	A Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) Substation is constructed with switchgear with gaseous reliant components which allows operation and safety clearances to be reduced compared to an AIS substation.
GWDTE	Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems
hectare (ha)	A metric unit of area used to measure land, equivalent to 10,000 square metres.
Habitat	Term most accurately meaning the place in which a species lives, but also used to describe plant communities or agglomerations of plant communities.
HER	Historic Environment Record
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
HET	Historic Environment Team
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).
LCA	Landscape Character Area
LCT	Landscape Character Type
LDP	Local Development Plan
LMP	Land Management Plan
LNR	Local Nature Reserves
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation or alleviation of adverse impacts.
NBN	National Biodiversity Network
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPF4	National Planning Framework – Fourth Edition
NS	NatureScot
NVC	National Vegetation Classification
NWSS	Native Woodland Survey of Scotland
OS	Ordnance Survey
Overhead line (OHL)	An electric line installed above ground, usually supported by towers or poles.
PCA	Peatland Condition Assessment
PLHRA	Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment
PMP	Peat Management Plan
PSH	Pumped Storage Hydro
Plantation Woodland	Woodland of any age that obviously originated from planting.
Routeing	The work undertaken which leads to the selection of a proposed alignment, capable of being taken forward into the consenting process.
Scheduled Monument	A monument which has been scheduled by Scottish Ministers as being of national importance under the terms of the 'Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979'.

Term	Definition
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.
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 European Commission (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.
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Landscapes designated by the Highland Council which are considered to be of regional/local importance for their scenic qualities.
Special Landscape Qualities (SLQ)	The characteristics that make a designated landscape special in terms of landscape and scenery, both individually or combined.
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'.
Species Protection Plan (SPP)	Developed by the Applicant to document general procedures, legislation and requirements for ensuring protection to a variety of species.
Stakeholders	Organisations and individuals who can affect or are affected by SSEN Transmission works.
Substation	A node on the network to allow safe control of the electricity network. This could include convergence of multiple circuits, transformation of voltage or other functions to maintain and operate the electricity network.
Substation Site	Site identified as necessary to deliver all the substation infrastructure requirements e.g. platform, internal access, temporary construction area, drainage including sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and landscaping.
Substation Platform Area	Area of the stone platform required for the HV infrastructure.
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
THC	The Highland Council
The National Grid	The electricity transmission network in the Great Britain.
Underground Cable (UGC)	An electric cable installed below ground, protected by insulating layers and marked closer to the surface to prevent accidental damage through later earthworks.
Volts	The international unit of electric potential and electromotive force.
VP	Vantage Points
WLA	Wild Land Areas
WLQ	Wild Land Qualities
ZTV	Zone of Theoretical Visibility

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Scoping Report has been prepared on behalf of Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc ("the Applicant') who operate under licence as Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission ("SSEN Transmission") in support of a request for a Scoping Opinion under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

The report relates to the development of new electricity transmission infrastructure comprising a new substation, approximately 16 km of underground electricity cable (UGC), diversion and tie-in to the existing Beauly-Denny overhead line (OHL), associated access infrastructure, drainage works, landscaping and ancillary development (hereafter referred to as "the Proposed Development").

The purpose of this report is to provide sufficient information on the Proposed Development to enable Scottish Ministers, The Highland Council (THC) and consultees to provide a Scoping Opinion on the proposed scope and content of the Environmental Impact Assessment.

The Proposed Development will be assessed as a single integrated project for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) purposes, whilst requiring consent under two separate consenting regimes.

Consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 will be sought from Scottish Ministers for the diversion and tie-in of the existing Beauly-Denny overhead line and associated electrical infrastructure.

Planning permission will be sought from THC (unless called in by Cairngorm National Park Authority (CNPA)) under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 for the proposed substation, UGC route, access tracks, drainage infrastructure, landscaping and associated works.

Whilst separate applications will be submitted, the environmental effects of all components will be assessed collectively within a single EIA Report to ensure that the environmental effects of the project as a whole, including cumulative and interrelated effects, are fully considered.

The Proposed Development is required to facilitate the connection of the consented Earba Pumped Storage Hydro (PSH) scheme to the electricity transmission network (Energy Consents Unit (ECU) reference ECU00005062). The Proposed Development comprises:

- Construction and operation of a new 400 kV electricity substation: the proposed substation would comprise a platform, anticipated to be approximately 350 m x 300 m, which could accommodate 24 bays of a Gas Insulated Substation (GIS as well as the cut and fill requirements, temporary construction laydown areas, drainage (including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)), and any immediate landscaping around the substation boundary.

- Installation of approximately 16 km of 400 kV UGC: this would enable a connection between the consented Earba PSH Scheme's powerhouse and the proposed GIS substation.

- Reconfiguration of approximately 0.7 km of the existing Beauly-Denny OHL including the installation of replacement towers, temporary towers, conductors and associated downleads to connect the proposed substation to the reconfigured OHL.

- Ancillary works in the form of temporary and permanent access tracks, joint bays (for the UGC connection), drainage infrastructure, and vegetation clearance would be required to facilitate the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

The proposed scope of the EIA has been defined through a process of preliminary environmental appraisal of the Proposed Development, drawing on information gathered during the optioneering and site selection processes, which has included consultation responses from statutory consultees and other stakeholders.

For further information in relation to the Proposed Development please visit: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/new-coire-mashie-400kv-substation-and-earba-psh-connection/

The Applicant invites consultees to comment on the following:

- **What environmental information do you hold or are aware of that would assist in the EIA described here for the Proposed Development?**
- **Do you agree with the proposed approach for collection of baseline data, and that the range of surveys across particular topics, is sufficient and appropriate to inform the assessment of environmental effects?**
- **Is there any other relevant existing baseline data that should be taken into account?**
- **Are there any key issues or possible effects which have been omitted?**
- **Do you agree with the list of issues to be scoped out, and the rationale behind the decision?**

Responses to this Scoping Report should be submitted to THC and ECU, who are undertaking parallel scoping processes under the relevant EIA Regulations, to inform their respective Scoping Opinions.

Responses may be submitted to:

The Highland Council

Email to: eplanning@highland.gov.uk

Or, by writing to:

The Highland Council
Glenurquhart Road
Inverness
IV3 5NX

Energy Consents Unit

Email to: Econsents_Admin@gov.scot

Or, by writing to:

Scottish Government
5 Atlantic Quay
150 Broomielaw
Glasgow
G2 8LU

Where a response addresses all elements of the Proposed Development, respondents are requested to copy their submission to both THC and the ECU.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This Scoping Report has been prepared by ASH design+assessment Limited ("ASH") on behalf of Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc ("the Applicant") who, operating under licence 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. In this Scoping Report, "the Applicant" and "SSEN Transmission" are used interchangeably unless the context requires otherwise.

1.1.2 The report relates to the development of new electricity transmission infrastructure comprising a new 400 kV substation[1], approximately 16 km of 400 kV underground electricity cable (UGC), diversion and tie-in to the existing Beauly-Denny overhead line (OHL), associated access infrastructure, drainage works, landscaping and ancillary development (hereafter referred to as "the Proposed Development"). The Proposed Development is located near Laggan, Highlands (see **Figure 1.1 Site Plan - Overview**). The Proposed Development is required to connect the consented Earba Pumped Storage Hydro (PSH) scheme (Energy Consents Unit (ECU) reference ECU00005062)[2] to the electricity transmission network.

1.1.3 The Proposed Development will be assessed as a single integrated project for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) purposes, whilst requiring consent under two separate consenting regimes. Consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 will be sought from Scottish Ministers for the diversion and tie-in of the Beauly-Denny overhead line and associated electrical infrastructure. Planning permission will be sought from The Highland Council (THC) (unless called in by Cairngorm National Park Authority) under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, for the proposed substation, UGC route, access tracks, drainage infrastructure, landscaping and associated works.

1.1.4 The Proposed Development comprises:

- Construction and operation of a new 400 kV electricity substation: the proposed substation would comprise a platform, anticipated to be approximately 350 m x 300 m, which could accommodate 24 bays of a Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) as well as the cut and fill requirements, temporary construction laydown areas, drainage (including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)), and any immediate landscaping around the substation boundary.
- Installation of approximately 16 km of 400 kV UGC: this would enable a connection between the consented Earba PSH Scheme's powerhouse and the proposed GIS substation.
- Reconfiguration of approximately 0.7 km of the existing Beauly-Denny OHL including the installation of replacement towers, temporary towers, conductors and associated downleads to connect the proposed substation to the reconfigured OHL.
- Ancillary works in the form of temporary and permanent access tracks, joint bays (for the UGC connection) and vegetation clearance would be required to facilitate the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

1.1.5 For the purposes of this Scoping Report and the subsequent EIA Report, the proposed works are considered together for environmental assessment, reflecting their functional interrelationship and interdependence.

[1] Area of stone platform required for the substation infrastructure.

[2] ECU (2024) *Earba 1,800MW Pumped Storage Hydro Scheme*, [online] Available at: https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx?cr=ECU00005062 [Accessed: May 2026].

1.1.6 The Proposed Development is considered a National Development under National Planning Framework 4[3].

1.1.7 For further information in relation to the Proposed Development please visit: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/new-coire-mashie-400kv-substation-and-earba-psh-connection/

1.2 The EIA Regulations

1.2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017[4], and the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017[5], together referred to in this report as the "EIA Regulations", contain two schedules. Schedule 1 lists projects where EIA is mandatory. Schedule 2 lists projects where EIA may be required '*where proposed development is considered likely to give rise to significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location'*.

1.2.2 The proposed works are not listed within Schedule 1 of either set of EIA Regulations. However, having regard to their nature, scale and location, elements of the proposed works fall within categories of development described in Schedule 2 of the respective EIA Regulations.

1.2.3 In this context, and given the potential for likely significant environmental effects, the Applicant has elected to undertake an EIA and prepare an EIA Report for the Proposed Development in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Regulations.

1.3 Purpose of the EIA Scoping Report

1.3.1 The purpose of this EIA Scoping Report is to ensure that the subsequent EIA is focused on the key impacts likely to give rise to significant effects.

1.3.2 In addition to identifying the environmental topics to be considered within the EIA Report, this document also identifies those matters that are not considered likely to give rise to significant effects and are therefore proposed to be scoped out of further assessment.

1.3.3 In accordance with the EIA Regulations, this EIA Scoping Report contains:

- a plan sufficient to identify the location of the Proposed Development;
- a description of the nature and purpose of the Proposed Development and its likely significant effects on the environment; and
- information on the aspects of the Proposed Development and the receiving environment that are not proposed to be scoped out of further assessment in the EIA Report.

1.4 Scoping Report Approach

1.4.1 This report provides information on the individual environmental topics which require consideration under the EIA Regulations. It presents the findings of an initial appraisal of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development on the receiving environment.

1.4.2 It provides an overview of the baseline conditions, as understood at the time of writing, and identifies the likely significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Development.

1.4.3 Where surveys or further assessment are required, the proposed approach and methodologies are outlined.

[3] Scottish Government (2023) National Planning Framework 4. Edinburgh: Scottish Government, [online] Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/ [Accessed: May 2026].
[4] Scottish Government (2017) *The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017* (SSI 2017/102), [online] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2017/102/contents [Accessed: May 2026].
[5] UK Government (2017) *The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017* (SI 2017/580), [online] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/580/contents [Accessed: May 2026].

1.4.4 Environmental topics included for initial assessment in this EIA Scoping Report are:

- Landscape and Visual Amenity;
- Ecology;
- Ornithology;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Soils, Geology and the Water Environment;
- Forestry;
- Traffic and Transport;
- Recreation and Tourism;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Socio-economics;
- Land Use and Agriculture;
- Air Quality and Climate Change;
- Major Accidents and / or Disasters;
- Population and Human Health; and
- Material Assets.

1.4.5 For each topic, a description of the baseline environment is provided. This is followed by a summary of the potential effects associated with each environmental topic listed above, and the proposed scope of survey and assessment work to determine effects and identify appropriate mitigation measures.

1.4.6 Where a topic is proposed to be scoped out of the EIA Report, the rationale for doing so is provided in **Section 14** of this report.

1.5 Scoping Report Structure

1.5.1 This Scoping Report comprises the following sections:

1 - Introduction – sets out the purpose of the Scoping Report and document structure;

2 - Description of the Proposed Development – describes the principal components of the Proposed Development and associated construction activities;

3 - EIA approach and methodology – describes the proposed approach to the assessment of environmental effects in the EIA Report;

4 - Planning Policy – describes the planning context and relevant policies for the Proposed Development;

5 to 13 -Topics to be taken forward to the EIA Report and the proposed scope of assessment. These topics include Landscape and Visual Amenity; Ecology; Ornithology; Cultural Heritage; Soils, Geology and the Water Environment; Forestry; Traffic and Transport; Recreation and Tourism; and Noise and Vibration.

14 - Topics to be scoped out of the EIA Report – provides the rationale for excluding the detailed assessment of certain topics; and

15 - Summary – summarises the topics to be scoped in and scoped out of the EIA Report.

1.5.2 The main body of this Scoping Report is supported by a series of figures provided at the end of this document.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Proposed Development

2.1.1 The Proposed Development would be located predominantly within the Cairngorms National Park (CNP), in the local authority area of THC (see **Figure 1.1**). The site boundary comprises a total area of approximately 1,234 ha and includes potential areas for access associated with the Proposed Development. The substation platform itself would be centred approximately at National Grid Reference NN 58342 89374, and the UGC would start at NN 47422 81798 from the consented Earba PSH Scheme Power station, and terminate at the proposed substation.

2.1.2 The elements of the Proposed Development subject to consent under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, would comprise the following:

- A substation platform[1] (anticipated to be approximately 350 m x 300 m) and associated GIS electrical plant;
- The substation would accommodate the operation of up to 24 bays;
- A control building (approximately 70 m in length, 26 m in width and up to 20 m in height);
- Fencing around the substation site, including an access gate;
- Lighting at the substation site for security, safety, and for use during periods of inspection and maintenance;
- Site drainage proposals at the substation site;
- An UGC (anticipated to be approximately 16 km in total) connecting the consented Earba PSH Scheme Powerhouse to the new substation. Along the UGC route, joint bays (a location at which cable lengths are jointed), would be required every 600 m (approximately). The joint bays would comprise an underground concrete lined structure approximately 15.8 m in length, approximately 4 m wide and approximately 1.9 m deep. An above ground link pillar of approximately 1 m in height would also be required within 10 m of each joint bay, protected by a stock proof fence;
- Upgrades to the local road network as required, existing forestry and estate access tracks, as well as the creation of new permanent and temporary access tracks to facilitate construction and operational access to the substation and along the route of the UGC;
- Landscape mitigation and biodiversity enhancement;
- Temporary construction laydown areas; and
- Associated site clearance, vegetation removal and earthworks.

2.1.3 The elements of the Proposed Development subject to consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 would comprise:

- The reconfiguration of approximately 0.7 km of the existing Beauly-Denny OHL, including the installation of replacement towers, temporary towers, conductors and associated downleads to connect the proposed substation to the reconfigured OHL; and
- Ancillary works that would be required as part of the OHL reconfiguration, to facilitate its construction and operation, such as tree clearance, hardstanding areas, access and working areas. Deemed planning permission would be sought for these works under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as part of the application for Section 37 consent).

2.1.4 The Proposed Development is shown on **Figures 2.1a-d**.

2.2 Substation Components

2.2.1 It is proposed that the new 400 kV substation would partly comprise an indoor design utilising non-SF6 GIS technology. Additional 132 / 33 kV Grid Transformer and Static Compensator equipment would also be housed within the buildings.

2.2.2 Within a GIS substation, live electrical equipment typically uses a dense gas as the insulating medium, usually Sulphur Hexa-Fluoride (SF6). However, the proposed substation would use an alternative SF6 free technology solution in support of SSEN Transmission's commitments and responsibilities to the decarbonisation of the electricity network. GIS typically allows safe clearance distances between live conductors to be reduced. This results in a smaller footprint compared to the more traditional substations comprising Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS). High Voltage cable connections are proposed within the substation, increasing design flexibility and minimising the footprint.

2.2.3 Indicative site layout plans suggest the new operational substation would require a level area of approximately 350 m x 300 m. Ground works, including a cut-fill exercise, would be required at the proposed site to achieve a level area of this size.

2.2.4 The Proposed Development would include a centralised GIS building approximately 155 m x 32 m, with a maximum height of approximately 20 m, to house the 400 kV gas insulated switchgear, site services, and control equipment. A 400 kV double busbar gas insulated switchgear arrangement would be provided within the GIS building, with a series of distributed relay rooms spread throughout the development, one per bay, resulting in 24 relay rooms in total. Other smaller units and utilities required for the systems would also be included. The Proposed Development would also include space provision for two outdoor supergrid transformers with associated oil retaining bund and foundations, each rated 480 MVA, 400/132 kV. Also included would be two 400 kV shunt reactors with associated bunds, and line landing gantries to accept oncoming OHLs.

2.2.5 The substation would not be illuminated at night for normal operation. Floodlights would be installed but would only be used in the event of a fault during the hours of darkness; or during the over-run of planned works; or when sensor-activated as security lighting for night-time access.

2.2.6 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, including upgrades to the local road network as required;
- Ground works to achieve a level area at the proposed substation site;
- Construction of perimeter and site drainage, including 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.

2.3 Underground Cable Components

2.3.1 The installation of the UGC would involve the following tasks:

- Enabling works and site clearance;
- Establishment of a temporary construction compound;
- Establishment of suitable laydown areas for materials;
- Establish a working corridor (approximately 60 m wide) centred on the cable centreline;
- Installation of an access haul road and bridges where/if required;
- Excavate a trench up to 1.5 m in depth and 2 m wide, widened through benching and battering where stability and safety concerns arise;
- Implementation of temporary drainage, dewatering, and surface water management measures during construction;
- Clear out all materials likely to damage cable ducts, e.g. clods, rocks, stones and organic debris, and employ use of pumps to remove any water;
- Installation of ducting within the trench, surrounded by engineered backfill in suitable layers for protection, with protection tile and warning tape placed above the cable line, reinstatement to sub-soil level;
- Excavation and formation of power cable joint bays with above ground electrical link pillars and associated demarcation; reinstate excavated surface layers in reverse order;
- Installation of trenchless crossings, including horizontal directional drilling (HDD), thrust boring, or similar techniques at watercourses, roads, infrastructure crossings, or environmentally constrained locations where open-cut excavation is not suitable;
- Installation of cable sealing end compounds, earthing, bonding, and fibre-optic communication infrastructure associated with the cable system;
- Temporary diversion or protection of existing utilities, drains, tracks, or services where required;
- Temporary fencing, signage, and environmental protection measures during construction activities;
- Transportation of and installation of power cable;
- Mobilisation of jointing containers and jointing of power cable; and
- Final reinstatement, restoration, and regrading of disturbed land following completion of the works.

2.4 Overhead Line Reconfiguration Components

2.4.1 Two existing towers on the Beauly - Denny 400 kV OHL, Tower 99 (NN 58348 89641) and Tower 100 (NN 58738 89462), would be replaced by two new towers, Tower 99R (NN 58160 89727) and Tower 100R (NN 58776 89445). The replacement towers are anticipated to be a similar height to the existing towers, between approximately 50 m and 60 m in height.

2.4.2 Approximately 0.4 km of new 400 kV OHL conductor would be installed between Tower 99R and a new terminal tower (Tower 99A, located at NN 58244 89486), and between Tower 100R and a new terminal tower (Tower 100A, located at NN 58529 89363). The terminal towers are also anticipated to be between 50 m and 60 m in height.

2.4.3 Two sets of downleads would connect the terminal towers to the proposed Coire Mashie substation.

2.4.4 Temporary OHL infrastructure would be required during construction to maintain transmission of electricity along the Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL while the permanent works are installed. This would comprise a temporary diversion of the line supported by three temporary towers located either immediately north or south of the existing OHL between Tower 99 and Tower 100. The temporary towers are anticipated to be between 50 m and 60 m in height.

2.4.5 Following commissioning of the permanent infrastructure, the temporary OHL diversion and temporary towers would be removed, together with the existing section of OHL and the existing Tower 99 and Tower 100 structures.

2.5 Limit of Deviation

2.5.1 In general terms, a Limit of Deviation (LoD) defines the maximum extent within which a development can be built. There is a good degree of certainty with respect to the location of infrastructure, as presented within this EIA, nevertheless it is possible that further micrositing may be required during the construction to reflect localised land, engineering and environmental constraints, and therefore the LoD provides some flexibility in this regard.

2.5.2 In the case of the Proposed Development, a horizontal LoD would be required for the following elements:

- Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL Reconfiguration – approximately 100 m LoD (i.e. 50 m either side of the alignment);
- UGC – approximately 200 m LoD (i.e. 100 m either side of the alignment); and
- Access Tracks (new permanent and temporary) – approximately 50 m LoD (25 m either side of the centre line).

2.5.3 The width of the LoD would be reviewed through the EIA stage of the project and may be increased or decreased in some areas to account for specific environmental constraints or known engineering challenges.

2.5.4 A vertical LoD is also sought for the replacement Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL towers. The vertical LoD refers to the maximum height of a tower above existing ground level and would allow a height increase or decrease of up to 10% from the indicative tower heights that are referred to in this report and would be set out in the EIA Report.

2.6 Operational Corridor

2.6.1 An Operational Corridor (OC) would be required through areas of woodland and commercial forestry to enable the safe operation and maintenance of the UGC and reconfigured OHL, including the temporary OHL works. The width of the OC would be variable depending on the nature of the woodland or forestry (based on species present) but is anticipated to be up to 90 m.

2.7 Access During Construction and Operation

2.7.1 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 facilitate the construction and on-going maintenance of the Proposed Development, would be required.

2.7.2 The site boundary presented within this Scoping Report has been developed to include all access options that are currently under consideration (see **Figures 2.1a-d**).

2.8 Programme and Hours of Working

2.8.1 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 THC.

2.9 Use of Natural Resources

2.9.1 It is not anticipated that the Proposed Development would require any notable water consumption.

2.9.2 Borrow pits are likely to be required to provide suitable rock and aggregate for construction of the Proposed Development. At the time of writing, potential borrow pit locations are still being identified and assessed. Any borrow pits required for the Proposed Development would be included within the planning application and assessed as part of the EIA.

2.10 Construction Environmental Management

2.10.1 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).

2.10.2 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.

2.10.3 A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) would be implemented for the works and would be reviewed throughout the project and updated as necessary.

2.10.4 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.

2.11 Operation and Future Maintenance of the Proposed Development

2.11.1 The Proposed Development would be unmanned, with operations largely being controlled remotely from SSEN Transmission's control centre in Perth.

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

2.11.3 In general, OHLs and UGCs require very little maintenance. Regular inspections are undertaken to identify any unacceptable deterioration of components or damage by inclement weather, storms or lightning.

2.11.4 During the operation of the Proposed Development, it may be necessary to manage vegetation around all elements of the Proposed Development, to maintain required safety clearance distances from infrastructure.

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

2.11.6 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.

2.12 Decommissioning

2.12.1 The Proposed Development would not have a fixed operational life and consent is sought in perpetuity. As such, no separate assessment of decommissioning of the Proposed Development will be presented in the EIA report given its permanence.

