

Report on Consultation (Site Selection)

Coire Mashie Substation

October 2025

REF: LT000505



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GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Alignment	A centre line of an overhead line or underground cable.
Alignment (proposed)	An alignment taken forward to consent application. It comprises a defined centre line for the overhead line and includes an indicative support structure (i.e. a tower or pole) schedule, also specifying access arrangements and any associated construction facilities.
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.
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.
Corridor	A linear area which allows a continuous connection between the defined connection points. The Corridor may vary in width along its length; in unconstrained areas it may be many kilometres wide.
Environmental Appraisal (EA)	When a Proposed Development is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental effects and is not considered an EIA development it would not be subject to an EIA and the preparation of an EIA Report. In this circumstance, an optional EA detailing the results of surveys, and any appropriate mitigation, can accompany a consent application.
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A formal process codified by EU directive 2011/92/EU, and subsequently amended by Directive 2014/52/EU. The national regulations relevant to electricity developments are set out in The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 for overhead transmission lines and The Town and Country Planning Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 for substations and underground cables, as required. The EIA process includes the preparation of an EIA Report by the developer to systematically identify, predict and report on the likely significant environmental effects of a proposed project or development.
GWDTE	Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems.
Habitat	Term most accurately meaning the place in which a species lives, but also used to describe plant communities or agglomerations of plant communities.
Kilovolt (kV)	One thousand volts.
Listed Building	Building included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest and afforded statutory protection under the 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997' and other planning legislation. Classified categories A – C(s).
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation or alleviation of adverse impacts.
NNR	National Nature Reserve.
NPF4	National Planning Framework – Fourth Edition.
NWSS	Native Woodland Survey of Scotland.
Overhead line (OHL)	An electric line installed above ground, usually supported by towers or poles.
Plantation Woodland	Woodland of any age that obviously originated from planting.
PWS	Private Water Supply

Term	Definition
Route	A linear area of approximately 1 km width (although this may be narrower/wider in specific locations in response to identified pinch points / constraints), which provides a continuous connection between defined connection points.
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'.
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.
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'.
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), & landscaping.
Substation Platform Area	Area of the stone platform required for the HV infrastructure
The Highland Council (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.
WLA	Wild Land Areas.

PREFACE

This Report on Consultation has been prepared by ASH design+assessment Ltd. (ASH) on behalf of Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc ("the Applicant") who, operating and known as Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission), owns, operates and develops the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands.

This report provides a summary of the responses received from key stakeholders (including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners, and individual residents) during consultation between May 2025 and September 2025 for a proposed new 400 kV substation, referred to as "Coire Mashie substation", required to connect approximately 1,800 MW of power from the consented Earba Pumped Storage Hydro (PSH) Scheme near Kinloch Laggan in the Highlands of Scotland, to the existing transmission network as set out in the May 2025 Consultation Document¹.

Route options for a new 400 kV underground cable (UGC) to connect the consented Earba PSH Scheme to the electricity transmission network at the proposed Coire Mashie substation were also discussed in an appendix to the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹. The UGC would be expected to fall under SSEN Transmission's permitted development rights under Class 40 1(a) of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992, therefore, these works do not require statutory public consultation or specific consent, but have been included for completeness.

A Consultation Booklet was made available from 13th May 2025, and a Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ was made available from 19th May 2025, online at the project website: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/new-coire-mashie-400kv-substation-and-earba-psh-connection/>.

An in-person consultation event was held to seek the views of the local community on:

- 28th May 2025: 14:00 to 19:30 at Laggan Village Hall, Newtonmore, PH20 1AN

Further discussion and meetings have also been undertaken with Laggan Community Council since the consultation event on 28th May 2025.

This report summarises the feedback received regarding the potential site for the proposed substation and where relevant the 400 kV UGC. This report also describes how the feedback from consultation has informed the identification of a proposed substation site option to be taken forwards to detailed design stage of the Coire Mashie substation project. This report also describes the identification of a proposed route to be taken forward to the alignment selection stage for the 400 kV UGC Earba PSH Grid Connection.

¹ SSEN Transmission (2025), *Coire Mashie Substation: Consultation Document (Site Selection)*. Online, available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/projects/new-coire-mashie-400kv-substation-and-earba-psh-connection-downloads/full-consultation-document-site-selection-coire-mashie-substation---combined.pdf>, [last accessed 14th October 2025].

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SSEN Transmission, operating under licence as Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc, is proposing to construct a new 400 kV substation to connect approximately 1,800 MW of power from the consented Earba PSH Scheme near Kinloch Laggan in the Highlands of Scotland, to the existing transmission network.

An application for consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 was submitted by Gilkes Energy Ltd. for the 'Earba PSH' project in March 2024. Scottish Ministers granted consent for the project in March 2025. SSEN Transmission has a statutory duty under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989 to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical transmission system in its licenced areas. SSEN Transmission has obligations to offer non-discriminatory terms for connection to the transmission system. In line with these duties and obligations, SSEN Transmission has entered into an agreement with Gilkes Energy Ltd., the PSH developer, to provide a connection from the PSH scheme to the National Grid.

To connect Earba PSH scheme to the National Grid a new 400 kV substation would be required. The new substation, referred to in this document as "Coire Mashie substation", would be required to be located within close proximity to the existing Beaulay – Denny 400 kV Overhead Line (OHL) to enable onward transmission of electricity.

An UGC between the PSH scheme and Coire Mashie substation would also be required and is referred to in this document as the "Earba PSH Grid Connection". The UGC would be expected to fall under SSEN Transmission's permitted development rights under Class 40 1(a) of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992. As such these works would not require statutory public consultation or specific consent.