2.13 Biodiversity Net Gain

2.13.1 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a process which leaves nature in a better state than before development work started. SSEN Transmission has developed a BNG toolkit based upon the Natural England Biodiversity Metric[6], which aims to quantify biodiversity based upon the value of habitats for nature. It is an efficient and effective method for demonstrating whether development projects have been able to maintain or increase the biodiversity value of a development site after construction works.

2.13.2 The BNG toolkit would be applied on this project to quantify the overall potential biodiversity impacts for the Proposed Development; this includes a biodiversity baseline assessment, analysis of habitat losses due to temporary works and permanent structures during construction works, and analysis of biodiversity gains following reinstatement of habitats in areas of temporary construction work.

SSEN Transmission's Biodiversity Ambition

2.13.3 SSEN Transmission is committed to protecting and enhancing the environment by minimising the potential impacts from their construction and operational activities. As part of this approach, SSEN Transmission has made commitments within its Environmental Legacy[7], Sustainability Strategy (2018)[8], Sustainability Plan (2019)[9] and RIIO-T2 Business Plan[10], for new infrastructure projects to:

- Ensure natural environment considerations are included in decision making at each stage of a project's development;
- Utilise the mitigation hierarchy to avoid impacts by consideration of biodiversity in project design;
- Positively contribute to the UN and Scottish Government Biodiversity strategies by achieving an overall 'No Net Loss' on new infrastructure projects gaining consent in 2020 onwards and achieving a 10% Net Gain on all new projects gaining consent in 2023 onwards; and
- Work with their supply chain to gain the maximum benefit during asset replacement and upgrades.

2.13.4 The design and evolution of this project will be carried out in line with these commitments.

[6] Natural England Biodiversity Metric 2.0, [online] Available at: http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5850908674228224 [Accessed: May 2026].
[7] Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks: Delivering a positive Environmental Legacy [online] Available at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/documents/sustainability-and-environment/environmental-legacy-booklet [Accessed: May 2026].
[8] The Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Sustainability Strategy (2018) Delivering a smart, sustainable energy future [online] Available at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/media/2701/sustainability-strategy.pdf [Accessed: May 2026].
[9] SHE Transmission. Our Sustainability Plan: Turning Ambition into Action. (2019) [online] Available at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/media/3215/our-sustainability-plan-consultation-report.pdf [Accessed: May 2026].
[10] SSEN Transmission. A Network for Net Zero [online] Available at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/2030-projects/ [Accessed: May 2026].

3. EIA APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The EIA Report will be prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations. Consideration will also be given to advice contained in Scottish Government Planning Advice Note (PAN) 1/2013 (revision 1.0)[11], and Planning Circular 1/2017[12], and other good practice guidance documents where relevant.

3.1.2 The EIA will comprise a series of specialist environmental studies to assess the potential significant effects of the Proposed Development on the environment. Each topic included within the EIA Report will be presented as a separate chapter in the main body of the EIA Report, with supporting technical appendices provided where detailed information is required.

3.1.3 On receipt and consideration of this Scoping Report, THC and the ECU, following input by the Cairngorms National Park Authority and other statutory and non-statutory consultees, would issue their respective Scoping Opinions confirming the scope of the EIA Report.

3.1.4 Throughout the EIA Report, where an issue raised in the Scoping Opinions is addressed, it will be clearly referenced in the relevant chapter. A scoping matrix will also be included in the EIA Report detailing all consultation responses received during the scoping and EIA process, and identifying where these responses have been addressed. A schedule of mitigation measures will also be provided as an appendix and cross-referenced in the relevant assessment chapters.

3.2 Structure of the EIA Report

3.2.1 It is anticipated that the EIA Report would be structured as follows:

- Volume 1 – Main Report. Describing the project, the alternatives considered, the EIA process, and including an assessment undertaken for each of the environmental topics scoped into the EIA.
- Volume 2 – Figures. This volume would provide supporting figures to the assessments carried out as part of Volume 1.
- Volume 3 – Visualisations. This volume would provide visualisations of the Proposed Development from agreed viewpoint locations.
- Volume 4 – Technical Appendices. This volume would provide supporting technical appendices to the assessments carried out as part of Volume 1.
- A Non-Technical Summary would form part of the EIA Report, summarising the project and its likely significant effects.

3.2.2 A separate Planning Statement would also be provided, assessing the Proposed Development against the planning context. A Design and Access Statement would also be provided as part of the planning application.

3.3 Approach to Assessment of Significant Environmental Effects

3.3.1 The purpose of the EIA would be to focus the assessment on environmental effects which have the potential to be significant, drawing on the preliminary findings of the assessments undertaken in this Scoping Report. The description of predicted effects in the EIA Report would take account of the following characteristics:

- Temporary – where an effect occurs for a limited period of time and the change for a defined receptor can be reversed;
- Permanent – where an effect represents a long-lasting change for a defined receptor;
- Direct – where an effect is a direct result (or primary effect) of the Proposed Development;

[11] Scottish Government (2013, revised 2017) Planning Advice Note 1/2013 (revision 1.0): Environmental Impact Assessment.
[12] Scottish Government (2017) Planning Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017.

- Indirect – a knock-on effect which occurs within or between environmental components, may include effects on the environment which are not a direct result of the Proposed Development, often occurring away from the proposals or as a result of a complex biological or chemical pathway;
- Secondary – an induced effect arising from the actions or presence of a project, such as changes to the pattern of future land use or improvements to local road networks;
- Cumulative – effects arising from the interaction of the Proposed Development with other consented, submitted or reasonably foreseeable developments, which may alter the effects identified for the Proposed Development in isolation (see also **Section 3.4**);
- Beneficial – an effect beneficial to one or more environmental receptors; and
- Adverse – a detrimental, or adverse, effect on one or more environmental receptors.

3.3.2 Where more appropriate definitions to the above terms are applicable to a particular technical discipline, this would be clearly outlined within the relevant technical chapter of the EIA Report.

3.3.3 The result of the assessment would be the determination of whether the likely effect of the Proposed Development on the receptors in the study area would be significant or not significant, and, adverse or beneficial. Receptors should be defined as meaning the factors of the natural and built environment, including people and communities, that may be significantly affected by the Proposed Development. Examples include cultural heritage, landscapes, populations, animal and plant species, and the water environment.

3.3.4 Where no published standards exist for a particular topic, the assessments presented in the EIA Report would describe the professional judgements (assumptions and value systems) that were used to underpin the attribution of significance. For certain technical topics, such as ecology, widely recognised published significance criteria and associated terminology would be applied, and these would be presented in the technical chapters and associated appendices where relevant.

3.3.5 The assessment of significance would typically consider the magnitude of change (from the baseline conditions), the sensitivity of the affected environmental factors / receptors and (in terms of determining residual effects) and the extent to which mitigation and enhancement can reduce or reverse adverse effects. In addition, further considerations such as those listed below would be factored into the assessment using professional judgement:

- Likelihood of occurrence;
- Geographical extent;
- The value of the affected resource;
- The compatibility of the Proposed Development with the provisions of legislation and planning policy; and
- Reversibility and duration of the likely effect.

3.3.6 The magnitude (scale) of change for each effect would be identified and predicted as a deviation from the established baseline conditions for the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. The scale typically uses high, medium, low, and negligible criteria, as outlined in **Table 3.1** below. This would be defined within each of the technical chapters of the EIA Report.

3.3.7 The sensitivity of the receptor / receiving environment to change would be determined using professional judgement, consideration of existing designations and quantifiable data, where possible. The scale typically uses high, medium, low, and negligible criteria, as outlined in **Table 3.1** below. This would also be defined within each of the technical chapters of the EIA Report.

3.3.8 Effects would be assessed taking account of the predicted magnitude of change and the sensitivity of the receptor / receiving environment as shown in **Table 3.1** and would be defined within each of the technical chapters of the EIA Report to determine an overall significance of effect.

Table 3.1: Matrix for Determining the Significance of Effects

Magnitude of Change/ Effect	*Sensitivity of Receptor/Receiving Environment to Change/Effect*			
	High	**Medium**	**Low**	**Negligible**
High	Major	Major	Moderate	Negligible
Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
Low	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

3.3.9 Major and moderate effects are generally considered to be significant in the context of the EIA Regulations. Minor and negligible effects are not considered significant. Where different terms or levels of effect to the above are used, they would be defined within the methodology section within each of the technical chapters of the EIA Report.

3.3.10 The characteristics of an effect would vary depending on the duration of the activity causing the effect, the sensitivity of the receptor and the resultant change. It is therefore necessary to assess whether the effect is temporary or permanent; beneficial or adverse; and indirect or direct. Effects that are temporary are usually reversible and generally confined to the construction period.

3.3.11 It is considered that there would be no potential for transboundary effects associated with the Proposed Development, and therefore no further assessment of transboundary effects is proposed.

3.3.12 Given the application is for planning permission in perpetuity, the assessments carried out as part of the EIA Report will focus on the construction and operational phases only, as relevant to each specialist topic. As such, the decommissioning phase is proposed to be scoped out of the EIA Report.

3.3.13 A more detailed overview of the guidance and methodology adopted for each technical study proposed to be scoped into the EIA is provided within **Sections 5** to **13** of this Scoping Report.

3.4 Cumulative Effects

3.4.1 The appraisal of cumulative effects would be considered in relation to those topics scoped into the EIA. The individual topic-based chapters would set out the justification for developments to be included in each of the topic based cumulative effects assessment. Such developments typically include those for which an EIA is required and that consent has been granted, or future EIA development for which an application has been submitted, or it is reasonable to assume, at the date that the list of cumulative developments is frozen, that the developer will proceed with an application for consent.

3.4.2 The final list of developments to be considered in the cumulative effects assessment would be frozen three months prior to publication of the EIA Report to allow sufficient time for its compilation. The Earba Pumped Storage Hydro PSH Scheme (Consented March 2025[2]) would be included in the final list of developments under consideration, as would the proposed Speyside Distillery[13].

[13] THC References: 22/04453/SCRE; 22/03622/PAN; 23/02656/FUL; 26/00993/S42; and 23/01952/SCOP

3.5 Environmental Effects of the Wider Project

3.5.1 Given that the consented Earba PSH Scheme is functionally related to the Proposed Development, the relationship between the Proposed Development and the consented Earba PSH Scheme will be described within an Associated Works Appendix to the EIA Report.

3.5.2 The purpose of the Associated Works Appendix will be to:

- describe the nature and status of the Earba PSH Scheme;
- explain the functional relationship between the Earba PSH Scheme and the Proposed Development;
- identify any physical overlap, interaction or interdependency between the projects; and
- set out how the relationship between the projects has been considered within the EIA process.

3.5.3 The Associated Works Appendix will not duplicate the environmental assessments undertaken as part of the Earba PSH Scheme consenting process. Rather, it will provide a proportionate review of the extent to which the wider project may give rise to environmental effects beyond those identified for the Proposed Development alone.

3.5.4 For completeness, the Associated Works would also be considered within the cumulative assessment for each specialist topic where relevant. This overlap in consideration is intentional, as the Associated Works review and the cumulative assessments serve different purposes. The Associated Works review would consider whether the functional relationship between the Proposed Development and the Earba PSH Scheme could give rise to environmental effects beyond those identified for the Proposed Development in isolation. In contrast, the cumulative assessment would consider whether the effects identified for the Proposed Development would change in nature or significance when considered alongside the Earba PSH Scheme and other operational, consented, submitted or reasonably foreseeable developments.

3.6 Mitigation

3.6.1 The EIA would identify and assess potentially significant effects prior to mitigation, and, where mitigation measures are proposed, their likely effectiveness would be examined and the significance of the 'residual' effect then assessed. The Applicant would be committed to implementing all the mitigation measures identified in the EIA Report and where appropriate, the mitigation measures implemented would be monitored for effectiveness.

3.6.2 Where there are opportunities for offsetting and/or positively enhancing effects, these would be identified through the EIA process.

3.7 Scoping Methodology

3.7.1 The following sections of this Scoping Report aim to provide sufficient detail to characterise the potential interactions between the Proposed Development and the environmental receptors identified. In presenting a rationale for the proposed scope of environmental assessment, this report takes into account the sensitivity of the receiving environment, based on an understanding of the baseline conditions. The Scoping Report also takes into account the potential magnitude of impacts, considering the construction and operational activities, physical characteristics and potential emissions/residues associated with the Proposed Development.

3.7.2 Where there is sufficient evidence to support a topic being scoped out of the EIA, this is clearly set out and justified. Otherwise, where it is considered that there is the potential for likely significant effects, the Scoping Report provides details of the proposed scope of assessment, including the approach to further baseline data collection and brief details of the proposed methodology for impact assessment which would be employed for each topic.

3.7.3 Within each specialist topic, a description of the baseline environment is provided, followed by a summary of the potential effects, and the proposed scope of survey and assessment work required as a result.

3.8 Study Areas

3.8.1 The study areas to be assessed within each technical discipline may differ from each other, as they depend on unique factors, as the location of potential receptors that could be impacted. For those topics 'scoped in' to the EIA Report, a description and justification of the relevant study area is provided within this Scoping Report.

4. PLANNING POLICY

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This Section provides an overview of the planning policy context for the Proposed Development. A more detailed discussion and evaluation of relevant policies would be included within the Planning Statement that would be provided as a supporting document to both applications. An up-to-date list of relevant planning policies would be contained within the EIA Report for context and detailed further within the Planning Statement.

4.2 National Planning Policy

National Planning Framework 4 2023 (NPF4)

4.2.1 The National Planning Framework (NPF)[14] is a long-term plan for Scotland that sets out where development and infrastructure is needed. NPF4 came into force on 13 February 2023.

4.2.2 Section 13 of the 2019 Planning Act amends Section 24 of the 1997 Planning Act regarding the meaning of the statutory Development Plan, such that for the purposes of the 1997 Act, the Development Plan for an area is taken to consist of the provisions of:

- The National Planning Framework; and
- Any Local Development Plan (LDP).

4.2.3 NPF4 therefore now forms part of the statutory Development Plan and should be afforded substantial weight. A key provision of the 2019 Planning Act is that in the event of any incompatibility between the provisions of NPF4 and a provision of an LDP then whichever of them is the later in date would prevail. That would include where a LDP is silent on an issue that is now provided for in NPF4.

4.2.4 Part 1 of NPF4 sets out the Spatial Strategy for Scotland to 2045 based on six spatial principles which are to influence all plans and decisions. The introductory text to the Spatial Strategy starts by stating (page 3):

"*The world is facing unprecedented challenges. The global climate emergency means that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the future impacts of climate change."*

4.2.5 Page 6 of NPF4 addresses the delivery of sustainable places. Reference is made to the consequences of Scotland's changing climate, and it states, inter alia:

"Scotland's Climate Change Plan, backed by legislation, has set our approach to achieving net zero emissions by 2045, and we must make significant progress towards this by 2030…..Scotland's Energy Strategy will set a new agenda for the energy sector in anticipation of continuing innovation and investment."

4.2.6 The National Spatial Strategy in relation to 'sustainable places' is described (page 7) as follows:

"Scotland's future places will be net zero, nature-positive places that are designed to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, whilst protecting, recovering and restoring our environment.

Meeting our climate ambition will require a rapid transformation across all sectors of our economy and society. This means ensuring the right development happens in the right place.

Every decision on our future development must contribute to making Scotland a more sustainable place. We will encourage low and zero carbon design and energy efficiency, development that is accessible by sustainable travel, and expansion of renewable energy generation."

[14] Scottish Government (2023) *National Planning Framework 4*, [online] Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/, [Accessed: May 2026].

4.2.7 Six National Developments support the delivery of sustainable places, one being 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure', of which the Proposed Development accords. A summary description of this National Development is provided at page 7 of NPF4 as follows:

"Supports electricity generation and associated grid infrastructure throughout Scotland, providing employment and opportunities for community benefit, helping to reduce emissions and improve security of supply".

4.2.8 NPF4 would be the key policy consideration for the determination of the Proposed Development as part of the statutory Development Plan.

4.3 Local Planning Policy

4.3.1 The Scottish Development Plan system is composed of Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) and Local Development Plans (LDPs). While the SDPs offer policy guidance regarding land use and new development for the four major city regions, the LDPs furnish detailed and site-specific planning policies for an area, encompassing all local authority areas and aligning with the SDP where relevant.

4.3.2 The substation and OHL elements of the Proposed Development would be located entirely within the CNP, and the UGC element of the Proposed Development and the associated tracks would fall partly within the CNP and partly within THC area. Due to this, the Proposed Development must be considered against the relevant Local Development Plan for each area.

Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan 2021

4.3.3 The current Local Development Plan in the CNP comprises the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan (LDP)[15], which was adopted by the Cairngorms National Park Authority in March 2021. Where there are inconsistencies in policy between the Cairngorms National Park LDP and NPF4, NPF4 will prevail.

4.3.4 The Cairngorms National Park LDP provides a more local context for assessing development proposals. It sets out both the broad strategic themes in its vision statement, as well as local planning matters. It is aimed at setting out a strategy for future built development within the National Park, focusing on a 5-year period until 2025, but with consideration for development proposals within the 10-year period until 2030.

4.3.5 The Cairngorms National Park LDP contains no policies that relate specifically to the development of electricity infrastructure. However, there are several policies on the protection of cultural and environmental assets, infrastructure and development that mention or could be relevant in the consideration of this project. These include:

- Cairngorms National Park LDP – Policy 2 – Supporting Economic Growth;
- Cairngorms National Park LDP – Policy 3 – Design and Placement;
- Cairngorms National Park LDP – Policy 4 – Natural Heritage;
- Cairngorms National Park LDP – Policy 5 – Landscape;
- Cairngorms National Park LDP – Policy 7 – Renewable Energy;
- Cairngorms National Park LDP – Policy 8 – Open Space, Sport and Recreation;
- Cairngorms National Park LDP – Policy 9 – Cultural Heritage;
- Cairngorms National Park LDP – Policy 10 – Resources; and
- Cairngorms National Park LDP – Policy 11 – Developer obligations.

[15] Cairngorms National Park Authority (2021) *Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan*. [online] Available at: https://cairngorms.co.uk/planning-development/ldp-2021/ [Accessed: April 2026].

Highland-wide Local Development Plan

4.3.6 As part of the Proposed Development, namely the UCG falls outwith the Cairngorms National Park boundary, that section requires to be considered against the policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan[16] (HwLDP).

4.3.7 **Policy 69** is the lead policy in relation to the Proposed Development. It states:

"Proposals for overground, underground or sub-sea electricity infrastructure (including lines and cables, pylons, poles and vaults, transformers, switches and other plant) will be considered having regard to their level of strategic significance in transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption. Subject to balancing with this consideration, and taking into account any proposed mitigation measures, the Council will support proposals which are assessed as not having an unacceptable significant impact on the environment, including natural, built and cultural heritage features. In locations that are sensitive, mitigation may help to address concerns and should be considered as part of the preparation of proposals. This may include, where appropriate, underground or sub-sea alternatives to overground route proposals. Where new infrastructure provision will result in existing infrastructure becoming redundant, the Council will seek the removal of the redundant infrastructure as a requirement of the development".

4.3.8 Other policies of relevance in the HwLDP are considered to include:

- Policy 57 – Natural, Built, and Cultural Heritage;
- Policy 61 – Landscape;
- Policy 55 – Peat and Soils;
- Policy 58 – Protected Species;
- Policy 59 – Other Important Species;
- Policy 60 – Other Important Habitats;
- Policy 61 – Landscapes;
- Policy 63 – Water Environment;
- Policy 64 – Flood Risk; and
- Policy 78 – Long Distance Routes.

[16] The Highland Council (2012) *Highland-wide Local Development Plan*, [online] Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/199/highland-wide_local_development_plan#:~:text=The%20Highland-wide%20Local%20Development%20Plan%20(HwLDP)%20is%20our, [Accessed: May 2026].

5. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL AMENITY

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This Section provides a brief overview of the landscape character and visual amenity baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

5.2 Baseline Conditions

Landscape Designations

5.2.1 The Proposed Development would fall within, or partly within, the following designated or otherwise protected landscapes as illustrated on **Figure 5.2: Designated and Protected Landscapes.**

- The substation and OHL elements of the Proposed Development would be located entirely within the CNP, whilst the UGC element of the Proposed Development and the associated tracks would fall partly within the CNP. 42 Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) have been identified for the CNP[17].
- Around 4.3 km of the proposed UGC would fall within Wild Land Area (WLA) 14 – Rannoch-Nevis-Mamores-Alder, with the remainder situated close to its boundary. Although not a formal designation, WLAs are given protection through NPF4.
- The substation and OHL elements, along with around 45% of the UGC and some tracks would also fall within the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor Special Landscape Area (SLA), identified by THC.

5.2.2 Further designated or protected landscapes within the wider vicinity of the Proposed Development include:

- WLA 19 – Braeroy-Glenshirra-Creag Meagaidh, located approximately 5 km to the west of the proposed UGC; and
- WLA 15 – Cairngorm, located approximately 7.5 km to the south-east of the proposed substation site.

Landscape Character

5.2.3 The Proposed Development would be set within an area of forest edge and moorland mosaic which forms a transitional landscape on the southern side of Loch Laggan and Strath Mashie, between the settled, farmed and wooded valley floor and loch edge, and an extensive area of more rugged and remote moorland and mountains which lies to the south. Towards the western end of the proposed UGC, within the valley of Lochan na h-Earba[18], the character is more remote and falls within WLA 14. However, this is expected to be somewhat modified by the construction of the Earba PSH which would include construction of a new power station, raising the water level of the two linked lochs within this valley, and tree planting around surrounding valley slopes. The wider surrounding landscape is comprised of interlocked groups of high, steep, flat-topped mountains, separated by broad, sweeping straths, often defined by lower, craggy hills. Commercial forest is common across the lower slopes, and straths are typically populated by sparse rural settlement strung along winding roads, with a mix of small areas of improved farmland and woodland.

5.2.4 A breakdown of landscape character has been defined at two different levels across the area covered by the Proposed Development.

5.2.5 The Proposed Development as a whole falls within the following Landscape Character Types (LCTs) identified in the National Landscape Character Assessment[19] (see **Figure 5.3: Landscape Character**):

- LCT 87 – Small Craggy Knolls and Hills;
- LCT 86 – Smooth Rounded Hills – Badenoch & Strathspey;

[17] CNP [online] Available at: https://cairngorms.co.uk/our-work/special-landscape-qualities [Accessed July 2026]
[18] Referred to throughout this report as 'Loch Earba'
[19] NatureScot (2019) *Landscape Character* [online] Available at: http://nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-description [Accessed; May 2026].

- LCT 89 – Broad Loch and Glen; and
- LCT 126 – Upland Glen – Cairngorms.

5.2.6 Within the CNP, a more detailed breakdown of Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) has been defined. The Proposed Development would fall within and therefore directly affect the following LCAs:

- Ardverikie: Pattack Glen Strath Mashie (Straths and Glens); and
- Ardverikie Hills (Uplands).

5.2.7 Both of these LCAs fall within LCT 126 (Upland Glen – Cairngorms) from the National Landscape Character Assessment.

Visual Amenity

5.2.8 The area surrounding the Proposed Development features scattered settlement and is popular for recreation and tourism. Potential visual receptors (see **Figure 5.1**) comprise residents, travellers on roads and people undertaking recreation in the surrounding landscape including walkers, mountain bikers and tourists. Key visual receptor groups include the following:

- Residents, including those living at Feagour, in Strath Mashie and around Kinloch Laggan;
- Travellers on the A86 public road;
- Mountain bikers at the Laggan Wolftrax trail centre which lies around 1.5 km to the north of the proposed substation site;
- Recreational users of a number of paths within woodland and forestry around Strath Mashie and River Pattack including routes promoted by Forest and Land Scotland (FLS) at Laggan Wolftrax, River Pattack and Feagour and other nearby Core Paths including routes to Dun da Lamh Fort and Falls of Pattack;
- Walkers and mountain bikers using longer distance routes including Scottish Hill Tracks along River Pattack and to Dalwhinnie, other upland tracks, and ascending surrounding mountains;
- Rock climbers accessing and ascending the Ardverikie Wall rock face; and
- Tourists or others appreciating views from other promoted recreational areas.

5.2.9 A full list of routes is included within **Section 12: Recreation and Tourism**.

5.3 Study Area

5.3.1 A preliminary Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (see **Figure 5.1**) has been produced for the substation elements of the Proposed Development to help illustrate the potential range of intervisibility. The ZTV reflects a scenario of 20 m tall features placed across the full platform and is based on a bare ground scenario which does not take into account any woodland or forest which may limit visibility. It therefore illustrates a likely worst-case scenario.

5.3.2 Potential longer-term effects of the Proposed Development would be most likely to relate to the proposed substation and therefore this is proposed as the focus for the study area. Following review of the ZTV and initial site appraisal, a study area of 6 km from the proposed substation platform is considered sufficient to identify any significant landscape or visual effects.

5.3.3 The proposed towers for the re-configuration of the OHL would be close to and very similar to the existing towers of the Beauly-Denny OHL which they would replace and, whilst these proposed towers will be considered within the assessment, they are not predicted to lead to noticeably greater long term landscape or visual effects. Potential landscape and visual effects of these towers are therefore anticipated to be accommodated within the study area for the substation.

5.3.4 The effects of the UGC and track elements of the Proposed Development would be more contained and largely temporary in nature. A study area of 3 km from these elements of the Proposed Development is considered appropriate to capture all potentially significant effects.

5.3.5 The study area will continue to be reviewed as the design of the Proposed Development and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) progresses and, should any further potential for significant effects outwith this area be identified, the study area will be altered accordingly.

5.3.6 The Proposed Landscape and Visual Study Area is shown on **Figure 5.1**.

5.4 Potential Effects

5.4.1 The potential landscape and visual effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development include:

- Temporary or long-term physical effects on landscape fabric;
- Temporary or long-term effects on landscape character including key characteristics of National LCTs and CNP LCAs;
- Temporary or long-term effects on views affecting residents, recreational users, travellers and tourists;
- Temporary or long-term effects on the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the CNP and Special Qualities of Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA;
- Temporary or long-term effects on the Wild Land Qualities (WLQs) of the WLA 14 and / or other surrounding WLAs; and
- Cumulative landscape and visual effects with other consented and proposed infrastructure projects which may affect the landscape fabric, character or views within the study area.

5.5 Mitigation

5.5.1 It is noted that the study area comprises a sensitive landscape that contributes to the values of designated and protected landscapes including the CNP. Landscape and visual mitigation will therefore comprise a key element of the design process in order to try to minimise landscape and visual effects within the wider area. This is likely to include the use of earthworks and planting proposals, as well as careful consideration of design aspects of the Proposed Development.

5.5.2 Mitigation measures will also take into consideration opportunities to restore and enhance habitats and biodiversity, particularly along the proposed UGC route.

5.6 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology

5.6.1 A LVIA, carried out by Chartered Landscape Architects in accordance with best practice Guidance (the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), 2013)[20], will form part of the EIA. The assessment will consider the potential landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development during construction, upon completion and after 10 years of operation once proposed planting and restoration has had time to establish.

5.6.2 The results of the LVIA will be reported within one chapter which will consider the subjects of Landscape and Visual Amenity within separate sections. The chapter will be supported by appendices and figures, including a ZTV, as appropriate.

[20] Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (2013) *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. 3rd edition.* Published by Routledge.

Landscape Assessment

5.6.3 The landscape assessment will describe the key components, features and characteristics that make up the character of the landscape within the study area. It will consider the extent to which the loss of features and the introduction of the Proposed Development would influence the landscape character and the qualities of designated and protected landscapes.

5.6.4 The following key tasks will form part of the landscape assessment:

- Assessment of effects on key characteristics of National LCTs and CNP LCAs within the study area (as the CNP LCAs form a more detailed breakdown of character within the CNP area, where LCTs and LCAs overlap, the LCAs will be considered in preference).
- An assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on the SLQs of the CNP in accordance with best practice Guidance (NatureScot, 2025)[21].
- An assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on the Special Qualities of the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA.

5.6.5 Taking account of the context within which the proposed substation and OHL elements of the Proposed Development would be situated, within an area characterised by commercial forestry, alongside the generally temporary nature of effects relating to the UGC and tracks, it is considered that a full Wild Land Assessment of WLA 14 should not be required. However, it is proposed that a review of the WLQs will be included as part of the landscape assessment.

Visual Assessment

5.6.6 The visual assessment will be receptor-based assessment, giving consideration to views obtained by all identified visual receptors within the study area including residents, travellers on the A86, and recreational users of paths, tracks and other key resources and locations.

5.6.7 To support the visual assessment, a series of visualisations will be prepared to illustrate how the Proposed Development would be likely to appear in a range of settings. Photomontages will focus on the substation and OHL elements of the Proposed Development, and are proposed from the locations detailed in **Table 5.1**.

Table 5.1: Proposed Visualisation Locations

Ref	Location	Grid Reference (Indicative)	Purpose
VL1	Dun da Lamh Fort	NN 58189 92913	Popular vantage point in the CNP and illustrative of effects in the context of Strath Mashie.
VL2	Laggan Wolftrax (Creag a' Ghrianain)	NN 59686 91288	Popular recreational resource close to the proposed substation. A suitable representative location would be selected around the top of the red and black trails where it is considered bikers may stop and appreciate the view.
VL3	Druim an Aird	NN 57332 89604	Historic township on a prominent ridge and destination of FLS waymarked path. Illustrative of views from within the forest area at close proximity (around 0.75 km) to the proposed substation.

[21] NatureScot (2025) *Special Landscape Qualities – Guidance on Assessing Effects* [online] Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/special-landscape-qualities-guidance-assessing-effects [Accessed: May 2026].

5.6.8 Proposed Visualisation Locations are indicated on **Figure 5.4: Potential Visual Receptors**. Two sets of visualisations will be produced, to meet NatureScot[22] and THC[23] Guidance requirements.

Cumulative Assessment

5.6.9 The potential for cumulative effects with other existing and proposed energy infrastructure projects within the area will be given consideration within the assessment. The current list of sites proposed for consideration within the cumulative assessment include:

- Existing Developments (those which form part of the existing baseline):
  - Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL;
  - Pattack Hydroelectric Scheme;
- Consented Developments:
  - Earba Pumped Storage Scheme.
  - Speyside Distillery[24].
- Application Developments (those for which a valid planning application has been submitted):
  - None known of at the current time.

Other Information

5.6.10 The evolution of the project design and mitigation, together with the design principles adopted, would be documented within a Design and Access Statement. This would form a separate part of the EIA Report.

5.7 Issues to be Scoped Out

5.7.1 As detailed in Section 5.6, it is considered that a full Wild Land Assessment (WLA) of WLA 14 should not be required and it is proposed to scope this out of the assessment. However, as the Proposed Development falls partly within this area, it is proposed to include a review of the WLQs within the landscape assessment. Given their greater distance from the Proposed Development, significant effects are considered very unlikely for WLA 15 and WLA 19 and therefore it is not proposed to include consideration of these areas within the LVIA.

[22] NatureScot (2017) *Visual Representation of Wind Farms* [online] Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/visual-representation-wind-farms-guidance [Accessed: May 2026].
[23] The Highland Council (2016) *Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments* [online] Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/65/visualisation-standards-for-wind-energy-developments [Accessed: May 2026].
[24] THC References: 22/04453/SCRE; 22/03622/PAN; 23/02656/FUL; 26/00993/S42; and 23/01952/SCOP

6. ECOLOGY

6.1.1 This Section provides a brief overview of the terrestrial ecological baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development, and the proposed scope and assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

6.2 Baseline Conditions

6.2.1 The Proposed Development is partly located within the CNP (as shown on **Figure 6.1: Natural Heritage Designations**) The Proposed Development is not situated within any designated sites for ecology**.** Nine designated sites for nature conservation lie within 5 km of the Proposed Development. These are Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve (NNR), Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation (SAC); Ben Alder and Aonach Beag SAC and SSSI; the River Spey SAC and SSSI, Ben Alder SPA; and Monadhliath SAC and SSSI, as described in **Table 6.1** with their respective distances listed. No Ramsar wetland sites or Local Nature Reserves (LNR) are found within 5 km of the Proposed Development.

6.2.2 A total of nine parcels of woodland on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)[25] are located within the site boundary, as detailed In **Table 6.1** below. The Proposed Development is not located within an area of woodland included in the Caledonian Pinewood Inventory (CPI)[25] or the associated Regeneration Zone or Buffer Zone. The Proposed Development is located partly within Open Land Habitat and Native Pinewood in the southwest of the site, identified in the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS).

Table 6.1: Natural Heritage Designations

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
Designated Sites			
SSSI	Kinlochlaggan Boulder Beds	2.3 km north	The Kinlochlaggan Boulder Beds SSSI is situated within 5 km of the southern extent of the proposed UGC; however, based on the geological nature of the qualifying features and proximity to the UGC, no pathways for impacts are present.
NNR SAC SPA SSSI	Creag Meagaidh	2.7 km north-west	Creag Meagaidh NNR, SAC, SPA and SSSI are designated for a range of notable and protected features. The sites support a breeding bird assemblage that includes protected species such as Dotterel (*Charadrius Morinellus*). They also encompass a variety of important upland habitats, including rocky slopes, upland vegetation assemblages, upland birch woodland, acidic scree, alpine and subalpine heaths, blanket bog, and dystrophic lakes.
SAC SSSI	River Spey	3.2 km north	The River Spey SAC / SSSI is a river corridor, with both sites designated for the internationally important species assemblage this river system supports, comprising Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera),* otter (*Lutra lutra*), and sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*).

[25] Scotland's Environment Map. [online] Available at: https://environment.gov.scot/maps/scotlands-environment-map/ [Accessed: May 2026].

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
			NatureScot has also approved a licence application from the CNP Authority to release up to six beaver (*Castor fiber*) families at agreed sites in the upper River Spey catchment. The UGC element of the Proposed Development and construction accesses would require crossing the River Mashie. The proposed substation area does not directly intersect over any watercourses and is located approximately 400 m southwest of the River Mashie. The River Mashie is a tributary of the River Spey and forms part of the River Spey catchment area. As such, there is hydrological connectivity between the Proposed Development and the River Spey SAC / SSSI.
SAC SSSI	Ben Alder and Aonach Beag	4.8 km south-east	Ben Alder and Aonach Beag SSSI is designated for its breeding bird assemblage, and bryophyte and lichen assemblage, with the SAC of the same coverage designated for a diverse upland habitat assemblage, hosting nationally-scarce habitat types and component species.
SPA	Ben Alder	4.9 km south-east	Ben Alder SPA is designated as it supports the population of Dotterel – a breeding and protected species. It supports a nationally important population of breeding dotterel.
SAC SSSI	Monadhliath	4.8 km north-west	Monoadhliath SSSI is designated for a range of notable features. It supports a breeding bird assemblage that includes protected species such as Dotterel and holds a record of nationally scarce black mountain month (*Glacies coracina*). It also comprises an assemblage of upland habitats, including acidic grasslands and alpine that support several rare vascular plants such as alpine foxtail (*Alopecurus borealis*). There is also extensive high-altitude blanket bog present (further designated under the SAC).
Ancient Woodlands			
AWI	Wood ID: 16357 Wood ID: 16793 Wood ID: 16800 Wood ID: 16801 Wood ID: 16802 Wood ID: 16804 Wood ID: 16805 Wood ID: 16812 Wood ID: 16827	Within the site boundary	All parcels of woodlands except for Wood ID 16800 are located within the ancient semi-natural origins (ASNO) woodlands database. These parcels of woodland are considered to comprise areas of semi-natural established ancient woodland. Wood ID 16800 is located within the Other Roy woodland database, and as a result, is considered to only contain isolated ancient woodland features.

Habitats

6.2.3 Initial walkover surveys undertaken in February 2024 confirmed the following UK Habitat Classification[26] (UKHab) habitats to be present within the area of the Proposed Development (see **Figures 6.2a-d and 6.3):**

- Upland birch woods (Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL));
- Native Pinewoods (SBL);
- Other Scot's pine woodland;
- Other coniferous woodland;
- Wet heathland (H4010) (Annex I);
- Dry heaths - upland (H4030) (Annex I);
- Acid grassland;
- Oligotrophic and dystrophic lakes;
- Other rivers and streams (SBL);
- Blanket bog (H7130) (Annex I);
- Degraded blanket bog (SBL[27]); and
- Artificial Unvegetated Unsealed Surfaces.

Upland birch woods (w1e)

6.2.4 Stands of ancient upland birchwoods are present on the north-west-facing slopes of Creag a' Mhaigh and Creag a' Chuir, extending as a linear woodland corridor at a higher altitude above the adjoining moorland, with smaller riparian woodland fragments in mosaic with wet heath and purple moor grass mire surrounding the unnamed watercourse that outflows from Loch Coire Chuir through to Loch Earba.

Native Pinewoods (w2a)

6.2.5 Native pinewoods, dominated by semi-natural Scot's pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) woodlands, are present only within the southern sections of the proposed UGC, and absent throughout the rest of the Proposed Development. Although these woodlands are considered to be nationally important and located within the NWSS, none of them fall within the CPI.

Other Scot's pine woodland (w2b)

6.2.6 Small parcels of Scot's pine plantation are present within the substation and OHL works area and are also located within isolated patches throughout the length of the proposed UGC. These areas are dominated by Scots pine forestry plantations, utilised primarily by forestry operations, and/or planted as a form of compensation for previous development works on the estate or within the wider area. Very few to none other canopy forming species are present, and the uniform structure of these woodlands is considered to provide a lower ecological value compared to semi-natural areas of pinewood in the wider area.

Other coniferous woodland (w2c)

6.2.7 Coniferous plantation woodlands with dominant Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) and only occasional scattered young birch (*Betula sp.*) are present to the south-west and north-east. Sitka spruce plantation also comprises the predominant habitat present within the proposed substation area.

[26] UKHab Ltd (2023) UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0. [online] Available from: https://www.ukhab.org [Accessed: May 2026].

[27] Blanket bogs are Annex 1 priority habitats, however some of the blanket bog condition on this site is does not fit the criteria for Annex 1, however would still be considered within the SBL blanket bog category.

6.2.8 The central area of the proposed UGC is dominated by non-native coniferous plantation woodland stretching from west to east. The coniferous plantation woodland comprises dominant Sitka spruce, with scattered larch and Scot's pine at the margins, and due to the high density of the closed woodland canopy and subsequent limitation of the light regime, there is a notable absence of ground flora at the centre of these woodland blocks, with scattered dwarf shrubs, mosses, and grasses at the margins.

Wet heathland (h1b6)

6.2.9 The wet heathland is defined by a >25% coverage of dwarf shrubs, specifically cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*), common heather (*Calluna vulgaris*),bog myrtle (*Myrica gale*), and less frequent bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum agg*), with an extensive coverage of mosses, including Sphagnum mosses found on wet ground, such as *S. capillifolium, S. palustre, and S. papillosum*, as well as more generalist mosses, such as *Hylocomium splendens, Hypnum jutlandicum*, and *Racomitrium lanuginosum*. In addition to frequent bog asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), grasses and sedges, including purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), deer grass (*Trichophorum germanicum*), and common cotton grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), are frequent throughout, with sparse coverage of hare's-tail cotton grass (*Eriphorum vaginatum*).

Dry heaths - upland (H4030) (h1b5)

6.2.10 A small parcel of high-quality Annex I European dry heath (H4030) on the slopes of Creag a' Chuir is directly intersected by the proposed UGC, although there is potential to avoid through micro-siting.

Acid grassland (g1b)

6.2.11 Patches of acid grassland can be found along the banks of Allt Mor and comprise abundant common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), mat grass (*Nardus stricta*), wavy hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*), and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), with constant flowering species including heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile)* and tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), as well as abundant generalist mosses.

Oligotrophic and dystrophic lakes (r1c)

6.2.12 A small area of Loch Earba is present within the Proposed Development.

Other rivers and streams (r2b)

6.2.13 The UGC element of the Proposed Development and construction accesses would require to cross the River Mashie, whilst the reconfiguration of the Beauly-Denny OHL intersects a small unnamed tributary of the River Mashie to the north of the site. The proposed substation area does not directly intersect over any watercourses and is located approximately 400 m southwest of the River Mashie The River Mashie is a tributary of the River Spey and forms part of the River Spey catchment area.

Blanket bog (f1a5)

6.2.14 Blanket bog is situated on peat >50 cm deep, typically on shallower gradients, and is characterised by abundant coverage of hare's-tail cotton grass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), a species restricted to peatland, as well as a larger extent of Sphagnum moss carpets, with scattered dwarf shrubs throughout. This habitat also features bog pools, situated on exposed peat and typically comprised of inundated, abundant *Sphagnum cuspidatum* and cotton grass spp.

6.2.15 Annex I Blanket bog was also identified within the site boundary, extending over the shallower sloped ground surrounding Moy Burn, spreading out towards the central expanse between the two lochans of Loch Earba. The blanket bog within this area displayed varying degrees of degradation, with the parcel extending northward from Moy Burn, adjoining the access track, being classified as a degraded form of blanket bog, with the associated vegetation displaying a transitional composition toward wet heath.

6.2.16 Blanket bogs are classified as Annex 1 Priority Habitats and are therefore considered to be of International importance. Blanket bog is further classified as an irreplaceable habitat.

Degraded blanket bog (f1a6)

6.2.17 The degraded peat bog habitat is characterised by an impoverished sward of dominant purple moor grass, with scattered bog myrtle and sparse hare's-tail cotton grass, where previous management and / or overgrazing has reduced the coverage of typical bog vegetation as described above. These degraded habitats adjoin expanses of upland acid grassland (UKHab code: g1b), situated on the flat ground between the two waterbodies that comprise Loch Earba, with this managed grazing habitat comprising abundant common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), mat grass (*Nardus stricta*), wavy hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*), and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), with constant flowering species including heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), as well as abundant generalist mosses.

Artificial, Unvegetated, Unsealed Surfaces (u1c)

6.2.18 Artificial features and habitats comprising of access tracks, are scattered throughout the Proposed Development.

Peatland habitats

6.2.19 The Proposed Development is also located within areas considered to be Class 1[28] and Class 2[29] priority peatland habitat as indicated on the Carbon and Peatland Map[30]. Class 5 areas are also present on site and comprise carbon-rich soil and deep peat. All areas of blanket bog, and degraded blanket bog, within the site, contained botanical indicators of deep peat, such as hare's tail cottongrass and Sphagnum mosses.

Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs)

6.2.20 The predominant GWDTEs within the site boundary comprise extensive areas of wet heathland, with this habitat type dominating the south-western portion of the Proposed Development where it exists in mosaic with purple moor grass-dominated mire habitat as a secondary component, across the north-west-facing slope of Creag Pitridh. As the Proposed Development extends north-eastward along Loch Earba, the purple moor grass-dominated mire replaces wet heath as the dominated ground cover, with wet heath localised to smaller pockets of sloped linear depressions on the north-west-facing slopes of Creag a' Mhaigh. Wet heath becomes again more abundant to the northeast of Loch Laggan, often comprising the predominant habitat in between parcels of forestry plantation and other woodlands. Although wet heath has the potential to be groundwater dependent, it is likely that the majority of the wet heath within the site is fully or at least partially surface-water fed, with only a smaller portion of the wet heath being a GWDTE. In addition to these more expansive habitats, localised linear areas of base-rich flush habitats were identified across the sloped ground of Creag Pitridh comprising several botanical indicators of base enrichment and associated groundwater emergence. Due to the presence of these botanical indicators of base enrichment (atypical within the commonly acidic substrate of the site), it is considered likely that a number of the upland flushes found within the site comprise GWDTE.

6.2.21 In addition to these moorland habitats, stands of ancient upland birchwood's are present on the north-west-facing slopes of Creag a' Mhaigh and Creag a' Chuir, extending as a linear woodland corridor at a higher altitude above the adjoining moorland, with smaller riparian woodland fragments in mosaic with wet heath and purple moor grass mire surrounding the unnamed watercourse that outflows from Loch Coire Chuir through to Loch Earba. Some birch-dominated woodland communities are potential GWDTE although most of the birchwoods within the site are considered to be likely completely or at least partially surface-water fed.

[28] Class 1 - Nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat. Areas likely to be of high conservation value.

[29] Class 2 - Nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat. Areas of potentially high conservation value and restoration potential.

[30] SNH (2016) Carbon and Peatland Map. [online] Available at: https://map.environment.gov.scot/soil_maps/ [Accessed: May 2026].

6.2.22 Based on the recurring sloped topography (providing a pathway for surface water flow) dominating areas of the Proposed Development where parcels of birchwood and wet heath are found, as well as the close association of these parcels with watercourses, it is likely that these wetland habitats, are not entirely maintained by groundwater, with a strong influence from surface water flow.

Species

6.2.23 Records of red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) between 2012 and 2014 were the only protected species records returned from the desk study.

6.2.24 The presence of moorland and watercourses with associated riparian woodland provide some localised commuting, foraging, and sheltering opportunities for otter (*Lutra lutra*), with good hydrological connectivity through Loch Earba to Allt Labhrach where field evidence of this species was identified. However, as identified within the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) Obstacles to Fish Passage dataset[31], one such impassable obstacle is present at the northern extent of Loch Earba, where this waterbody meets the Allt Labhrach, in the form of a large weir; therefore, limiting the availability of fish prey for otter upstream of this feature. Better opportunities for otter can also be found within larger watercourses such as the River Mashie and the River Pattack, both of which are intersected by the proposed UGC.

6.2.25 The presence of moorland and watercourses within the Proposed Development indicates the possibility of water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) being present and field signs including latrines, feeding stations and burrows were observed along at least one watercourse, within a small tributary of the River Pattack. However, the abundance of rocky sediments and banks over long stretches of most watercourses, provides limiting opportunities for burrow creation, thus overall limited opportunities for water voles within the majority of the watercourses. Water voles are also unlikely to be present within the larger watercourses such as the River Pattack and River Mashie, due to the fast-flowing waters, creating unsuitable conditions for water voles.

6.2.26 The Proposed Development also displays a limited extent of broadleaf woodlands (other than some isolated parcels of birchwood), with extensive areas of wet soil conditions, which limits sett creation opportunities for badger (*Meles meles*) on site. However, observations of badger activity were noted during early wildlife monitoring stages, primarily centred around the forestry plantations in northern parts of the site, nearer the proposed substation area, and within some of the parcels of birchwood.

6.2.27 The upland birchwoods and native pinewoods that characterise the higher slopes of Creag a' Mhaigh and Creag a' Chuir provide suitable habitat for pine marten (*Martes martes*), red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), bats (*Chiroptera*) and Scottish wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) based on the mosaic nature of these woodlands within the wider upland habitat assemblage, particularly due to the abundance of rock cavities throughout the woodland and dry heathland which can function as a suitable denning or roosting location, particularly for wildcats and pine marten. The woodlands that characterise the site boundary are also well-connected to expansive woodlands to the north that comprise a mosaic of mature semi-natural and plantation, with extensive ancient components, providing a high degree of mobility for these species across the landscape. For bats specifically, component trees within the ancient upland birchwood may provide some decay features suitable for roosting, with abundant foraging and commuting opportunities throughout the wider habitat mosaic.

6.2.28 In addition to the above, the site is located within an area of the Cairngorms specifically targeted for the reintroduction of the Scottish wildcat[32], with known releases by Saving Wildcats[33] having been undertaken in the area, and yearly monitoring of the wildcat population being carried out. This data has been shared with SSEN, and regular contact is being maintained with Saving Wildcats.

[31] SEPA, Obstacle to Fish Passage. [online] Available at: https://marine.gov.scot/?q=maps/1746 [Accessed: August 2026].
[32] Cairngorms Wildcat Reintroduction. Available at: https://cairngorms.co.uk/our-work/saving-wildcats
[33] Saving Wildcats. Available at: https://www.savingwildcats.org.uk/

6.2.29 The non-wooded upland assemblage, comprising wet and dry heaths, blanket bog, and purple moor-grass mire habitats that could support mountain hare (*Lepus timidus*), as well as reptiles, primarily including common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), with localised habitat for adder (*Vipera berus*) and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) where these upland habitats exist in mosaic with semi-natural woodlands, such as the upland birchwoods and native pinewoods that characterise a large portion of the site. These habitats are, however, scarcer within the proposed substation location, where forestry woodland cover is, instead more predominant, offering less suitability for the above taxonomic groups and species.

6.2.30 The wet ground conditions within the site boundary provide limited opportunities for hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), and it is not believed that hedgehogs regularly utilise most of the habitats on site.

6.2.31 The presence of watercourses near patches of woodland can provide opportunities for a range of amphibians such as palmate newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*), common frog (*Rana temporaria*) common toad (*Bufo bufo*) and a number of invertebrates species, particularly odonates. Deeper bog pools may also provide some suitability for the above amphibian species.

6.3 Study Area

6.3.1 Initially a desk study would be undertaken to supplement and confirm existing baseline data around the Proposed Development, such as the location of designated sites or other natural features of potential ecological importance. The desk study area is anticipated to be defined as a 5 km buffer from the site boundary of the Proposed Development.

6.3.2 A habitat survey would be undertaken to identify habitats and vegetation communities within the survey area. The survey area would be defined as 250 m from all new infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development.

6.4 Potential Effects

6.4.1 The potential ecology and nature conservation effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development includes:

- Based on the sensitive nature of the designated species assemblage within the River Spey, particularly regarding water quality; through the hydrological connection, it is possible that the works and associated construction could affect the conservation objectives of the designated features (e.g. freshwater pearl mussel, Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey and otter) directly (e.g. pollution, sedimentation) or indirectly (e.g. prey reduction) through accidental pollution, disturbance or deterioration of the River Spey during construction activities;
- Temporary or permanent, direct (e.g. from land-take) and / or indirect (e.g. through changes caused by impacts to supporting systems such as groundwater or overland flow) losses or alteration / disturbance of habitats of nature conservation value, such as Annex 1 habitats or those habitats that are on the SBL;
- Temporary or permanent direct effects on protected species (e.g. bats, otter, water vole, pine marten, wildcat, mountain hare, amphibians (excluding Great Crested Newt), reptiles and invertebrates, such as mortality to individuals as a result of the Proposed Development, loss of key habitat, displacement from key habitat, barrier effects preventing movement to / from key habitats, and general disturbance;
- Temporary or permanent indirect effects on protected species through loss / changes of / to food resources, population fragmentation, or degradation of key habitat (e.g. as a result of pollution);
- Introduction or spread of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) from increased numbers of vehicles movements during construction;
- Cumulative effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development in combination with other relevant projects (see also **Section 3.4**);

- Accidental pollution, disturbance or deterioration of River Spey SAC / SSSI during operational activities;
- Accidental spills from vehicles, plant and any on-site storage of fuels and chemicals leading to pollution of habitats and potential harm to a range of species and habitats;
- Increased, un-natural lighting leading to disturbance and displacement of foraging, roosting or nesting species; and
- Introduction or spread of INNS from increased numbers of vehicles during operation.

6.5 Mitigation

6.5.1 The optioneering stage for the Proposed Development has enabled consideration of likely significant effects on habitats and species likely to be present, and for such effects to be minimised where practicable through this process. This would continue through the EIA process, whereby further detailed survey data would help inform the micrositing of infrastructure and construction access, within the pre-established route, to further minimise effects on habitats and species where practicable.

6.5.2 In addition, the Applicant has established best practice construction techniques and procedures that have been agreed with statutory consultees, including SEPA and NatureScot. These are set out within the Applicant's GEMPs and SPPs. The Proposed Development would be constructed in accordance with these plans.

6.5.3 Full mitigation and enhancement measures will be determined through the EIA process following all appropriate ecological survey work identified. Good practice mitigation is however recommended in this Scoping Report based on the current level of available site information.

6.5.4 Habitat loss impacts on terrestrial habitat should be mitigated by design. Good practice mitigation measures should be recommended to minimise the impacts of construction and specific operation activities on terrestrial habitats and species through avoidance, retention, and replacement.

6.5.5 Based on the coverage of GWDTEs, avoidance of wet heath is not considered to be possible, and direct losses of this habitat are expected. However, losses can be minimised through considerate site design (i.e. micro-siting) and implementing best practice construction measures, inclusive of maintaining and protecting surface water flow pathways, particularly for wet heath, base-rich flushes, and any upland birchwood downslope of the Proposed Development.

6.5.6 A Shadow Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) will be undertaken to determine whether the Proposed Development could affect any European sites within zone of influence of the site, which would include considering whether the Proposed Development will have a 'likely significant effect' on a European site, and if so, an 'appropriate assessment' (AA) will be carried out. The results of the Shadow HRA will be included as part of the EIA Report.

6.5.7 All ecological mitigation would be incorporated into a CEMP, both as a result of the outcome of the EIA Report and in order to comply with relevant legislation.

6.5.8 In-water works should be appropriately planned and include measures to prevent the release of contaminants (i.e. concrete, fuel etc.) into any rivers and watercourses. In order to prevent an accidental pollution event, compliance with SEPA Guidelines for Pollution Prevention (GPPs) and a suitable and site-specific CEMP should be implemented.

6.5.9 Based on the availability of habitat supporting protected species in the wider locale and through the implementation of considerate site design (and associated micro-siting) and best practice construction measures, impacts to protected species can likely be minimised. Based on the coverage of woodland within the Site, through appropriate site design and minimising woodland loss, impacts on arboreal species can also be minimised.

6.6 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology

6.6.1 The desk study would review readily available data sources such as NatureScot Site Link, the AWI, the Carbon and Peatland Map 2016 and National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway. Relevant Local Biodiversity Action Plans would also be reviewed.

6.6.2 Habitat surveys would be undertaken following the UKHab, with priority habitat classified to the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) scheme[34] using standard methods[35].

6.6.3 The NVC data would be used to identify areas of potential GWDTE within the survey area described above. Potential GWDTE habitats would be identified in accordance with SEPA guidance[36].

6.6.4 Walkover surveys focussing on otter, pine marten, wildcat, red squirrel, badger, water vole and potential roost features (PRFs) for bats would be undertaken in accordance with best practice methodologies and NatureScot guidance[37]. Surveys would occur in areas of suitable habitat within the survey area described above. In addition to surveys for the aforementioned species, any incidental records or signs of any other protected species (e.g. wildcat, reptiles, or newts) where they may be present would be recorded, or any features of particular importance (i.e. potential hibernacula or potential dens).

6.6.5 Monitoring of potential otter, pine marten and/or wildcat denning features will be undertaken via camera trap monitoring in accordance with current guidelines.[38,39, 40] Additionally, camera trap monitoring of wildcat to determine population numbers, will be undertaken within suitable woodland parcels throughout the Proposed Development.

6.6.6 An initial Invertebrate Site Assessment (IISA), comprising of a walkover of the site to evaluate the suitability of the site for different taxonomic groups of invertebrates and determine the requirements for further targeted surveys will be undertaken. Further targeted surveys will then be carried out where/if required.

6.6.7 The results of these surveys would be used to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) of the Proposed Development, carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (2018)[41], and with due consideration of any other relevant legislation, policy or guidance.

6.6.8 In line with National Planning Policy 4 (Policy 3b), a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment would be undertaken by the Applicant.

6.6.9 Where appropriate, mitigation measures would be recommended within the EcIA to remedy any adverse effects and measures to enhance the local ecology would also be incorporated within the assessment. An assessment of residual effects would then be undertaken and reported within the EIA Report.

6.7 Issues to be Scoped Out

6.7.1 It is proposed that the following is scoped out of the detailed ecology assessment:

[34] Rodwell, J.S. (Ed) et al. (1991 – 2000) British Plant Communities (5 volumes). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
[35] Rodwell, J.S. (2006) NVC Users' Handbook. ISBN 978 1 86107 574 1.
[36] SEPA (2024) Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Developments on Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems
[37] NatureScot – Planning and Development: Protected Species. [online] Available at: https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/planning-and-development-advice/planning-and-development-protected-species [Accessed: May 2026].
[38] Otter Field Survey and Monitoring Guidelines. [online] Available at: https://www.nhbs.com/the-otter-field-survey-and-monitoring-handbook?srsltid=AfmBOorwDdobE_uCIiMYC_MASwlt4eS9YqYRFuDKQVrzo4Wq0buvr8QS [Accessed: May 2026].
[39] Standing Advice Planning Consultation - Pine Marten [online] Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/standing-advice-planning-consultations-pine-martens [Accessed: May 2026].
[40] NatureScot Wildcat Monitoring report. [online] Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-commissioned-report-479-use-camera-trapping-method-survey-scottish-wildcat [Accessed: May 2026].
[41] CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine (version 1.3, updated September 2024). Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

- No direct effects on the Creag Meagaidh designated sites are anticipated, as the Proposed Development lies within a separate catchment, separated by mountainous terrain and lacking hydrological connectivity. Although some habitats within the site are similar to those within the designated sites, they are isolated and do not contribute to their ecological function. Habitats within the site are also unsuitable for supporting qualifying species such as dotterel; therefore, no direct or indirect effects on the Creag Meagaidh SSSI, SPA, SAC, or NNR are predicted and thus significant effects are not anticipated.
- Similarly, no direct effects on the Monadhliath SAC and SSSI are anticipated, as the designated sites are separated by extensive mountainous terrain and lack hydrological connectivity to the areas proposed for the development.
- The Ben Alder and Aonach Beag SSSI/SAC lie across mountainous ground from the Proposed Development and have no direct ecological connectivity; therefore, no direct or indirect effects are anticipated, despite some habitats within the site being similar to those within the SAC specifically, but overall isolated from each other within the wider landscape, thus significant effects are not anticipated.
- The Kinlochlaggan Boulder Beds SSSI is considered to be of geological importance rather than ecological, and no direct pathways for impacts exist between the Proposed Development and the designated site. As a result, no significant effects are anticipated.
- Areas of other coniferous woodland, comprising non-native coniferous forestry plantation, are considered to provide a low ecological value, and are considered to be common and widespread within the wider area. As a result, the partial loss and fragmentation of these woodlands is not expected to lead to significant effects on their conservation status locally and/or nationally.
- Specific surveys and associated assessments for great crested newt (GCN) are not considered to be required for the Proposed Development. The habitat within the study area is generally unsuitable, as per current guidance[42,43]. The Proposed Development is also located within a geographical area where populations of GCN are mostly absent or very scarce and highly fragmented. In the unlikely scenario that this species is discovered in proximity to the Proposed Development then the adoption of a SPP would ensure all relevant wildlife legislation is complied with and significant effects are not anticipated.
- Although beavers have been released within upper sections of the River Spey, no evidence of beaver activity was identified within the Proposed Development or in surrounding areas. As there are no known beaver populations located in the immediate vicinity, significant effects on beavers are not anticipated.
- Due to the absence of habitats suitable for hedgehog, their presence within the Proposed Development is not expected. As a result, no significance effects on hedgehog are anticipated.

[42] Oldham, R.s., Keeble. J., Swan. M.J.S and Jeffcote, M. (2000) Evaluating the Suitability of Habitat for the Great Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus). Herpetological Hournal, Vol. 10 pp. 143 - 155

43 O'Brien, D., Hall, J., Miro, A., Wilkinson, J. (2017) Testing the validity of a commonly used habitat suitability index at the edge of a species' range: great crested newt Triturus cristatus in Scotland. Amphibia-Reptilia 38: 265 – 273.

7. ORNITHOLOGY

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This Section considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on ornithological features within the local area, based on available data and information collected from targeted bird surveys. The scope of field surveys and assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report is also set out.

7.2 Baseline Conditions

7.2.1 Information on ornithological baseline conditions has been obtained from a suite of bird surveys undertaken for the project between April and June 2024 and between May and June 2026. These surveys included:

- Moorland breeding bird surveys;
- Woodland surveys; and
- Black Grouse lek surveys.

7.2.2 Further to the above surveys, Vantage Point (VP) survey work and monitoring was undertaken along the Proposed Development between Loch Earba near the consented Earba PSH Scheme Power station and the proposed substation between October 2024 and September 2025.

7.2.3 During the bird surveys, 80 bird species were recorded in the vicinity of the Proposed Development, within moorland habitat and forestry blocks, along the proposed access tracks, and along adjacent sections of the A86 Newtonmore - Spean Bridge trunk road.

7.2.4 Bird species recorded during the bird surveys that are relevant to the Proposed Development (due to high levels of conservation concern, stricter legal protection, or proximity to the Proposed Development) are:

- Black-throated Diver (*Gavia arctica*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) are all afforded additional legal protection by appearing on Annex 1 of the Wild Birds Directive and Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, and are known to be nesting within 1 km of the Proposed Development.
- Black grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*) is a Red-listed species within the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (BoCC5) that has a small lek located within 200 m of the boundary of the Proposed Development.
- Common crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) - a Schedule 1 species on the WCA 1981, and therefore afforded additional levels of legal protection within the UK, is found throughout suitable woodland habitat along the Proposed Development and the proposed site of the substation.
- Common cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), Eurasian curlew (*Numenius arquata*), 'lesser' redpoll (*Acanthis flammea cabaret*), mistle thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) and skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) are all Red-listed species recorded along the Proposed Development in suitable habitat.
- Other relevant species recorded in the vicinity of the Proposed Development are hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) and red kite (*Milvus milvus*) which are all listed on Annex 1 and Schedule 1, although records are occasional and no nest sites have been found.
- Eurasian goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) is a Schedule 1 species that was recorded during the VP surveys within suitable habitat, and it is likely that a nest is located within 1 km of the Proposed Development.

7.2.5 The Proposed Development would be located within 10 km of five sites designated for their ornithological features, as noted in **Table 7.1** below.

Table 7.1: Ornithology Designations

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Qualifying Interest
SPA	Ben Alder	4 km south	Dotterel (*Charadrius morinellus*)
SSSI	Ben Alder & Aonach Beag	4 km south	Upland breeding bird assemblage which includes black-throated diver (*Gavia arctica*)
SPA	Creag Meagaidh	5 km north-west	Dotterel
SSSI	Creag Meagaidh	<3 km north-west	Breeding bird assemblage
SPA SSSI	Drumochter Hills	9.5 km south-east	Upland breeding bird assemblage, including dotterel and merlin (*Falco columbarisu*)

7.3 Study Area

7.3.1 The study area for ornithology will include all areas of proposed works. Appropriate buffers will be applied relative to the bird species under consideration, reflecting a species' behaviour and its sensitivity to disturbance and in accordance with NatureScot guidance[44]. For bird species of relatively low disturbance sensitivity (the majority of species) the study area will likely be defined by a 300-500 m buffer. For more sensitive species including black grouse and most breeding raptor species, the study area will be defined by a buffer of 1 km.

7.4 Potential Effects

7.4.1 The potential ornithology effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development could include:

- Habitat loss;
- Disturbance (visual and noise);
- Displacement; and
- Indirect effects e.g. disruption to habitat function, effects on prey.

7.5 Mitigation

7.5.1 The EIA would identify and assess potentially significant effects prior to mitigation. Where mitigation measures are proposed to reduce or avoid a potential effect, the significance of the 'residual' effect would then be assessed. The Applicant and / or the successful Principal Contractor would be committed to implementing all the mitigation measures identified in the EIA Report.

7.6 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology

7.6.1 The survey results, along with desk study data, have been incorporated into reports that will act as an Ornithological Technical Report for the EIA Report.

7.6.2 The surveys and Technical Report will be used to inform an ornithological chapter within the EIA Report, carried out in accordance with the CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment[45], and with due consideration of any other relevant legislation, policy or guidance. The assessment will also consider cumulative effects.

[44] Nature Scot guidance (2025) *Assessment and mitigation of impacts of powerlines and guyed meteorological masts on birds* [online] Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/guidance-assessment-and-mitigation-impacts-power-lines-and-guyed-meteorological-masts-birds [Accessed: May 2026].
[45] CIEEM (2018) *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland* [online] Available at: https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Combined-EclA-guidelines-2018-compressed.pdf [Accessed: May 2026].

7.6.3 Where appropriate, mitigation measures would be recommended within the chapter to remedy any adverse effects and measures for enhancement would also be incorporated within the assessment. An assessment of residual effects would then be undertaken and reported within the chapter.

7.7 Issues to be Scoped Out

7.7.1 Given the lack of connectivity of both ornithological features and habitats between the Proposed Development and the four designated sites within 10 km, all sites have been scoped out of the assessment. Therefore, the requirement for a HRA in relation to ornithological interests has also been scoped out.

8. CULTURAL HERITAGE

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This Section of the Scoping Report provides a brief overview of the cultural heritage baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

8.2 Baseline Conditions

8.2.1 The cultural heritage baseline summarised below has been established through a desktop study, drawing on data from Highland Historic Environment Record (HER) [46] and designation lists held by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) (Trove[47]), combined with targeted field survey carried out as part of the optioneering stage of the project.

8.2.2 The baseline described includes all heritage assets (designated or non-designated) within or immediately adjacent to the site boundary (Inner Study Area) (see **Figure 8.1: Cultural Heritage – Inner Study Area** and **Appendix 8.1, Table 1**), and designated heritage assets within up to 6 km from the Proposed Development (Outer Study Area) (see **Figure 8.2: Cultural Heritage – Outer Study Area; Appendix 8.1, Table 2**). Further discussion on the extent of the study areas proposed for assessment purposes is included in **Section 8.5**.

Designated Heritage Assets

8.2.3 There are no designated heritage assets (Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings) within the Inner Study Area (site boundary).

8.2.4 There are 2 Scheduled Monuments within the Outer Study Area:

- St Kenneth's Church and Cross Slab Scheduled Monument (SM 5703) situated approximately 0.5 km from the site boundary and approximately 5 km from the proposed substation location; and
- Dun-da-Lamh fort (SM4361) of prehistoric to Pictish period date, located on a high ridge, situated approximately 2 km from the site boundary, and approximately 3 km from the proposed substation location.

8.2.5 There are 15 Listed Buildings within 6 km of the Proposed Development (Outer Study Area) - four are Category A listed, six are Category B listed and five Category C.

8.2.6 There are no Battlefield sites, World Heritage Sites or Inventory Garden and Designed Landscapes within the Outer Study Area.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

8.2.7 The local HER holds records of 28 non-designated heritage assets within the Inner Study Area, and four immediately adjacent to the Inner Study Area within the Outer Study Area. One further archaeological feature, Allt a' Mhaigh stalkers path, shieling and cairn (EHG6269) was recorded during targeted archaeological survey completed in July 2023 to inform the optioneering stage of the project, situated approximately 100 m from the proposed UGC within the Inner Study Area.

8.2.8 There is one heritage asset considered to be of Regional significance and medium sensitivity, Druim an Aird township (HER ref: MHG4482) the remains of buildings, enclosures, a corn drying kiln and dykes are preserved within an area of felling and have been provided with an interpretation panel and access paths. Outwith the cleared area are further associated structures including a head dyke looping south and west round the ridge.

[46] Highland Historic Environment Record (2026) [online] Available at: https://her.highland.gov.uk/map [Accessed: August 2026].
[47] Historic Environment Scotland (2026) Trove [online] Available at https://www.trove.scot/ [Accessed: August 2026]

8.2.9 The remaining features are of Local significance and are either related to post-mediaeval farming and land use (e.g. dykes, cairns, enclosures) or mid-20th century forestry activity associated with the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit during the Second World War (sawmill, winch, railway). Eight of these have been recorded from historic information noted on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) maps Inverness-shire (Mainland) sheets. The majority of the remaining assets were recorded during a detailed archaeological survey of Strathmashie Community Forest[48].

8.3 Potential Effects

8.3.1 The potential cultural heritage effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development include:

- Direct (physical) impacts: occur where the physical fabric of the asset is removed or damaged, or where it is preserved or conserved, as a direct result of the proposal. Such impacts are most likely to occur during the construction phase and are most likely to be permanent.
- Indirect (physical) impacts: occur where the fabric of an asset, or buried archaeological remains, is removed or damaged, or where it is preserved or conserved, as an indirect result of the proposal even though the asset may lie some distance from the proposal. Such impacts are most likely to occur during the construction phase and are most likely to be permanent.
- Setting impacts: these are generally direct and result from the proposal causing change within the setting of a heritage asset that affects its cultural significance or the way in which it is understood, appreciated, and experienced. Such impacts are generally, but not exclusively, visual, occurring directly as a result of the appearance of the proposal in the surroundings of the asset. However, they may relate to other senses or factors, such as noise, odour or emissions, or historical relationships that do not relate entirely to intervisibility, such as historic patterns of land-use and related historic features. Such impacts may occur at any stage of a proposal's lifespan and may be permanent, reversible, or temporary.
- Cumulative impacts: can relate to the physical fabric or setting of assets. They may arise as a result of impact interactions, either of different impacts of the proposal itself, or additive impacts resulting from incremental changes caused by the proposal together with other projects already in the planning system or allocated in a Local Development Plan.

8.3.2 As presently proposed, the substation and OHL elements of the Proposed Development would be located within extant or recently felled commercial coniferous plantation, with only short sections of proposed new access track routed through areas of upland heather moorland and rough grazing. There are known, recorded sites of heritage interest both in the areas of moorland/rough grazing and in areas of commercial forestry, although many of the latter have been degraded or lost through forestry operations The majority of the recorded heritage assets are located on or near the several proposed access routes. Given the relatively discrete nature of the known sites along these routes, they can readily be avoided during ongoing design work. As a result, it is unlikely that the Proposed Development would result in significant adverse direct or indirect physical effects on known heritage assets.

8.3.3 The nearest designated heritage assets to the Proposed Development are the group of designated assets at Kinloch Laggan, the Scheduled Monument, St Kenneth's Church and Cross Slab, Laggan (SM5703), the Category A listed building, Ardverikie Gate Lodge, Gatepiers and Bridge over the River Pattack (LB6911), and the Category C listed buildings Kinloch Laggan Limekiln (LB6908 and Old St Kenneth's Church and Burial Ground (LB6907). The assets are located approximately 1 km from the proposed access roads, 2 km from the proposed UGC, and 4.5 km from the proposed substation location. However, due to the presence of intervening topography and vegetation, it is considered unlikely the Proposed Development would result in a significant impact on the setting of these assets.

[48] EHG1351 Desk Based Assessment and Walk Over Survey – Strathmashie Forest Community Heritage Project: Stage 1. Glasgow University (GUARD) March 2005 [Accessed: March 2026].

8.3.4 One designated monument, Dun-da-Lamh fort (SM4361) is prominently placed on a ridge at the confluence of two glens. There would be a degree of visibility of the proposed substation and reconfigured OHL approximately 3 km to the south-east from this asset, but not of the proposed upgraded access tracks or UGC. The impact of the Proposed Development on the settings of this Scheduled Monument would be discussed in detail in the EIA Report.

8.4 Mitigation

8.4.1 Design mitigation through the optioneering stages has sought to minimise the potential for adverse impacts on cultural heritage assets.

8.4.2 The details and scope of any construction phase mitigation that may be warranted to offset any identified adverse effects arising from the Proposed Development would be agreed through consultation with THC Historic Environment Team (HET).

8.5 Proposed Scope and Methodology of Assessment

8.5.1 Direct or indirect effects on archaeological remains, and effects on the settings of designated heritage assets, would be assessed, supported by the results of a desk-based study and by field survey of the Proposed Development site (including access requirements) to verify the findings of the desk-based study and to inform mitigation proposals.

8.5.2 The following study areas will be adopted for the cultural heritage assessment:

- Inner Study Area (see **Figure 8.1**): a corridor 100 m wide (to allow for potential micro-siting) centred on the route of the underground cable, proposed new access tracks (temporary or permanent), existing tracks or paths that would be built or used to facilitate access to the Proposed Development would form the study area for the identification of cultural heritage assets that could be directly affected.
- Outer Study Area (see **Figure 8.2**): The Outer Study Area would align with the study areas adopted for the LVIA (see **Section 5.3**), comprising a 6 km study area for the substation and OHL elements of the Proposed Development and a 3 km study area for the UGC and access track elements. This approach reflects the fact that indirect effects on cultural heritage assets are most likely to arise through changes to setting, with the potential for such effects being closely related to the visibility of the Proposed Development. The relevant Proposed Development ZTVs would be used to assist in identifying heritage assets with statutory and non-statutory designations (including Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Gardens and Designed Landscapes) that may be susceptible to indirect visual effects or effects on setting.

Desk Based Assessment

8.5.3 Further desk-based assessment will be carried out covering the Proposed Development Inner Study Area. The following information sources will be consulted:

- HES Spatial Data Warehouse: for up-to-date data on the locations and extents of Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Inventory status Garden and Designed Landscapes, and Inventory status Historic Battlefields;
- Highland Council HER: for up-to-date data on non-designated heritage assets;
- The National Record of the Historic Environment (NHRE) online database (Trove): for any information additional to that contained in the HER;
- Map Library of the National Library of Scotland: for OS maps and other historical map resources;

- Scottish Remote Sensing Portal; for LIDAR[49], Remote Sensed Data[50] Digital Terrain Model (DTM) coverage of the study areas; and
- Historic Land-Use Assessment Data for Scotland (HLAMap): for information on the historic land use character within the site boundary and the surrounding area.

Field Survey

8.5.4 A walkover survey of the Proposed Development was carried out during the routeing stage of the project in July and December 2023 to assess the baseline character, condition and sensitivity of heritage assets in the area.

8.5.5 Field survey was not carried out through areas previously investigated through detailed archaeological survey, the results of which are recorded on THC HER.

8.5.6 Site visits to designated heritage assets were also carried out during site visits in 2023 to assess the character and sensitivity of their settings and to assess the potential effect of the Proposed Development on their settings. No further site visits are considered necessary to inform the impact assessment.

8.5.7 To inform the EIA, targeted field survey will be undertaken focussing on the known archaeological sites and any archaeological sites recorded during the desk-based assessment to record their current condition and extents, and to assess their sensitivity to impacts.

8.5.8 Site visits to relevant designated heritage assets will also be carried out to understand their current setting and to inform the potential effect of the Proposed Development on their setting.

Impact Assessment Methodology

8.5.9 The proposed approach to the cultural heritage impact assessment will follow relevant legislation, policy and guidance. The effects of the Proposed Development on heritage assets will be assessed on the basis of their type (direct effects, effects on setting and cumulative effects) and nature (adverse or beneficial). The assessment will take into account the value/sensitivity of the heritage asset and its setting and the magnitude of the predicted impact, following the approach advised in the SNH/HES (2018) EIA Guidance[51]:

- Adverse effects - those that detract from or reduce cultural significance or special interest of heritage assets.
- Beneficial effects - those that preserve, enhance, or better reveal the cultural heritage or special interest of heritage assets.

8.5.10 The assessment of significance of effects will be undertaken using two key criteria: the sensitivity of the cultural heritage asset and the magnitude of the predicted impact, which measures the degree of change to the baseline condition of an asset resulting from the Proposed Development.

8.5.11 Mitigation measures designed to avoid, minimise or offset significant adverse effects would be set out and residual effects remaining following the implementation of proposed mitigation measures would be reported.

Assigning Sensitivity to Heritage Assets

8.5.12 Cultural heritage assets are assigned value/importance through the designation process. Designation ensures that sites and places are recognised and protected by law through the planning system and other regulatory processes. The level of protection and how a site or place is managed varies depending on the type of designation and the laws and policies that apply to it (HES, 2019[52]). In accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook**Error! Bookmark not defined.**, Appendix 1: Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment,

[49] EnergyLine Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) survey data (completed June 2026).
[50] Scottish Government Remote Sensing Data [online]. Available at: https://remotesensingdata.gov.scot/
[51] Nature Scot/Historic Environment Scotland 2018: Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook
[52] Historic Environment Scotland (2019): Historic Environment Policy for Scotland

Heritage Assets are 'features, buildings or places that provide physical evidence of past human activity identified as being of sufficient value to this and future generations to merit consideration in the planning system'. The sensitivity of heritage assets is considered to range from High to Negligible. Assets assessed to be of a value between High and Low are considered to be sufficient value to this and future generations to merit consideration in the planning system. Any feature assessed to be of little or no intrinsic heritage value and therefore not of sufficient value, to this and future generations to merit consideration in planning decisions, may be said to have Negligible sensitivity. Features assessed to be of Negligible sensitivity will be listed in an appendix, no further assessment of these features will be included. **Table 8.1** summarises the relative sensitivity of heritage assets (including their settings) relevant to the Proposed Development, based on the guidance set out in the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)/HES EIA Handbook[Error! Bookmark not defined.]

Table 8.1: Sensitivity of Heritage Assets

Sensitivity of Heritage Assets	Definition/Criteria
High	Assets valued at an international or national level, including: • World Heritage Sites • Scheduled Monuments • Category A Listed Buildings (Buildings of special architectural or historic interest which are outstanding examples of a particular period, style or building type) • Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes • Inventory Historic Battlefields • Non-designated assets that meet the relevant criteria for designation (including sites listed in the HER as being non-statutory register (NSR) sites deemed to be of potential national importance)
Medium	Assets valued at a regional level, including: • Archaeological sites and areas that have regional value (contributing to the aims of regional research frameworks) • Non-Inventory Designed Landscapes (NIDL) (where these are identified in Local Authority records) • Category B Listed Buildings (Buildings of special architectural or historic interest which are major examples of a particular period, style or building type) • Conservation Areas
Low	Assets valued at a local level, including: • Archaeological sites that have local heritage value • Category C listed buildings (Buildings of special architectural or historic interest which are representative examples of a period, style or building type) • Unlisted historic buildings and townscapes with local (vernacular) characteristics
Negligible	Assets of little or no intrinsic heritage value, including: • Artefact find-spots (where the artefacts are no longer in situ and where their provenance is uncertain) • Poorly preserved examples of particular types of features (e.g. quarries and gravel pits, dilapidated sheepfolds, etc)

Criteria for Assessing the Magnitude of Impact

8.5.13 The magnitude of impact (adverse or beneficial) will be assessed in the categories, high, medium, low, and negligible as described in **Table 8.2**.

Table 8.2: Magnitude of Impact

Magnitude of Impact	Criteria	
	Adverse	Beneficial
High	Changes to the fabric or setting of a heritage asset resulting in the complete or near complete loss of the asset's cultural significance, such that it may no longer be considered a heritage asset.	Preservation of a heritage asset in situ where it would otherwise be completely or almost completely lost in the do-nothing scenario.
Medium	Changes to those elements of the fabric or setting of a heritage asset that contribute to its cultural significance such that this is substantially altered.	Changes to key elements of a heritage asset's fabric or setting, resulting in its cultural significance being preserved where this would otherwise be lost, or restored.
Low	Changes to those elements of the fabric or setting of a heritage asset that contribute to its cultural significance such that this is slightly altered.	Changes that result in elements of the fabric or setting of a heritage asset that is detract from its cultural significance, being removed.
Negligible	Changes to fabric or setting of a heritage asset that leave its cultural significance unchanged.	
No impact	No changes to the fabric or setting of a heritage asset.	

Assessing the Significance of Effects

8.5.14 The sensitivity of the asset (**Table 8.1**) and the magnitude of the predicted impact (**Table 8.2**) will be used to inform an assessment of the level of the effect (direct effect or effect on setting), summarised using the formula set out in the matrix in **Table 8.3**. The matrix employs a graduated scale (from Negligible to Major effects) and where two outcomes are possible through application of the matrix, professional judgement supported by reasoned justification, will be used to determine the level of effect.

Table 8.3: Significance of Effect

Magnitude of Impact	Sensitivity of Asset		
	High	Medium	Low
High	Major	Major / Moderate	Moderate / Minor
Medium	Major / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Minor
Low	Moderate / Minor	Moderate / Minor	Minor
Negligible	Minor / Negligible	Minor / Negligible	Negligible
No Impact	None	None	None

8.5.15 Major and moderate effects are considered to be 'significant' in the context of the EIA Regulations. Minor effects are considered to be 'not significant'.

Assessment of Effects on Setting

8.5.16 The SNH/HES EIA Handbook Appendix 1, paragraph 42 advises that:

"In the context of cultural heritage impact assessment, the receptors are the heritage assets and impacts will be considered in terms of the change in their cultural significance."

8.5.17 Historic Environment Scotland's guidance document, 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting'[53]), notes that:

"Setting can be important to the way in which historic structures or places are understood, appreciated and experienced. It can often be integral to a historic asset's cultural significance."

"Setting often extends beyond the property boundary or 'curtilage' of an individual historic asset into a broader landscape context".

8.5.18 The guidance also advises that:

"If proposed development is likely to affect the setting of a key historic asset, an objective written assessment should be prepared by the applicant to inform the decision-making process. The conclusions should take into account the significance of the asset and its setting and attempt to quantify the extent of any impact. The methodology and level of information should be tailored to the circumstances of each case".

8.5.19 The guidance recommends that there are three stages in assessing the impact of a development on the setting of a historic asset or place:

- Stage 1: identify the historic assets that might be affected by the Proposed Development.
- Stage 2: define and analyse the setting by establishing how the surroundings contribute to the ways in which the historic asset or place is understood, appreciated, and experienced.
- Stage 3: evaluate the potential impact of the proposed changes on the setting, and the extent to which any negative impacts can be mitigated.

8.5.20 The SNH/HES EIA Handbook (2018)[54], Appendix 1, paragraphs 42 and 43, advises that:

"When considering setting impacts, visual change should not be equated directly with adverse impact. Rather the impact should be assessed with reference to the degree that the proposal affects those aspects of setting that contribute to the asset's cultural significance".

8.5.21 Following these recommendations, the ZTV for the substation elements of the Proposed Development will be used to identify those designated heritage assets within the Outer Study Area from which there would be theoretical visibility. Consideration will be given to designated heritage assets where there is no predicted visibility from the asset but where views of or across the asset are important factors contributing to their cultural significance. In such cases, consideration will be given to whether the Proposed Development could appear in the background to those views.

8.5.22 It is expected that visualisations will be required to support the assessment for the Proposed Development. The following asset has provisionally been identified as a potential viewpoint:

- Dun-da-Lamh fort (SM4361).

8.5.23 This requirement will be reviewed following consideration of the Proposed Development ZTV and, if required, appropriate visualisation viewpoints will be agreed in post-scoping consultation with HES. At present, no other

[53] Historic Environment Scotland 2016: Managing Change in the Historic Environment
[54] Nature Scot//Historic Environment Scotland 2018: Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook

designated heritage assets stand out as warranting representation by visualisations or detailed assessment in the EIA Report.

8.6 Issues to be Scoped Out

8.6.1 Based on the work undertaken to date and professional judgment, the following effects are proposed to be scoped out of the assessment:

- Direct (physical) effects on designated heritage assets. None have been identified within the Proposed Development Site.
- Direct (physical) effects on heritage assets outwith the defined Inner Study Area There will be no construction works outwith the Inner Study Area.
- Indirect effects on standing archaeological remains or structures and buried archaeological remains or deposits. Given the nature of the Proposed Development, it is unlikely to give rise to significant indirect effects, through hydrological changes or vibration and seismic events (e.g. plant movement, blasting).
- Temporary setting effects on heritage assets resulting from construction activities will be scoped out. These construction activities would be temporary, resulting in short-term / minor effects on heritage assets in close proximity to the Proposed Development and would have no permanent effects.

8.6.2 It is proposed that assessment of the effect of the Proposed Development on the settings of key heritage assets outwith the proposed Outer Study Area will be scoped out. None have been identified through initial analysis as having settings that are likely to be sensitive to adverse effects from the Proposed Development.

9. SOILS, GEOLOGY AND THE WATER ENVIRONMENT

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 This section provides an initial overview of the soils, geology and water environment (hydrology and hydrogeology), identifies the potential effects that may arise during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, and sets out the proposed assessment methodology.

9.2 Baseline Conditions

Designated Sites

9.2.1 Review of NatureScot SiteLink[55] website confirms that there are several designated sites located within 500 m of the site boundary (see **Figure 9.1: Hydrological Features**). These include:

- The boundary of the River Spey SAC follows the River Mashie and extends into the north-eastern corner of the site boundary. The main River Spey channel, which also forms part of the River Spey SAC and River Spey SSSI, is located approximately 3 km north (downstream) of the site boundary. The SAC is designated for Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera)*, and sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus)*, all of which are considered sensitive to changes in water quality;
- Allt Mhainisteir Geological Conservation Review (GCR), located along the banks of the Allt Mhainisteir approximately 50 m upstream (south) of the site boundary, has been designated for important outcrops of the Kinlochlaggan succession in the Geal-charn-Ossian Steep Belt; and
- Kinloch Laggan Road GCR and Kinlochlaggan Boulder Beds SSSI, located approximately 180 m north of the site boundary, designated for nationally important boulder bed outcrops found within the Dalradian Supergroup.

Geology and Hydrogeology

9.2.2 The site boundary is generally shown on mapping published by the British Geological Survey (BGS)[56] to be underlain by several low-grade metamorphic units, comprising psammites, semipelites and quartzites, with smaller areas of intrusive igneous rocks. The proposed substation is shown to be underlain by the Strathspey Granite Formation to the east and psammites of the Glen Banchor Subgroup and the Fara Psammite Formation to the west and north respectively.

9.2.3 The bedrock within the site boundary is primarily overlain by superficial deposits of glacial till, with smaller areas of peat, hummocky glacial deposits, alluvium, glaciofluvial and river terrace deposits. The proposed substation is shown to be entirely underlain by glacial till deposits.

9.2.4 The peat, glacial superficial deposits and bedrock deposits beneath the site boundary are unlikely to contain significant amounts of groundwater. The bedrock deposits have been classified by the BGS[57] as a low productivity aquifer where small amounts of groundwater may be present within the near surface weathered zone or secondary fractures. Shallow groundwater may be present within the alluvial, river terrace and glaciofluvial deposits, however, groundwater is likely to be localised and in hydraulic continuity with adjacent watercourses.

[55] NatureScot SiteLink [online] Available at: https://sitelink.nature.scot/home [Accessed: May 2026].
[56] British Geological Survey, GeoIndex (onshore), available at https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/geoindex-onshore/ [Accessed: May 2026].
[57] British Geological Survey Hydrogeological maps of Scotland, available at https://www.bgs.ac.uk/datasets/hydrogeological-maps-of-scotland/ [Accessed: May 2026].

9.2.5 The site boundary is shown by SEPA to be located within three groundwater bodies (Upper Glen Coe, Strathnairn, Speyside and Cairngorms and Upper Spey Valley) all of which have been classified as Good in the latest reporting cycle (2024)[58]. All of Scotland's groundwater bodies have been designated as Drinking Water Protected Areas (DWPAs).

Soils and Peat

9.2.6 Soil mapping[59] shows that the majority of the soils within the site boundary comprise of mineral podzols, peaty gleys and peaty podzols. A small area of the central extent of the site boundary, including approximately 350 m of the proposed underground cable route and access tracks, is shown to be underlain by peat soils. The north-eastern extent of the site boundary, including approximately 560 m of existing access track which will likely require upgrading if utilised, is underlain by alluvial soils. The proposed substation is shown to be underlain by peaty gleys and peaty podzols.

9.2.7 An extract of the priority peatland mapping published by NatureScot[60] is shown on **Figure 9.3: Peatland Classification**. Class 1 and Class 2 peatland are considered nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitats. Class 3 and Class 5 peatland areas are not considered priority habitats however soils may remain carbon rich with areas of deep peat whilst Class 4 and mineral soils are not considered to represent any peatland habitats. Review of **Figure 9.3** indicates that peatland classification is variable across the site boundary. Areas of Class 1 and Class 2 priority peatland are noted within the north-eastern and south-western extent of the site boundary, including parts of the proposed underground cable route and access tracks.

9.2.8 Areas of Class 3 and 5 peatlands are also noted within the parts of the north-eastern and south-western extent of the site boundary, whilst the centre and south-western extent of the site boundary, near Loch Earba, is noted within areas of Class 4 or mineral soils. The proposed substation is entirely located within an area of Class 5 peatland.

9.2.9 Phase 1 peat probing has been completed in 2024 across the majority of the site boundary as part of the routeing and alignment stage of the project. Additional peat probing was also undertaken in May 2026. The peat depth data is shown on **Figure 9.4: Peat Depth Plan**. Peat depths across the site boundary range from 0.1 m to 4.8 m. Deepest areas of peat are noted within the southern extent of the site boundary, east of the Allt a' Mhuilinn and west of the River Mashie. Peat depths of between 0.2 m and 0.3 m have been recorded across the proposed substation.

Hydrology and Designated Sites

9.2.10 Local hydrology is displayed on **Figure 9.1: Hydrological Features** and **Figure 9.2a-e: Watercourses and Flooding**.

9.2.11 The northern extent of the site boundary is located with the River Spey surface water catchment whilst the remainder of the site boundary is located within the River Spean surface water catchment (as shown on **Figure 9.1**)

9.2.12 The River Spey flows eastward north of the site boundary. The north-eastern extent of the site boundary, including the proposed substation is drained by the River Mashie sub catchment, which flows northwards through the eastern extent of the site boundary before discharging into the River Spey approximately 3 km north-east of the site boundary.

[58] SEPA Water Classification Hub, available at https://informatics.sepa.org.uk/WaterClassificationHub/ [Accessed: May 2026].
[59] James Hutton Institute, National soil map of Scotland https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/soil-maps/national-soil-map-of-scotland/ [Accessed May 2026].
[60] Scottish Natural Heritage available at https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/thematic-maps/carbon-and-peatland-2016-map/ [Accessed May 2026].

9.2.13 The remainder of the site boundary is drained by several tributaries of Loch Laggan including the Allt Labhrach, Allt Doire nan Sgiath, Allt a' Mhuilinn and River Pattack which flow generally northwards before discharging into Loch Laggan north-west of the site boundary.

9.2.14 The proposed underground cable and access tracks would cross the River Mashie, Allt a'Mhuilinn and River Pattack channels which are located within the eastern and central extents of the site boundary respectively. Numerous other smaller tributaries will also be crossed by the proposed underground cable and access tracks.

9.2.15 River Spey, designated as a DWPA, sits approximately 3 km downstream (north) from the site boundary and approximately 4.4 km downstream (north) of the proposed substation.

9.2.16 The River Pattack (Loch Laggan to Loch Pattack) (SEPA ID: 20347) and the River Mashie (SEPA ID: 23149) are monitored by SEPA and classified annually in accordance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Both the River Pattack and the River Mashie were classified in 2024 (the latest reporting cycle) as an overall Moderate classification. The River Mashie has been designated as a heavily modified waterbody on account of physical alterations that cannot be addressed without significant impact on water storage for hydroelectricity generation.

9.2.17 SEPA flood mapping[61] indicates that the Proposed Development is not at risk from coastal flooding. Areas at risk of fluvial flooding are noted along the banks of the larger watercourses within the site boundary (see **Figure 9.2**), however, flooding is generally confined to the immediate watercourse corridors. A wider area of flooding is noted within the northern extent of the site boundary near the River Pattack before it discharges into Loch Laggan.

9.2.18 Areas at risk of surface water flooding are also noted across the site boundary (see **Figure 9.2**). These areas of flood risk are also generally confined to immediate watercourse corridors or form shallow (<0.3 m) overland flow paths towards the watercourses. A deeper area of surface water flood risk (up to 1m deep) is noted within the proposed substation area.

Private Water Supplies and Licenced Abstractions

9.2.19 A review of THC private water supply database[62] indicates that there are 15 private water supplies within 500 m of the site boundary. These are primarily situated along the A86 in the northern extent of the study area.

9.2.20 Review of SEPA records of Controlled Activity Regulation (CAR) and Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations (EASR) authorisations confirms that there are 23 CAR/ EASR authorisations or licences located within 500 m of the site boundary. These include:

- one licenced abstraction for Pattack Hydro Scheme;
- five discharges for private sewage;
- one discharge for new sewage treatment system to land, one discharge for new sewage treatment system to water and two existing sewage treatment systems;
- three engineering activities for bridging culverts and structure removal;
- one reservoir registration;
- eight waste simple exemptions; and
- one unknown activity.

9.2.21 In addition, it is noted that water is abstracted from the River Mashie within the northern extent of the site to provide additional water volume for the Lochaber Hydroelectric Scheme.

[61] SEPA, Flood Maps [online] Available at https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/water/flooding/flood-maps/ [Accessed: May 2026].
[62] The Highland Council Open May Data [online] Private Water Supplies. Available at: https://map-highland.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Highland::private-water-supplies [Accessed: May 2026].

9.3 Mitigation

9.3.1 The Proposed Development will continue to evolve through the design process in response to constraints identified as part of the baseline studies and field studies in order to avoid and/or minimise potential effects on receptors where reasonably practicable.

9.3.2 For example, it is expected that the following potential embedded mitigation will be considered in the design of the Proposed Development, where practicable:

- except for proposed watercourse crossings, a buffer of up to 50 m will be applied to watercourses shown on 1:10,000 scale mapping for works deeper than 1 m,;
- except for proposed watercourse crossings, the SEPA riparian corridor buffer will be applied to watercourses in the proximity of works less than 1 m;
- areas with significant floodplains or large extents shown to be at risk from flooding as shown by SEPA mapping will be avoided;
- existing access tracks will be used, and any new tracks will be designed to limit the amount of required watercourse crossings;
- areas of deep peat (>1 m deep) or peat confirmed to be in near natural condition will be avoided wherever possible;
- areas of potential peat slide risk will be avoided where practicable; and
- impacts on private water supply sources and areas of GWDTEs will be avoided or limited wherever possible, in accordance with SEPA's guidance.

9.3.3 The Proposed Development would incorporate embedded mitigation and be subject to industry standard good practice measures to avoid or minimise potential effects on geology (including soils), hydrogeology, hydrology and peat.

9.4 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology

Study Area

9.4.1 An assessment of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on soils, geology and the water environment would be undertaken with reference to relevant legislation, polices and best practice guidance, principally published by SEPA, NatureScot, THC, and the UK and Scottish Governments.

9.4.2 The study area for soils, geology and the water environment will include a buffer of 500 m from the Proposed Development. This buffer reflects professional judgement and industry best practice regarding the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures and represents a reasonable Zone of Influence ("ZoI") for potential effects on the hydrological and hydrogeological environment. Beyond this distance, any effect is considered to be so diminished as to be undetectable and therefore not significant.

Desk Study

9.4.3 An initial desk study would be undertaken to determine and confirm the baseline characteristics by reviewing available information relating to soils and peat, geology, hydrology, and hydrogeology such as groundwater resources, licensed and unlicensed groundwater and surface water abstractions, public and private water supplies, surface water flows, flooding, rainfall data, water quality and soil data. This would include review of published geological maps, OS maps, aerial photographs and site-specific data such as site investigation data, geological and hydrogeological reports, digital terrain models (slope plans) and geological literature.

9.4.4 The desk study would identify sensitive features which may potentially be affected by the Proposed Development and would confirm the geological, hydrogeological and hydrological environment.

Field Surveys

9.4.5 The hydrology specialists would consult closely with the project ecologists, geology/geotechnical specialists and engineers to ensure that appropriate information is gathered to allow a comprehensive impact assessment to be completed.

9.4.6 A detailed site visit and walkover survey will be undertaken to:

- verify information collected during the desk and baseline study;
- identify drainage patterns, areas vulnerable to erosion or sediment deposition, and any pollution risks;
- visit any potential GWDTE (in consultation with the project ecologists);
- verify flow paths and any areas of flooding identified by SEPA;
- obtain private water supply information from THC and visit any public and private water supplies within the study area that might be affected by the Proposed Development to confirm details of the location of the abstraction, its type and use, as required;
- prepare a schedule of potential watercourse crossings;
- assess the site geomorphology and conduct additional peat depth probing; and
- inspect rock exposures, establish by probing an estimate overburden thickness (a probe is pushed vertically into the ground to refusal and the depth is recorded).

9.4.7 The desk study and field surveys will be used to identify potential development constraints and be used as part of the design of the Proposed Development.

9.4.8 Once the desk study is completed, and sensitive soil and peat, geological and water features are confirmed, an assessment would be undertaken to assess the potential effects on soils and peat, geology and the water environment as a result of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

Assessment of Effects

9.4.9 The purpose of this assessment will be to:

- assist in the micrositing of infrastructure associated with the Proposed Development to avoid areas of deeper peat and in the least hydrogeologically and hydrologically sensitive areas by applying buffer zones around watercourses, GWDTE and private water supplies, and other hydrological features wherever possible;
- determine what the likely effects of the Proposed Development are on the hydrological regime, including water quality, flow and drainage;
- assess potential effects on water (including groundwater) dependent habitats;
- determine suitable mitigation measures to prevent or reduce significant hydrological and hydrogeological effects; and
- develop an acceptable code for working on the site that will adopt best practice procedures, effective management and control of on-site activities to reduce or offset any detrimental effects on the geological, hydrogeological, soils, and hydrological environment.

9.4.10 It is anticipated that the assessment would be supported by the following Technical Appendices:

- Peat Management Plan (PMP);
- Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment (PLHRA);
- Peatland Condition Assessment (PCA);
- Schedule of watercourse crossings (which will comprise photographs and dimensions);
- Flood Risk Assessment (FRA);

- Private Water Supply Risk Assessment in accordance with SEPA's guidance[63], as required; and
- GWDTE Risk Assessment in accordance with SEPA's guidance[64], as required.

9.4.11 A qualitative risk assessment methodology would be used to assess the significance of the potential effects. Two factors would be considered: the sensitivity of the receiving environment and the potential magnitude should that potential impact occur.

9.4.12 This approach provides a mechanism for identifying the areas where mitigation measures are required, and for identifying mitigation measures appropriate to the risk presented by the Proposed Development. This approach also allows effort to be focused on reducing risk where the greatest benefit may result.

9.4.13 The sensitivity of the receiving environment (i.e. the baseline quality of the receiving environment as well as its ability to absorb the effect without perceptible change) and the magnitude of impacts would each be considered through a set of pre-defined criteria.

9.4.14 The sensitivity of the receiving environment together with the magnitude of the effect defines the significance of the effect, which would be categorised into levels of significance in accordance with those set out in **Chapter 3, Table 3.1** of this report.

Approach to Mitigation

9.4.15 Analysis and interpretation of data gathered during the EIA process would ensure that the different elements of the Proposed Development are carefully sited so that potential effects on the water environment are minimised where practicable through design.

9.4.16 Good practice guidance will be used to develop site-specific mitigation measures. Measures will be proposed to control and mitigate, for example, pollution risk (from anthropogenic and geogenic sources), flood risk, watercourse crossings, impacts on surface and groundwater flow paths, and management of peat and carbon rich soils.

9.4.17 Development and implementation of a comprehensive and site-specific CEMPs would also outline measures to ensure that the works minimise the risk to soils, geology, groundwater and surface water, and water users.

Peat Management Plan, Peatland Condition Assessment and Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment

9.4.18 A PCA will be completed to identify areas of peatland in near natural condition and areas of Priority Peatland which should be avoided during the design of the Proposed Development where practicable in accordance with Policy 5 (Soils) of NPF4[14].

9.4.19 A Stage 1 PMP will be prepared as a supporting Technical Appendix in line with NPF4[14] and SEPA Regulatory Position Statement: Developments on Peat (2012)[65]. The Waste Framework Directive (WFD) 2008/98/EC, transposed into National Law under The Waste Management Licensing (Scotland) Regulations 2011[66], sets out a requirement to apply a waste hierarchy. In terms of this project, this hierarchy should be considered as follows:

- reduce volumes of peat excavated; and

[63] SEPA (2024) *Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Groundwater Extractions*. Available at: https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/mfzpnjwb/guidance-on-assessing-the-impacts-of-developments-on-groundwater-abstractions.docx [Accessed: May 2026].
[64] SEPA (2024) *Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Developments on Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems*. Available at: https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/a1yh0blq/guidance-on-assessing-the-impacts-of-developments-on-groundwater-dependent-terrestrial-ecosystems.docx [Accessed: May 2026].
[65] SEPA and Scottish Renewables (2012) *Guidance on the Assessment of Peat Volumes, Reuse of Excavated Peat and the Minimisation of Waste*. Available at Guidance+on+the+assessment+of+peat+volumes%2C+reuse+of+excavated+peat%2C+and+the+minimisation+of+waste.pdf [Accessed: July 2026].
[66] Scottish Government (2011) *The Waste Management Licensing (Scotland) Regulations 2011*. Available at The Waste Management Licensing (Scotland) Regulations 2011 [Accessed: July 2026].

- reuse excavated peat in a manner to which it is suited.

9.4.20 The objective of the PMP is to demonstrate to SEPA and other relevant parties that: the extent and characteristics of peat at the site have been investigated; excavations in peat have been minimised wherever possible through design iterations and adoption of appropriate design and mitigation hierarchy; and that excavation and subsequent management of peat, including an estimation of quantities, has been considered as part of the EIA.

9.4.21 The following works will be completed:

- additional peat depth survey at 10 m grid at proposed infrastructure areas including the proposed substation and new tower locations will be completed (the probing will also provide information of the substrate below the peat), and 50 m centres with 10 m offsets along linear infrastructure (including proposed underground cable and access tracks);
- a geomorphological mapping exercise limited to review of aerial images will be undertaken to link the topographic features with the underlying geology and to visit those areas of the site that may be identified as potentially 'at risk from peat slide';
- the thickness of the peat will be established by probing and the underlying sub-strata confirmed by inspection of watercourses;
- the investigation will consider proposed infrastructure areas for signs of existing or potential peat instability;
- augering of a representative selection of peat probe locations will be undertaken and the proportion of acrotelmic and catotelmic peat recorded; and
- output from the field survey will comprise a record of investigation locations and summary of peat depths and augering results.

9.4.22 A PLHRA will be completed using the site survey data and slope analysis (using DTM data), if required by best practice guidance, highlighting areas that have the potential to be impacted by a peat slide so that appropriate mitigation measures can be identified.

Cumulative Impact

9.4.23 A review of other consented and reasonably foreseeable developments near to the Proposed Development would be undertaken and potential impacts on soils, geology and the water environment would be assessed to identify cumulative impacts.

9.4.24 The cumulative effects on geological, soil, hydrological and hydrogeological receptors will be assessed using the surface water catchments within the study area, with a maximum downstream distance of 5 km from the site boundary.

9.5 Potential Effects

9.5.1 The construction and operation of the Proposed Development has the potential to result in the following effects without appropriate controls or mitigation, and therefore will be considered within the EIA Report:

Construction

- disturbance and loss of peat deposits and carbon rich soils;
- ground instability (including peat slide if present);
- discharge of sediment laden runoff to drainage systems and watercourses;
- increased flood risk to areas downstream of the Proposed Development during construction through increased surface water runoff;
- changes in groundwater levels, or saturation of peat deposits, from dewatering excavations;

- potential adverse change to surface and groundwater flow paths and contribution to areas of peat and GWDTE;
- potential adverse impacts to licenced abstractions, private water supplies and water dependent designated sites (River Spey SAC); and
- an adverse effect on surface water or groundwater quality from pollution, fuel, oil, concrete or other hazardous substances.

Operation

- increased runoff rates and flood risk, resulting from increases in areas of impermeable hardstanding areas;
- increased flood risk from restriction of flow at permanent watercourse crossings;
- changes in natural surface water drainage patterns (which may affect water contribution to areas of peat and GWDTE);
- changes to groundwater levels and groundwater movement;
- longer term impacts on abstractions for water supplies, particularly any supplies dependent on groundwater; and
- an adverse effect on surface water or groundwater quality from pollution, fuel, oil, concrete or other hazardous substances from site traffic associated with maintenance activities.

9.6 Monitoring

9.6.1 It is expected that a programme of pre-development and construction phase water quality monitoring would be required to ensure that the water environment is safeguarded. It is anticipated that the monitoring programme would be agreed with statutory consultees post determination.

9.7 Issues to be Scoped Out

9.7.1 At this stage, it is proposed that the following can be scoped out of a detailed assessment:

- It is proposed to scope out effects on geology. While there will be effects arising from rock extraction for track construction and substation area, these are limited in area and do not extend beyond the immediate development footprint. Potential effects on carbon rich soils and peat will be assessed in full.
- Effects on Kinloch Laggan Road GCR, Kinlochlaggan Boulder Fields SSSI and Allt Mhainisteir GCR. No development is proposed within the designated sites. As such, no direct or indirect effects on the GCRs or SSSI are anticipated.
- Effects on the River Spey DWPA. The DWPA is located approximately 3 km downstream of the site boundary, and therefore, significant dilution would be expected. As a result, no significant effects are anticipated.
- A Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA). Design standards and measures which would be used to control and manage incident rainfall would be specified in the EIA Report. A site drainage design plan would be prepared as part of the detailed site design (post planning) and form part of the final CEMP. This would be submitted to SEPA and THC for approval at that stage.
- Baseline water quality monitoring completed as part of the baseline assessment to inform the EIA report. Classification data is available from SEPA for the watercourses at site and there are no known sources of potential water pollution at the site that might give rise for the need for water quality monitoring to inform the assessment.

10. FORESTRY

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 This Section of the Scoping Report provides a brief overview of the forestry baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

10.2 Baseline Conditions

10.2.1 Baseline conditions relevant to forestry and the different elements of the Proposed Development, including the substation area, UGC OC, OHL OC, access tracks and adjoining woodland areas that may be affected by woodland removal or changes to woodland stability are described below. Reference should also be made to **Figure 10.1: Forestry.**

10.2.2 Desk based studies and forestry walkover surveys have been undertaken to confirm the extent of the woodland areas affected by the Proposed Development, and to characterise the current woodland resource present within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

10.2.3 The desk study included review of the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS)[67], Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)[68], National Forest Inventory mapping[69], Forestry and Land Scotland information and aerial imagery, supplemented by field surveys undertaken in September 2025.

10.2.4 The field surveys confirmed the extent of the forest or woodland areas potentially affected by the Proposed Development, and recorded information on tree health, vigour, ground conditions and existing forest or woodland stability. Observations were also made of potential forest or woodland windfirm boundaries.

10.2.5 The baseline woodland resource varies considerably across the different elements of the Proposed Development, reflecting differences in land use, ownership, management history and woodland type. The principal woodland areas that may be affected by the Proposed Development are described below.

Coire Mashie Substation

10.2.6 The proposed substation is located within a mature commercial conifer plantation, predominantly comprising Sitka spruce and Lodgepole pine planted in 1961. The National Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) also records localised components of Scots pine within the woodland. The woodland forms part of an actively managed commercial forest with felling currently programmed for 2034. Construction of the proposed substation would require the permanent felling of the woodland within the substation footprint. In addition, management felling may be required around the perimeter of the substation to establish a windfirm forest edge and maintain the long-term stability of the adjacent retained woodland. The site is owned and managed by FLS, with management guided by an approved Land Management Plan (LMP)[70]. At the time of writing, the LMP is currently under revision.

[67] Native Woodland Survey of Scotland – Data Explorer, Scottish Forestry (2025). [online] Available at: Native Woodland Survey of Scotland - Data Explorer [Accessed: July 2026].
[68] NatureScot (2023). [online] Available at: A guide to understanding the Scottish Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) | NatureScot [Accessed: July 2026].
[69] National Forest Inventory GB, Forest Research (2024). [online] Available at: National Forest Inventory GB 2024 | Forestry Commission Open Data website [Accessed: July 2026].
[70] FLS (2024) *Laggan Woods Land Management Plan* [online] Available at: https://forestryandland.gov.scot/living-and-working/communities/land-management-plans/all-current-consultations/laggan-woods-land-management-plan [Accessed: June 2026].

Proposed UGC between Loch Earba PSH to Coire Mashie Substation

Woodland along the shore of Loch Earba

10.2.7 Travelling from south to north-east of Loch Earba the proposed UGC passes through areas of Native Woodland as identified on the NWSS. The woodland within this section of the Proposed Development is characterised primarily by open-grown mature upland birch woodland, interspersed with Scots pine. A small, localised area of non-native conifer species is also present within the wider woodland matrix. The woodland is privately owned.

Forest from Loch Earba weir to Druim na Beiste

10.2.8 Moving from west to east within the site boundary, the proposed UGC initially traverses an area of native pinewood, as identified within the NWSS. This element of the Proposed Development comprises predominantly Scots pine with a semi-natural structure and is considered a sensitive woodland type due to its ecological value and limited national extent. From this point, the proposed UGC continues parallel to the existing forest road, entering a block of semi-mature commercial conifer woodland. This stand was planted circa 1999 and extends for approximately 750 m along the route of the proposed UGC. The woodland exhibits typical characteristics of a second-rotation commercial crop, including uniform spacing, limited understorey development, and moderate crown closure. Operational access is generally favourable due to proximity to the forest road. Beyond this, the proposed UGC transitions into an area of mature commercial woodland for a further 500 m. This stand displays full canopy closure, increased stem diameter, and reduced internal visibility. The proposed UGC then crosses an area of open ground for approximately 280 m. Although this area has been designated for future woodland creation, as shown within the Scottish Forestry Map Viewer[71], no evidence of ground preparation or recent planting activity was observed during the site walkover. As such, it currently functions as non-wooded land with minimal constraints for the proposed UGC construction. Continuing eastward, the proposed UGC enters a further area of semi-mature native pinewood, again recorded within the NWSS, extending for approximately 300 m. This woodland comprises a mix of naturally regenerated Scots pine and associated native broadleaves. To the south of the proposed UGC, within the Red Line Boundary (RLB), lies an area of Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)[68] classified as 2a (Long-established woodland of plantation origin) at Coille Doir-ath. This woodland is identified as upland oakwood, a priority native woodland habitat of high ecological value. Although the proposed UGC does not directly pass through this AWI woodland, its proximity will require consideration during the EIA to ensure that potential indirect effects, including those associated with construction activities, access requirements and changes to hydrology, are appropriately assessed and avoided or mitigated where necessary.

Torr nan Damb Forest to Coire Mashie Substation

10.2.9 Moving from south to north within the site boundary, the proposed UGC passes through an extensive area of semi-mature and mature commercial conifer woodland. This woodland is currently subject to an active felling and restocking programme, with evidence of phased clear-fell operations, brash management, and early-stage replanting across several compartments. As a result, the woodland structure along this section is variable, ranging from recently felled coupes to stands approaching full maturity.

10.2.10 Within these commercial woodland blocks, areas of native pinewood are recorded within the NWSS. However, much of the NWSS-mapped native woodland coincides with areas that have recently been felled and replanted, meaning the actual extent of native woodland on the ground is likely to be more limited than indicated by the open-source dataset. These native pinewood pockets typically comprise Scots pine with associated native broadleaves and represent a more ecologically sensitive component of the wider forest matrix.

10.2.11 Within the standing crop, tree height and crown spread present an important design consideration in relation to statutory safety clearances for the proposed UGC.

[71] Scottish Forestry Map Viewer Application. [online] Available at: https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/f7af4d60802d4539b59f12f2ba995d64 [Accessed: June 2026].

10.2.12 To the north of the proposed UGC at Torr nan Damh, within the RLB, lies an area of AWI classified as 2a. This woodland is identified as upland birchwood and exhibits a varied age structure, ranging from young regenerating stands through to mature woodland. The woodland represents a valuable native habitat and contributes to the ecological connectivity of the surrounding landscape. While no direct encroachment on this woodland is anticipated, its proximity to the Proposed Development will be considered within the EIA, with the assessment focusing on the potential for indirect effects during construction and identifying any measures required to safeguard its ecological integrity.

Along north bank of the River Mashie

10.2.13 A new permanent access track is proposed extending along the north of the River Mashie to meet the existing forestry road network within the site boundary. The route passes through an extensive area of semi-mature to mature commercial conifer woodland. This woodland is currently subject to an active felling and restocking programme, with evidence of phased clear-fell operations, brash management, and early-stage replanting across several compartments. As a result, the woodland structure along this section is variable, ranging from recently felled coupes to stands approaching full maturity.

10.2.14 Within these commercial woodland blocks, areas of native pinewood are recorded within the NWSS. However, much of the NWSS-mapped native woodland coincides with areas that have recently been felled and replanted, meaning the actual extent of native woodland on the ground is likely to be more limited than indicated by the open-source dataset. These native pinewood pockets typically comprise Scots pine with associated native broadleaves and represent a more ecologically sensitive component of the wider forest matrix. In addition, areas of AWI are present within the RLB, including Category 1a (Ancient, semi-natural woodland) and 2a classified as young pinewood. These native woodland areas form important ecological features within the wider forest landscape and will be identified as sensitive receptors within the EIA, with the assessment considering the potential for both direct and indirect effects arising from the Proposed Development.

10.2.15 Within the standing crop, tree height and crown spread present an important design consideration in relation to statutory safety clearances for the proposed new permanent access track.

10.2.16 Where the track intersects with mature or semi-mature stands, felling will extend beyond the immediate footprint of the track to create a stable, windfirm edge. This is necessary to reduce the risk of windthrow in adjacent retained crops, particularly where newly exposed stand edges are created. The extent of this additional felling will be informed by site-specific factors including soil type, exposure, rooting depth, and stand condition, and will be designed in accordance with good forestry practice and relevant guidance.

10.3 Potential Effects

10.3.1 The Proposed Development would require the felling of productive and semi-natural woodlands during construction, and the creation of a managed wayleave once operational. The potential forestry effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development therefore includes:

- Temporary or Permanent woodland cover loss and fragmentation;
- Potential for wind throw risk and identification of wind firm boundaries; and
- Loss of timber volume production due to early felling.

10.4 Mitigation

10.4.1 The optioneering stages of the Proposed Development has enabled consideration of likely significant effects on forestry throughout the evolution of the project to date.

10.4.2 In line with the Scottish Government's policy on control of woodland removal[72], Compensatory Planting would be required for all areas of woodland loss associated with the Proposed Development. This would be discussed with Scottish forestry, THC and other forestry owners.

10.5 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology

10.5.1 The forestry study area comprises woodland located within and adjacent to the Proposed Development, including the substation area, UGC OC, OHL OC, access tracks and adjoining woodland areas that may be affected by woodland removal or changes to woodland stability.

10.5.2 The forestry assessment will be informed by the baseline studies described above, including a desk-based appraisal of OS mapping, aerial photography and review of web-based data provided by Scottish Forestry within the study area. This will be supplemented by consultation with landowners and review of existing forest data (provided by the landowners) on woodland type (species / age / class) and the existing woodland management regime, including woodland restructuring and Long-Term Forest Plan (LTFP) information.

10.5.3 Additional forest walkover and mapping surveys will be undertaken, to confirm the extent of the woodland areas affected by the Proposed Development and further assess the current woodland characteristics. Photographic records will be used to provide visual samples of the woodland types. Woodland volume assessments of the commercial conifer woodlands will be undertaken during the site walkovers, with the application of tree measurement techniques in-line with industry standard forest mensuration protocol.

10.5.4 The forestry assessment would focus on areas of productive and semi-natural woodland potentially affected by the Proposed Development. Consideration would be undertaken using a combination of tree height and wind throw hazard assessment as to the impact of felling, where necessary, on the woodland. Where wind throw is predicted, consideration would be made as to the requirement of felling to a desirable wind firm boundary. Within the semi-natural woodland areas, a Woodland Survey would be carried out to identify the potential impact of any felling/removal of woodland and any mitigation measures to be taken.

10.5.5 The assessment would consider the woodland removal directly associated with the Proposed Development. Any felling undertaken out with areas directly affected by the Proposed Development would remain the responsibility of the relevant landowner, and the Applicant would not have any influence or control over such. Consequently, the assessment is limited to consideration of the effects of the Proposed Development on forest composition and yield.

10.5.6 The assessment would consider the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on forestry, including cumulative effects with other relevant developments. This includes an assessment of the sensitivity of the forest areas located within close proximity to the Proposed Development and a determination of the potential level of impact upon them that would arise as a result of the Proposed Development, with particular emphasis on forest structure and management.

[72] Scottish Government (2025) Control of Woodland Removal – Policy [online] Available at: https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/control-woodland-removal-policy [Accessed: June 2026]

10.5.7 In accordance with the requirements of the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002 (as amended) and the Electricity Act 1989[73], the Applicant may require woodland removal within the areas directly affected by the Proposed Development to facilitate the safe construction, operation and maintenance of the Proposed Development. It is anticipated that the forestry assessment would be supported by the following Technical Appendices:

- Woodland Reports;
- Native Woodland Management Strategy; and
- Compensatory Planting Management Strategy.

10.6 Issues to be Scoped Out

10.6.1 There are no specific issues related to forestry that are scoped out of the assessment.

[73] The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002. [online] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2665/contents [Accessed: June 2026].

11. TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 This Section provides a brief overview of the traffic and transport baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with construction of the Proposed Development and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

11.1.2 A Transport Assessment (TA) would be provided to review the impact of transport related matters associated with the Proposed Development. This would be appended to the EIA Report and would be summarised into a Traffic and Transport chapter within the EIA Report.

11.1.3 The following policy and guidance documents would be used to inform the Traffic and Transport EIA chapter:

- Transport Assessment Guidance (Transport Scotland, 2012)[74];
- Environmental Assessment of Traffic and Movement (Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (now known as the Institute of Sustainable and Environmental Professionals), 2023)[75];
- NPF4 (Scottish Government, 2023)[76]; and
- The Highland Council Guidance on the Preparation of Transport Assessments (2014)[77].

11.2 Baseline Conditions

11.2.1 Baseline conditions relevant to the traffic and transport are described below.

11.2.2 All construction access for the Proposed Development would be taken from the A86 trunk road network with the use of existing access junctions between Kinloch Laggan and Strathmashie (see **Figure 1.1**).

11.2.3 Traffic survey data for use in the assessment would be obtained from the UK Department of Transport (DfT) traffic survey database[78] for the following links:

- A889 to the north of Dalnessie (ref 20954);
- A86 east of Balgowan (ref 10847); and
- A86 at Moy (ref 40848).

11.2.4 In addition to the above traffic flow data, traffic accident data for a five-year period for the A86 between Roybridge and Newtonmore and on the A889 between the A9 and the A86 junction would be obtained from the public website source[79].

11.3 Study Area

11.3.1 Sensitive receptors to be considered in the assessment would include communities within the traffic and transport study area and users of the road links.

11.3.2 The proposed study area would include the A86 between Roybridge and Newtonmore and on the A889 between the A9 and the A86 junction. All receptors, both communities and users would be considered in detail.

[74] Transport Scotland (2012). Transport Assessment Guidance. [online] Available at: https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/4589/planning_reform_-_dpmtag_-_development_management__dpmtag_ref__17__-_transport_assessment_guidance_final_-_june_2012.pdf [Accessed: May 2026].
[75] IEMA (2023). Environmental Assessment of Traffic and Movement. Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.
[76] Scottish Government (2023). National Planning Framework 4. [online] Available at: https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2023/02/national-planning-framework-4/documents/national-planning-framework-4-revised-draft/national-planning-framework-4-revised-draft/govscot%3Adocument/national-planning-framework-4.pdf [Accessed: May 2026].
[77] The Highland Council (2014). Guidance on the Preparation of Transport Assessment. [online] Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/6506/guidelines-for-transport-assessments [Accessed: May 2026].
[78] GOV.UK. Road Traffic in Great Britain. [online] Available at: https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/ [Accessed: May 2026].
[79] Crash Map. [online] Available at: https://www.crashmap.co.uk/ [Accessed: May 2026].

11.4 Potential Effects

11.4.1 Potential impacts that may arise during the assessment may include the following for users of the road and those resident along the delivery routes:

- Severance;
- Driver delay;
- Pedestrian delay;
- Non-Motorised User amenity;
- Fear and intimidation;
- Accidents and safety
- Road Safety; and
- Large Loads.

11.4.2 The impacts on receptors within the study area would be reviewed during the construction phase, with a peak construction period assessment undertaken. This would review the maximum impact and presents a robust assessment of the effects of construction traffic on the local and trunk road networks.

11.4.3 The effects that would be considered would be based upon percentage increases in traffic flow and reviewed against the impacts noted above.

11.5 Mitigation

11.5.1 Standard mitigation measures that are likely to be included in the assessment are:

- Production of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP);
- The design of suitable access arrangements with full consideration given to the road safety of all road users; and
- A Staff Travel Plan.

11.5.2 Site Specific measures may also be required, depending upon the results of the assessment.

11.6 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology

11.6.1 Environmental Assessment of Traffic and Movement (IEMA, 2023)[75] sets out a methodology for assessing potentially significant environmental effects. In accordance with this guidance, the scope of assessment would focus on:

- Potential impacts (of changes in traffic flows) on local roads and the users of those roads; and
- Potential impacts (of changes in traffic flows) on land uses and environmental resources fronting these roads, including the relevant occupiers and users.

11.6.2 The main transport impacts would be associated with the movement of general HGV traffic travelling to and from the site during the construction phase of the development.

11.6.3 The following rules taken from the guidance would be used as a screening process to define the scale and extent of the assessment:

- Rule 1: Include highway links where traffic flows are predicted to increase by more than 30% (or where the number of HGVs is predicted to increase by more than 30%); and
- Rule 2: Include any other specifically sensitive areas where traffic flows are predicted to increase by 10% or more.

11.6.4 Increases below these thresholds are generally considered to be insignificant given that daily variations in background traffic flow may fluctuate by this amount. Changes in traffic flow below this level predicted as a consequence of the Proposed Development would therefore be assumed to result in no discernible environmental impact and as such no further consideration would be given to the associated environment effects.

11.6.5 The estimated traffic generation of the Proposed Development would be compared with baseline traffic flows, obtained from existing traffic survey data, in order to determine the percentage increase in traffic.

11.6.6 Potentially significant environmental effects would then be assessed where the thresholds as defined above are exceeded. Suitable mitigation measures would be proposed, where appropriate.

11.6.7 The assessment would consider the impact of construction traffic in a future year. Baseline traffic flows would be subject to Low National Road Traffic Growth factors to allow for the future year baseline.

11.6.8 A cumulative assessment would take place where a proposed development has planning consent and would have a significant impact on the study network (i.e. over 30% increase in traffic flows). These traffic flows would be included into the baseline flows used within the assessment.

11.6.9 Planning proposals that do not have planning consent are not committed development and as such would not be included in the assessment.

11.6.10 Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) are likely to be associated with the Proposed Development. Appropriate transport assessments will be undertaken to confirm the suitability of proposed delivery routes for AIL movements. Any AIL deliveries would be coordinated with Police Scotland and the relevant Roads Authorities.

11.7 Issues to be Scoped Out

11.7.1 Once operational, it is envisaged that the level of traffic associated with the Proposed Development would be minimal. Whilst regular maintenance visits would be required, it is considered that the effects of operational traffic would be negligible and therefore no detailed assessment of the operational phase of the development is proposed.

12. RECREATION AND TOURISM

12.1 Introduction

12.1.1 This Section of the Scoping Report provides a brief overview of the recreation and tourism baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with the Proposed Development and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

12.2 Baseline Conditions

12.2.1 Baseline conditions relevant to recreation and tourism for the Proposed Development are described below.

12.2.2 The general area within which the Proposed Development is located comprises mountainous terrain, which attracts visitors and recreational users to its munro and mountain summits and other outdoor activities. It comprises several popular recreational routes, including mountain routes for Beinn na Lap Munro along the southern boundary of Loch Laggan and Beinn a Chlachair Munro along the southern edge of Loch Earba. There are also a number of other walking and cycling routes, many of which are noted as Core Paths by THC. Scottish Hill Tracks and longer distance hill tracks are also present within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

12.2.3 Other outdoor activities in the area include climbing, fishing, mountain biking (including at the Laggan Wolftrax Mountain biking centre) and other activities offered by the outdoor adventure company Highland Activities on Ardverikie Estate at Kinloch Laggan. The estate is also popular for its scenery and has featured in various film and tv series, including BBC series the Monarch of the Glen and The Crown.

12.2.4 Settlement within the area is generally sparse and limited to a few scattered properties within Strath Mashie (including at Aberarder Lodge, Kinloch Laggan, Gallovie, Inverpattack, Feagour and Strath Mashie); and the Spey Glen (including shooting lodges and estate properties at Glenshero Lodge, Sherramore and Garvamore).

12.2.5 Scattered throughout the site boundary but concentrated in the north-east at Kinloch Laggan are buildings owned and managed by Ardverikie Estate. These buildings include holiday cottages and the Estate House, which is used for highland sports and outdoor recreation, as well as being used as a film location.

12.3 Potential Effects

12.3.1 Potential effects on recreation and tourism assets can relate to the temporary or permanent disruption to recreational activities and sites, associated visual effects, and the consequential impact of the proposed works on tourism related businesses. Such effects may include:

- Temporary loss of access to publicly accessible land, paths or recreational assets;
- Temporary severance, diversion or disruption of recreational routes and activities;
- Changes to the accessibility of recreational receptors;
- Changes to recreational amenity resulting from construction activities, including traffic, noise and visual disturbance;
- Changes to the setting and recreational experience of tourism and recreation receptors; and
- Indirect effects on tourism-related businesses arising from changes to access, amenity or visitor experience.

12.3.2 The potential for visual effects on recreation and tourism receptors would be fully considered in the EIA Report through the LVIA, as described in **Section 5** of this Scoping Report.

12.4 Mitigation

12.4.1 An Outdoor Access Management Plan (OAMP) would be developed by the Applicant and Principal Contractor to ensure continued access for recreational users along Core Paths, and other walking / cycling routes in the area. An Outline OAMP will be included within the EIA Report.

12.5 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology

12.5.1 There is currently no recognised criteria or prescribed methodology for assessing potential effects on recreation and tourism assets for the purposes of an EIA for a scheme such as the Proposed Development. However, Appendix 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook[80] produced by NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland provides guidance on assessing impacts on outdoor access, summarising the types of outdoor access relevant to EIA, the types and likely scale of impacts and effects that may occur, and opportunities for mitigation. The assessment will draw upon this guidance and be informed by consultation responses, baseline survey work and professional judgement. The criteria for determining effects will be based on the general EIA methodology set out in Chapter 3 of the EIA Report.

12.5.2 The assessment will identify and evaluate recreation and tourism receptors that may be affected by the Proposed Development, including core paths, promoted paths, rights of way, informal access routes, recreational resources, visitor attractions and other tourism receptors. Particular consideration will be given to receptors located within and surrounding the Cairngorms National Park.

12.5.3 The assessment will consider the potential effects of the Proposed Development during both construction and operation, taking into account changes to access, connectivity, recreational amenity and user experience associated with recreation and tourism receptors.

12.5.4 Potential effects on the visual amenity and recreational experience of recreation and tourism receptors will be considered through the LVIA, as described in Section 5 of this Scoping Report. The recreation and tourism assessment will focus on access, recreational amenity and user experience, avoiding duplication with the LVIA where appropriate.

12.5.5 Cumulative effects with other consented, submitted and reasonably foreseeable developments will be considered where relevant.

12.6 Issues to be Scoped Out

12.6.1 There are no recreation and tourism issues proposed to be scoped out of the EIA Report.

[80] NatureScot (April 2018) Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook Version 5. [online] Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20220901050635/https:/www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2018-05/Publication%202018%20-%20Environmental%20Impact%20Assessment%20Handbook%20V5.pdf [Accessed: July 2026].

13. NOISE AND VIBRATION

13.1 Introduction

13.1.1 This Section provides a brief overview of the noise and vibration baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

13.2 Baseline Conditions

13.2.1 The Proposed Development is located in a predominantly rural area which hosts existing electricity transmission infrastructure. The main settlements within the vicinity of the Proposed Development are the small hamlets of Strathmashie (approximately 1.5 km to the north-west) and Kinloch Laggan (approximately 3 - 3.5 km to the west).

13.2.2 No baseline noise measurements have been conducted to date regarding the Proposed Development. Baseline measurements will be required at the noise sensitive receptors (NSRs) closest to the site.

13.2.3 Ordnance Survey “AddressBase” will be used to identify potential NSRs in addition to satellite imagery. Receptors chosen would be considered representative of the closest residential properties surrounding the Proposed Development.

13.3 Study Area and Sensitive Receptors

13.3.1 NSRs are defined in the context of this assessment as residential properties located within 2 km of a nominal centre of the Proposed Development, which is a typical distance beyond which the noise impact of the Proposed Development is deemed unlikely due to the typical sound levels of sources. Where properties lie in groups rather than alone, one location may be chosen as being representative of several properties that would produce duplicate readings.

13.3.2 The noise assessment conducted for these properties would be based on the predicted highest (worst case) noise impact from the Proposed Development, and therefore if the chosen properties meet noise criteria, then any property at greater distances would also pass the criteria.

13.4 Potential Effects

13.4.1 There is the potential for noise from static, quasi-static and mobile plant items during the construction of the substation, OHL and UGC, including:

- Installation of and stringing of OHL towers, including the use of cranes;
- Excavating and establishing foundations for OHL towers;
- Establishment of access tracks and sites, including tree felling;
- Dismantling of pre-existing and erection of new OHLs;
- Traffic noise on the proposed access tracks.
- Potential for crushing of rock;
- Potential for peat removal and/or rotary piling during the construction of foundations;
- Excavators for all elements of the Proposed Development;
- Delivery of materials using heavy goods vehicles (HGVS)/dumper trucks; and
- Pumping of concrete.

13.4.2 There is potential for operational noise from the proposed transformers and reactors.

13.5 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology

13.5.1 The methodology of assessment is identified below, for consideration by the Local Authority Environmental Health Officer (EHO). If acceptable to the EHO, then, following adoption of the scoping opinion, the methodology would be implemented and reported on within the EIA report.

Construction Noise

13.5.2 The assessment of construction noise would comply with the following standards and guidance.

13.5.3 Guidance on the prediction and assessment of noise and vibration from construction sites is provided in British Standard (BS) 5228 2009 +A1:2014 Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites (BS 5228) [81].

13.5.4 Part 1: Noise of BS 5228-1 provides recommended limits for noise from construction sites. These limits depend on the period of working hours and the background noise level at the NSR.

13.5.5 The Construction Noise Impact Assessment (CNIA) would be carried out according to the ABC method specified in Table E.1 of BS 5228-1, in which NSRs are classified in categories A, B or C according to their measured or estimated background noise level.

13.5.6 In line with best practice (BS 5228-1), a Construction Noise Management Plan (CNMP) would be developed by the Principal Contractor prior to starting construction works. The details of the CNMP would be agreed with THC and is expected to be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.

13.5.7 A full noise impact assessment would be performed for construction noise associated with the Proposed Development. British Standard (BS) 5228 2009 +A1:2014 provides recommended limits for noise from construction sites to meet a maximum 65 dB limit at receptors.

13.5.8 Construction noise due to traffic also has a potential to cause impact. Vehicle movements of the construction equipment on the access tracks and main roads would be estimated to find the noise impact on nearby noise sensitive receptors. These would be summed with the activity of onsite noise.

Operational Noise

13.5.9 The assessment of operational noise will comply with the Planning Advice Note (PAN) 1/2011: 'Planning and Noise' [82], published in March 2011. This document provides advice on the role of the planning system in helping to prevent and limit adverse effects of noise. Information and advice on noise assessment methods are provided in the accompanying Technical Advice Note (TAN): Assessment of Noise. Included within the PAN document and the accompanying TAN are details of the legislation, technical standards, and codes of practice for specific noise issues.

13.5.10 Neither PAN 1/2011 nor the associated TAN provides specific guidance on the assessment of noise from fixed plant, but the TAN includes an example assessment scenario for 'New noisy development (incl. commercial and recreation) affecting a noise sensitive building', which is based on BS 4142:1997: Method for rating industrial noise affecting mixed residential and industrial areas. This British Standard has been replaced with BS 4142:2014: Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound[83].

13.5.11 British Standard 4142 describes methods for rating and assessing the following:

- Sound from industrial and manufacturing processes.
- Sound from fixed installations which comprise mechanical and electrical plant and equipment.

[81] British Standard 5228: Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Site), BSI, 2009, Amended 2014
[82] Planning Advice Note: Planning and noise (PAN 1/2011, The Scottish Government, 2011
[83] British Standard 4142: Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound (BS 4142), BSI, 2014, Amended 2019

- Sound from the loading and unloading of goods and materials at industrial and/or commercial premises.
- Sound from mobile plant and vehicles that is an intrinsic part of the overall sound emanating from premises or processes, such as that from forklift trucks, or that from train movements on or around an industrial and/or commercial site.

13.5.12 The methods use outdoor sound levels to assess the likely effects of sound on people who might be inside or outside a dwelling or premises used for residential purposes upon which sound is incident.

13.5.13 In accordance with the assessment methodology, the specific sound level (LAeq,T) of the noise source being assessed is corrected, by the application corrections for acoustic features, such as tonal qualities and / or distinct impulses, to give a "rating level" (LAr,Tr). The British Standard effectively compares and rates the difference between the rating level and the typical background sound level (LA90,T) in the absence of the noise source being assessed.

13.5.14 The British Standard advises that the time interval ('T') of the background sound measurement should be sufficient to obtain a representative or typical value of the background sound level at the time(s) when the noise source in question is likely to operate or is proposed to operate in the future.

13.5.15 Comparing the rating level with the background sound level, BS 4142 states:

- "*Typically, the greater this difference, the greater the magnitude of impact.*
- *A difference of around +10 dB or more is likely to be an indication of a significant adverse impact, depending on the context.*
- *A difference of around +5 dB is likely to be an indication of an adverse impact, depending on the context.*
- *The lower the rating level is relative to the measured background sound level, the less likely it is that the specific sound source will have an adverse impact or a significant adverse impact. Where the rating level does not exceed the background sound level, this is an indication of the specific sound source having a low impact, depending on the context*."

13.6 Mitigation

13.6.1 As part of the impact assessment process, mitigation measures would, where possible, be identified within the EIA Report that would reduce the level of predicted noise impacts, particularly where this is necessary to avoid significant adverse effects. Two types of measure can be distinguished, as follows:

- Mitigation measures, aimed at managing potential impacts of moderate or major significance to reduce residual effects to an acceptable level; and
- Measures including adoption of good practice aimed at managing potential effects of minor significance.

13.6.2 Any potential impacts likely to have a significant effect on the NSRs with respect to construction noise of the Proposed Development, would be evaluated within the EIA Report. Mitigation measures would be proposed, where required, for likely significant effects.

Construction Noise

13.6.3 Even if the construction noise limit is met, it is best practice that construction noise should continue to be controlled with a CNMP, in accordance with the guidance and procedures outlined in BS 5228-1. Procedures which would be elaborated upon further in the EIA Report would include:

- Minimising the noise as much as is reasonably practicable at source;
- Attenuation of noise propagation;

- Carrying out identified high noise level activities at a time when they are least likely to cause a nuisance to residents; and
- Providing advance notice of unavoidable periods of high noise levels to residents.

13.6.4 In order to maintain low impact on the noise environment, consideration would be given to attenuation of construction noise at source by means of the following:

- Giving due consideration to the effect of noise, in selection of construction methods;
- Avoidance of vehicles waiting or queuing, particularly on public highways or in residential areas with their engines running;
- Scheduling of deliveries to arrive during daytime hours only. Care should be taken to minimise noise while unloading delivery vehicles;
- Ensure plant and equipment are regularly and properly maintained. All plant should be situated to sufficiently minimise noise impact at nearby properties;
- Fit and maintain silencers to plant, machinery, and vehicles where appropriate and necessary;
- Operate plant and equipment in modes of operation that minimise noise, and power down plant when not in use;
- Use electrically powered plant rather than diesel or petrol driven, where this is practicable; and
- Working typically would not take place outside of hours defined in the construction schedule.

13.6.5 Consideration would be given to the attenuation of construction noise in the sound wave transmission path by means of the following:

- Locate plant and equipment liable to create noise as far from noise sensitive receptors as is reasonably practicable or use natural land topography to reduce line of sight noise transmission;
- Noise screens, hoardings and barriers should be erected where appropriate and necessary to shield high-noise level activities; and
- Provide lined acoustic enclosures for equipment such as static generators and when applicable portable generators, compressors and pumps.

13.6.6 In setting working hours, consideration is given to the fact that the level of noise through the normal working day is more easily tolerated than during the evening and night-time.

13.6.7 Best practice measures would be put in place during construction to mitigate impacts from noise and vibration. The measures would be included in the CEMP, to be agreed with THC and secured by an appropriately worded planning condition and would include best practice measures as outline in BS 5228 such as:

- Avoiding undertaking noisy activities at the weekends or outside of daytime defined hours as necessary. In setting working hours, consideration is given to the fact that the level of noise through the normal working day is more easily tolerated than during the evening and night-time. Selecting quiet working methods, including the use of inherently quiet plant/equipment, reasonable working hours for noisy operations, and economy and speed of operations. Site work continuing throughout at 24-hour period should be programmed, where appropriate, including scheduling of haulage vehicles during the working day.
- Avoidance of vehicles waiting or queuing, particularly on public highways or in residential areas with their engines running.
- Ensuring plant and equipment are regularly and properly maintained. All plant should be situated to sufficiently minimise noise impact at nearby properties.

Operational Noise

13.6.8 A detailed noise impact assessment is required to determine the extent of mitigation required for the substation site to reduce the impact on NSRs. The substation has the potential to contribute to a noise impact at various NSRs. Equipment that is likely to cause noise impact includes but is not limited to the transformers, associated cooling, and reactors. Potential impacts will be limited the externally housed equipment of the proposed substation site, where mitigation may be required to curtail the noise impact on the critical receptors. This mitigation is likely to be achieved in the design phase, where low noise cooling systems are specified, otherwise this may come in the form of barriers within the site, bunds around the site, or building at lower platform heights, effectively “sinking” the site to reduce direct noise propagation to NSRs. Further modelling can be conducted to investigate the impact of bunding around the site, platform height reduction and acoustic barriers.

13.7 Issues to be Scoped Out

13.7.1 Underground cables are not expected to generate any audible noise when operational, therefore it is proposed that operational noise from the UGC is scoped out of the EIA assessment.

13.7.2 Changes are proposed to the position of two OHL towers near the substation site to allow for downleads to the proposed substation, however no changes to the main alignment are expected. Therefore, no change in operational noise from the OHL is expected at nearby NSRs, and it is proposed that operational noise from the OHL is scoped out of the EIA assessment.

13.7.3 There are no known vibrational noise issues associated with neither the construction nor operation of all elements of the Proposed Development at nearby NSRs. Therefore, it is proposed that construction vibration and operational vibration are scoped out of the EIA assessment.

14. TOPICS TO BE SCOPED OUT OF THE EIA REPORT

14.1 Introduction

14.1.1 This Section provides the rationale for excluding the detailed assessment of certain topics from the EIA Report. The following topics are proposed to be scoped out of the EIA Report because significant environmental effects are not anticipated, or because relevant effects are more appropriately considered within other technical chapters:

- Socio-economics;
- Land Use and Agriculture;
- Air Quality and Climate Change;
- Major Accidents and / or Disasters;
- Population and Human Health; and
- Material Assets.

14.2 Socio-economics

14.2.1 This Section provides a brief overview of the socio-economic conditions, and considers the potential effects associated with the Proposed Development.

Baseline Conditions

14.2.2 The socio-economic baseline will be presented in detail within the standalone Socio-Economic Report, which will support the planning application. The baseline will provide a comprehensive overview of the demographic profile, employment and economic activity, industrial structure, and the role of the tourism sector in the local and regional economy.

14.2.3 The regional economy will be The Highland Council, and the local area will be the defined Badenoch and Strathspey Ward of The Highland Council. This is within the Cairngorms National Park and the Laggan Community Council area. Settlements within the area is generally sparse and limited to a few scattered properties within Strath Mashie (including at Aberarder Lodge, Kinloch Laggan, Gallovie, Inverpattack, Feagour and Strath Mashie); and the Spey Glen (including shooting lodges and estate properties at Glenshero Lodge, Sherramore and Garvamore). The local baseline area assessment will draw on available socio-economic information for the Badenoch and Strathspey Ward, Cairngorm National Park and Laggan Community Council.

Potential Effects

14.2.4 The potential effects associated with the Proposed Development on socio-economic factors is typically related to the construction phase, including the creation of jobs and the indirect effects to the local supply chain and businesses.

14.2.5 The Proposed Development's delivery, alongside the consented Earba PSH Scheme, is anticipated to have a significant beneficial cumulative effect on the Highland and Scottish economies by generating substantial employment and Gross Value Added (GVA). These effects are considered to be consistent with the Scottish Government's objective to maximise net economic impact from renewable energy infrastructure, as set out in NPF4 Policy 11(c).

14.2.6 Potential effects may also arise during the operational phase, though these are anticipated to be considerably smaller in scale, limited to occasional maintenance and inspection visits.

14.2.7 In line with recent policy guidance and best practice, a detailed socio-economic is being undertaken to quantify and evaluate these effects.

Rationale for Scoping Out

14.2.8 The Proposed Development would result in the creation of temporary jobs during the construction period. It is envisaged that a small proportion of the workforce would be from the local area. In addition, there would be potential beneficial effects through temporary increased spending on the supply of goods and services during construction.

14.2.9 It is proposed that a standalone socio-economic assessment is undertaken, and this will be submitted as part of the planning application. This will not form part of the EIA Report. This approach reflects a proportionate level of assessment, as the potential for significant adverse effects on socio-economic receptors is considered low. Scoping socio-economics out of the EIA is consistent with recent Scottish Government advice[84] on streamlining EIA for onshore wind farms and the approach recommended for other comparable transmission infrastructure projects in Scotland. A standalone report allows for a more detailed and bespoke analysis than would be possible within the EIA framework. It will be structured to demonstrate how the Proposed Development aligns with The Highland Council's Community Wealth Building Strategy and maximises opportunities for local employment and supply chains.

14.2.10 The rationale for scoping socio-economics out of the EIA is based on the following:

- Proportionality: A standalone report provides a more appropriate and detailed platform for assessing a project's socio-economic benefits and contributions to community wealth building than a standard EIA chapter. This is in line with the principle of proportionate EIA, as encouraged by recent guidance.
- Alignment with Best Practice: The approach mirrors that taken for other major energy infrastructure projects in the Highlands, where this structure was accepted by the Scottish Government and The Highland Council. It allows for a comprehensive analysis without being constrained by the specific structure of an EIA Report chapter.
- Comprehensive Assessment: It is considered likely that the primary effects of the Proposed Development will be beneficial (e.g., job creation and GVA injection), not adverse. The standalone report is better suited to quantify these benefits and demonstrate the project's contribution to policy objectives.
- The EIA Report will not be devoid of socio-economic considerations. For instance, effects on recreation and tourism assets (via access restrictions) and residential amenity (via visual and noise effects) are assessed in the respective EIA chapters. The standalone report will draw on these assessments to present a holistic picture of the project's socio-economic context.

14.3 Land Use and Agriculture

Baseline Conditions

14.3.1 The Proposed Development is located in an area of open moorland, which is predominantly surrounded by areas of commercial conifer plantation, to the north of Dalwhinnie. Other key land use activities which occur within the vicinity of the Proposed Development include:

- Forestry and Woodland, including the forestry plantations within Strath Mashie at Achduchil, Black Wood and Feagour, owned and managed by FLS;
- Estate land, managed for sporting activities, including red deer stalking;
- Rough grazing;
- Water bodies and water courses including Loch Earba, River Spey and its tributary the River Mashie, and the River Pattack and Loch Laggan.
- Settlement, albeit sparce, within Strath Mashie;

[84] Scottish Renewables (2025). *Maximising Net Socio-Economic Benefit of Renewable Energy guidance and Reporting Framework* [online]. Available at: 2025.03.18_Maximising_Net_Socio-Economic_Benefit_Reporting_Framework_original.pdf [Accessed: August 2026].

- Infrastructure including the main transport routes, the A86 and a network of smaller roads, and existing overhead line infrastructure; and
- Renewable Energy and other energy related infrastructure, including the operational Pattack Hydro Scheme.

14.3.2 Under the Macaulay Institute's Land Capability for Agriculture Assessment[85] the land on which the Proposed Development would be sited is considered to be Class 6.2 and 6.3: land capable of use as rough grazing with low quality plants. There is no shortage of similar land in the area.

Potential Effects

14.3.3 Land use impacts associated with the Proposed Development are anticipated to be localised within the site boundary itself. The construction work may result in some wider temporary loss of land or access restriction; however, it is considered that this can be adequately managed through agreements with the relevant landowners. The permanent loss of land to the proposed substation and OC of the UGC and associated access would be limited in the local context.

Rationale for Scoping Out

14.3.4 It is proposed to scope out an assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on land use and agriculture given that the Proposed Development would have limited impact on land use and agricultural activities. An assessment of Forestry will be scoped into the EIA Report, as discussed in **Section 10** of this report.

14.3.5 Dialogue would be maintained by the Applicant and the Principal Contractor with landowners, local tenants and property owners throughout the construction period to ensure any potential disruption as a result of the proposed works is kept to a minimum. It is thus proposed that a separate assessment on land use and agriculture is scoped out of the EIA Report in its entirety.

14.4 Air Quality and Climate Change

Baseline Conditions

14.4.1 Local air quality is a combination of background air quality, representative of general levels of pollution away from busy roads and industrial activity and added emissions from local emission sources such as road traffic. Due to the generally rural nature of the Proposed Development and sensitive receptors, contribution from road traffic and polluting industrial sources are minimal. Current and predicted annual average and short-term Nitrogen Dioxide (NO^2) and PM10[86] within the region are compliant with all applicable objectives

14.4.2 The Proposed Development is not located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). There is currently one AQMA within the THC area, which is the Inverness City Centre AQMA declared for NO^2.[87]

Potential Effects

14.4.3 Potentially significant effects which can arise on air quality from developments of this type relate primarily to generation and dispersal of dust and airborne particulate matter from plant, construction traffic and construction activities.

[85] The Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, 2010, *Land Capability for Agriculture in Scotland*. Craigiebuckler, Aberdeen, June 2010. [online] Available at: https://www.hutton.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/soils/lca_map_hutton.pdf [Accessed: May 2026].
[86] Airborne Particulate Matter with a diameter of 10 micrometres or less.
[87] Air Quality in Scotland (2021): *Air Quality Management Areas: Highland Council*. [online] Available at: http://www.scottishairquality.scot/laqm/aqma?id=374 [Accessed: May 2026]

14.4.4 In the context of the EIA process, climate change is considered both in relation to the contribution of the Proposed Development to increasing or decreasing gaseous emissions with global warming potential (GWP), and in relation to climate change adaptation.

14.4.5 Emissions associated with the Proposed Development would be limited to temporary and short-term emissions of exhaust gases from vehicles and construction plant, and the potential for the release of carbon dioxide as a result of dewatering and exposing peat and peat soils during construction. Neither source is considered likely to be significant in terms of GWP. The proposed GIS equipment will utilise alternative insulating gas technology and is not anticipated to give rise to material operational greenhouse gas emissions.

14.4.6 A further consideration in relation to climate change is the potential loss of habitats that are important for carbon capture and storage to accommodate the construction of the Proposed Development, such as woodland and peatland habitats. As noted in **Section 9** of this Scoping Report, peat probing has been undertaken to confirm the depth and condition of peat on-site, and the data has informed the design to minimise disturbance. If required, the re-use of peat would be assessed so that the existing peat deposits on the Proposed Development can be safeguarded and a Peat Management Plan would also be prepared, as noted in **Section 9** of this Scoping Report. It is not considered likely that loss of habitats that are important for carbon storage would be significant.

14.4.7 With regard to climate adaptation, consideration would be given the potential implications of climate change on the switching station design (e.g. design for increased flood risk and adverse weather); however, no potential for significant impacts have been identified and it is therefore scoped out of further consideration in the EIA.

Rationale for Scoping Out

14.4.8 The Proposed Development has limited potential to impact upon air quality. There is a potential to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust and construction traffic exhaust emissions. However, the nature of construction activities means these would be localised, short-term and intermittent. Potential effects would further be minimised through the implementation of mitigation measures, in particular the project CEMP and relevant GEMPs.

14.4.9 The proposed GIS substation would utilise non-SF_6 insulating technology and therefore operational emissions associated with the insulating medium are anticipated to be negligible.

14.4.10 Given the limited potential for operational greenhouse gas emissions and the localised nature of construction-related emissions, no standalone assessment of air quality and climate change is proposed.

14.4.11 The Proposed Development would contribute to connecting the consented Earba PSH Scheme to the transmission network, which in turn would play a key role in establishing a cleaner, more renewables based, energy system and facilitate the displacement of emissions associated with fossil fuel-based electricity generation elsewhere.

14.5 Major Accidents and / or Disasters

Potential Effects

14.5.1 Potentially significant effects which can arise in relation to accidents and disasters from developments of this type include severe weather events and structural damage to infrastructure, as well as the potential for risks during the construction phase.

Rationale for Scoping Out

14.5.2 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.

14.5.3 Crisis management and continuity plans are in place across the SSEN Group. These are tested regularly and are designed for the management of, and recovery from, significant energy infrastructure failure events. Where there are material changes in infrastructure (or the management of it) additional plans are developed.

14.5.4 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).

14.5.5 Potential significant effects on the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to accidents and disasters would be scoped out in its entirety from the EIA Report.

14.6 Population and Human Health

Baseline Conditions

14.6.1 The Proposed Development is located within a remote rural area. There are no main settlements that are within the general vicinity of the Proposed Development. The main settlements within the vicinity of the Proposed Development are the scattered properties within Strath Mashie, Laggan and Kilfinnan, (including at Aberarder Lodge, Kinloch Laggan, Gallovie, Inverpattack, Feagour and Strath Mashie); and the Spey Glen (including shooting lodges and estate properties at Glenshero Lodge, Sherramore and Garvamore).

Potential Effects

14.6.2 Possible effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development in relation to population and human health could include the below, and a summary is included for each point in relation to it being scoped out of further assessment:

14.6.3 Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF):

- EMFs arise from electric charges and current flow. Transmission infrastructure complies with the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) on exposure to EMFs. SSEN believe that compliance with government policy on levels of exposure to EMFs, which in turn is based on the advice of the government's independent scientific advisers, the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) (now part of the Health Protection Agency), ensures the appropriate level of protection for the public from these fields. The NRPB keeps the results of EMF health studies under constant review to ensure that the guidelines for limiting exposure are based on the best available scientific information. It is therefore concluded that no likely significant effect on human health associated with EMFs is predicted, and it is therefore proposed to scope this out of the assessment in its entirety from the EIA.

14.6.4 Operational effects of additional electromagnetic interference to medium and long wave (AM) radio signals and TV signals:

- Potential effects from switching stations on TV and radio signals would be caused by physical obstruction of the signal. The Proposed Development would not represent a significant obstruction and it is not anticipated that any adverse effects on TV or radio reception would be experienced. Therefore, this topic would not be addressed in the EIA Report and the Applicant considers it can be scoped out of the EIA Report in its entirety.

14.6.5 Light disturbance:

- Construction activities would in general be undertaken during daytime periods as described in **Section 2.5** of this Scoping Report. During operation the switching station would not be illuminated at night for normal operation. Floodlights would be installed but would only be used in the event of a fault during the hours of darkness; or during the over-run of planned works; or when sensor-activated as security lighting for night-time access. It is therefore concluded that no likely significant effect on human health

associated with light disturbance is predicted, and it is therefore proposed to scope this out of the assessment in its entirety from the EIA Report.

Rationale for Scoping Out

14.6.6 No separate assessment of population and human health is proposed to be included in the EIA Report, albeit some topics of relevance would be included in other chapters of the EIA Report.

14.7 Material Assets

Baseline Conditions

14.7.1 The Proposed Development is not located on prime agricultural land and would be sited on land used for rough grazing.

14.7.2 As discussed in Section 2.1, the reconfiguration of approximately 1.15 km of the existing Beauly-Denny OHL would be made as part of the Proposed Development to connect the proposed substation to the existing OHL. However, the reconfiguration will not impact on the supply of electricity to the wider network given the proposals include temporary measures to ensure continued supply.

14.7.3 The Proposed Development would not cross any transport routes or gas pipelines.

Potential Effects

14.7.4 There are unlikely to be significant effects on material assets as a result of the Proposed Development.

Rationale for Scoping Out

14.7.5 Given the relatively small land take associated with the Proposed Development and the absence of any direct interaction with strategic transport, utility or pipeline infrastructure, no standalone assessment of Material Assets is proposed. Relevant effects relating to forestry, land use, transport infrastructure and existing transmission infrastructure will be considered within the relevant technical chapters of the EIA Report.

15. SUMMARY

15.1 Issues Scoped In and Scoped Out of EIA

15.1.1 **Table 12.1** below summarises the topics proposed to be scoped in and out of the EIA Report for the Proposed Development.

Table 12.1: Summary of topics scoped in and scoped out of EIA

Topic	Issues Scoped in	Issues Scoped Out
Landscape and Visual Amenity	A full LVIA including Special Landscape Qualities (SLQ) Assessment of the Cairngorms National Park, Assessment of the Ben Alder, Laggan and Glen Banchor SLA, and review of Wild Land Qualities (WLQs) of WLA 14 (Rannoch-Nevis-Mamores-Alder) are proposed as part of the EIA Report, with the exception of the issues listed as scoped out.	Full Wild Land Assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on: • (WLA) 14 – Rannoch-Nevis-Mamores-Alder; • (WLA) 19 – Braerory – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh; and • (WLA) 15 – Cairngorm.
Ecology	An ecology and nature conservation impact assessment is proposed as part of the EIA Report, with the exception of the issues listed as scoped out.	Assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on: • Designated sites (Creag Meagaidh SSSI/SPA/SAC/NNR; Monadhliath SAC and SSSI Ben Alder and Aonach Beag SAC/SSSI; ; and Kinlochlaggan Boulder Beds SSSI. • Specific surveys and associated assessments for great crested newt (GCN); • Area of non-native forestry plantation not located within the AWI database and not considered to offer suitable opportunities for protected species. • Specific surveys for beavers or hedgehogs due to no known populations and / or suitable habitats within the vicinity.
Ornithology	An ornithological impact assessment is proposed as part of the EIA Report, with the exception of the issues listed as scoped out.	Due to a lack of connectivity between the ornithological features and / or habitats with the Proposed Development, ornithologically designated sites within 10 km have all been scoped out of the assessment. Therefore, the requirement for a Habitats Regulations Assessment for these sites has also been scoped out.
Cultural Heritage	Desk-based and field-based appraisal is proposed as part of the EIA Report, with the exception of the issues listed as scoped out.	Assessment of potential direct (physical) effects on designated heritage assets within the Proposed Development Site or outwith the Inner Study Area would be scoped out. Assessment of indirect effects on standing archaeological remains or temporary setting effects on heritage assets as a result of construction is also proposed to be scoped out.

Topic	Issues Scoped in	Issues Scoped Out
Soils, Geology and the Water Environment	A soils, geology and the water environment impact assessment is proposed as part of the EIA Report, with the exception of the issues listed as scoped out.	It is not proposed to: • Assess effects on geology and geological designated sites (Kinloch Laggan Road GCR, Kinlochlaggan Boulder Fields SSSI and Allt Mhainisteir GCR); • Assess effects on River Spey DWPA; • Prepare a Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA); • Undertake water quality monitoring to inform the baseline assessment; and • Undertake hydraulic modelling to inform watercourse crossings.
Forestry	A forestry assessment, is proposed as part of the EIA Report, including Woodland Reports and a Compensatory Planting Management Strategy submitted as appendices.	There are no specific issues related to forestry that are scoped out of the assessment.
Traffic and Transport	A transport assessment is proposed as part of the EIA Report, with the exception of the issues listed as scoped out.	Assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on operational traffic.
Recreation and Tourism	Recreation and tourism assessment, including consideration of recreational routes, outdoor access, recreational amenity, user experience and tourism receptors. An Outline Outdoor Access Plan would also be included.	No separate assessment of socio-economic effects is proposed within the Recreation and Tourism chapter.
Noise and Vibration	A construction and operation noise impact assessment is proposed as part of the EIA Report, with the exception of the issues listed as scoped out.	It is proposed that operational noise from the OHL or UGC, as well as vibration is scoped out of the EIA Report.
Socio-economics	None	An assessment of potential socio-economic impacts as a result of the Proposed Development would be scoped out of the EIA Report. It is proposed that a standalone socio-economic assessment is undertaken, and this will be submitted in support of the planning application.
Land Use and Agriculture	None	An assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on Land Use and Agriculture would be scoped out of the EIA Report.
Air Quality and Climate Change	None	An assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on Air Quality and Climate Change would be scoped out of the EIA Report.
Major Accidents and / or Disasters	None	An assessment of the potential effects on the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to

Topic	Issues Scoped in	Issues Scoped Out
		accidents and disasters would be scoped out of the EIA Report.
Population and Human Health	Potential effects of the Proposed Development on water quality would be considered in the Soils, Geology and Water assessment. Potential noise effects of the Proposed Development would be considered in the Noise assessment.	A separate assessment of the Proposed Development on Population and Human Health would be scoped out of the EIA Report.
Material Assets	None	An assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Development on Material Assets would be scoped out of the EIA Report. Relevant effects on forestry, land use and existing infrastructure would be considered within the Forestry, Land Use and Agriculture, and Traffic and Transport chapters respectively.

Appendix 8.1: Cultural Heritage Assets

APPENDIX 8.1: CULTURAL HERITAGE ASSETS

Table 1: Cultural heritage assets within the Inner Study Area

Asset Ref	Asset Name	Asset Type	Period
MHG 4479	Strathmashie Bridge	Bridge	Post-medieval
MHG 32743	Strathmashie	Fank	Post-medieval
MGH 49133	Leacainn West	Boundary Dyke	Post-medieval
MGH 49134	Allt Tarsuinn	Structure	Post-medieval
MHG 49138	Leacainn	Trackway	Post-medieval
MHG 49139	River Mashie	Cairn	Post-medieval
MHG 27133	Sron a' Mhadaidh	Farmstead	Post-medieval
MHG 49132	Sron a' Mhadaidh East	Field Bank and Wall	Post-medieval
MHG 49140	Sron a' Mhadaidh South	Dyke	Post-medieval
MHG 49130	River Mashie	Building	Post-medieval
MHG 49165	River Mashie	Dyke	Post-medieval
MHG 49126	River Mashie	Dyke	Post-medieval
MHG 49208	The Cramlets East	Cairn	Post-medieval
MHG 32735	The Cramlets	Building, Cairn	Post-medieval
MHG 27128	River Pattack	Enclosure	Post-medieval
MHG 22756	Ardverikie House	Power Station	Post-medieval
MHG 27122	Alt Labhrach	Enclosure	Post-medieval
MHG 27135	Gallovie	Farmstead	Post-medieval
MHG 29855	Kinloch Laggan	Sawmill	Post-medieval
MHG 49168	Gallovie	Sawmill	Post-medieval
MHG 49118	Druim An Aird West	Cairn	Post-medieval
MHG 32742	Strathmashie	Structure	Post-medieval
MHG 49166	Druim an Aird West	Winch	Post-medieval
MHG 49117	Feagour	Railway	Post-medieval
MHG 49116	Feagour	Quary	Post-medieval
MHG 32748	Feagour	Building	Post-medieval
MHG 49115	Feagour	Settlement	Post-medieval
MHG 49129	Willie's Bridge	Bridge	Post-medieval

Asset Ref	Asset Name	Asset Type	Period
EHG 6269	Allt a' Mhaigh	Shielings, Cairn, Trackway	Post-medieval

Table 2: Cultural Heritage Assets within the Outer Study Area

Asset Ref	Asset Name	Asset Type	Period
SM 5703	St Kenneth's Church and Cross Slab, Laggan	Scheduled Monument	Mediaeval
SM 4361	Dun-da-Lamh Fort	Scheduled Monument	Prehistoric
LB 6911	Ardverikie Gate Lodge, Gatepiers and Bridge over River Pattack	Category A Listed	Post-medieval
LB 6910	Ardverikie House, Outbuildings, Game Larders, Boathouse and walled garden	Category A Listed	Post-medieval
LB 6899	Garvamore, Garva Barracks	Category A Listed	Early Modern 18th Century (1740) Georgian Period
LB 6900	Garvamore, Garva Bridge	Category A Listed	Early Medieval (Dark Ages) 6th Century
LB 6902	Glenshirra, Old wade Bridge (over Dry Burn)	Category B Listed	Post-medieval
LB 6897	Dalchully, Bridge over River Mashie	Category B Listed	Post-medieval
LB 6909	Laggan Bridge, Laggan Parish Church and Burial Ground, Church of Scotland	Category B Listed	Post-medieval
LB 6912	Catlodge, Catlodge Lodge and Gate Piers	Category B Listed	Post-medieval
LB 6917	Clunly Castle, West Lodge	Category B Listed	Tudor Period 16th Century
LB 6898	Dalwhinnie Distillery	Category B Listed	19th Century Late Victorian Era
LB 6908	Kinlochlaggan, Limekiln	Category C Listed	Post-medieval

Asset Ref	Asset Name	Asset Type	Period
LB 6907	Old St Kenneth's Church and Burial Ground excluding SM5703	Category C Listed	Post-medieval
LB 6901	Glenshero Lodge	Category C Listed	Post-medieval
LB 6896	Dalchully House	Category C Listed	Post-medieval
LB 6913	Catlodge Cottages	Category C Listed	Post-medieval
MHG 4482	Druim an Aird	Cairn	Post-medieval
MHG 32734	Druim an Aird South	Cairn	Post-medieval
MHG 49131	Dark Gully Burn	Cairn	Post-medieval
MHG 49207	Strathmashie Forest: the Cramlets Mid	Cairn	Post-medieval
MHG 49206	Strathmashie Forest: the Cramlets West	Cairn	Post-medieval