This Report on Consultation documents the consultation process which has been undertaken for the project during the site selection stage conducted between May 2025 and September 2025. The programme of consultation was designed to engage with stakeholders including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners and individual residents in order to invite feedback on the site options under consideration.

The approach to substation site selection is being informed by SSEN Transmission's guidance 'Substation Site Selection Guidelines for Voltages at or above 132 kV'² while the approach to route selection is being informed by SSEN Transmission's guidance 'Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines and Underground Cables of 132 kV and above'³. Both of which provide a framework to ensure environmental, technical and economic considerations are identified and appraised at each stage of the process.

A total of five site options were originally identified, appraised and consulted upon to connect power from the consented Earba PSH Scheme to the transmission network via the existing Beaulay – Denny 400 kV OHL (see **Figure 1**). The principal findings of the environmental and engineering appraisals were summarised in the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹. Following consultation feedback, a further two site options were appraised in addition to the original five site options. The findings of the appraisal of the additional two site options are available on the project website^{4, 5, 6}. A summary is also presented within this Report on Consultation.

As summarised in the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹, a number of potential UGC route options were considered to provide a connection between the PSH scheme and the proposed Coire Mashie substation (see **Figure 1**). Installing an UGC at this voltage can be challenging, but the appraisal identified a potential route option that minimises environmental and technical constraints where practicable.

² SSEN Transmission (2022) Substation Site Selection Guidelines for Voltages at or above 132kV.

³ SSEN Transmission (September 2020), Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines and Underground Cables of 132 kV and above.

⁴ SSEN Transmission (2025), New Coire Mashie 400kV Substation and Earba PSH Connection. Online, available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/new-coire-mashie-400kv-substation-and-earba-psh-connection/>, [last accessed 14th October 2025].

⁵ SSEN Transmission (2025), Addendum to Consultation Document (Site Selection): Environmental Appraisal of Additional Site Options. Online, available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/new-coire-mashie-400kv-substation-and-earba-psh-connection/>, [last accessed 24th October 2025].

⁶ SSEN Transmission (2025), Coire Mashie Site Screening - Additional Site Options 6 and 7 (Engineering). Online, available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/new-coire-mashie-400kv-substation-and-earba-psh-connection/>, [last accessed 24th October 2025].

This report summarises the responses received and where relevant provides detail on the actions proposed in response to the issues raised. Having considered the consultation responses received, and concluded an environmental and engineering appraisal of two additional site options, SSEN Transmission confirm that **Site Option 1** (as described within the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹), is to be taken forward as the proposed site to more detailed design and post site selection activities stage. This site option is considered to provide an optimum balance of environmental, technical, and economic factors.

In relation to the Earba PSH Grid Connection UGC, following review of the consultation feedback and accounting for additional engineering constraints associated with Route Option B2, SSEN Transmission concluded that the proposed route to take forwards to alignment selection stage is the combination of **Route Option 1, Route Option B1 and Route Option B3**.

The proposed site and proposed route can be seen on **Figure 4**.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Document

- 1.1.1 This document has been prepared by ASH design+assessment Ltd. (ASH) on behalf of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission). SSEN Transmission operate under licence held by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc, owns, operates and develops the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands.
- 1.1.2 This Report on Consultation documents the substation site selection stage consultation process between May 2025 and September 2025 for a proposed new 400 kV substation near Kinloch Laggan in the Highlands of Scotland. The new substation is referred to in this document as “Coire Mashie substation” and is required to connect the consented Earba Pumped Storage Hydro (PSH) scheme to the National Grid.
- 1.1.3 A new 400 kV grid connection to connect the consented PSH Scheme to the proposed Coire Mashie substation would also be required. This is proposed to be 400 kV underground cables (UGC) that would commence at Earba PSH scheme. The UGC would be expected to fall under SSEN Transmission’s permitted development rights under Class 40 1(a) of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992. As such these works do not require statutory public consultation or specific consent. Nevertheless, an appraisal of the route options has been undertaken, with the results included in an appendix to the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ for completeness.
- 1.1.4 The Programme of consultation was designed to engage with key stakeholders including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners, and individual residents in order to invite feedback on the site options identified within the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹.
- 1.1.5 This report summaries the responses received and details the actions taken in response to the issues raised.

1.2 Objectives

1.3 The objectives of this report are:

- To document the consultation process between May 2025 and September 2025;
- To summarise feedback received from stakeholders;
- To document actions undertaken in response to feedback where relevant; and
- To clearly set out how the substation site and the UGC has been informed by the consultation process.

1.4 Document Structure

1.4.1 This report is comprised of eight sections as follows:

1. Introduction – sets out the purpose of the Report on Consultation and report structure;
2. Project Overview – outlines the project need and provides a description of the key elements;
3. Site Selection and Route Selection – summarises the site and route selection process;
4. The Consultation Process – describes the framework for consultation and methods which have been employed;
5. Consultation Responses from Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultees – summarises the responses from these bodies;
6. Community Consultation Responses – summarises responses received from the local community;
7. Identification of the Proposed Site – describes how the comments and issues raised during consultation have helped inform the identification of a proposed site (and route where applicable); and
8. Conclusions and Next Steps – provides a summary of the conclusions reached and actions going forward.

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

2.1 The Need for the Project

- 2.1.1 SSEN Transmission has a statutory duty under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989 to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission. SSEN Transmission has obligations to offer non-discriminatory terms for connection to the transmission system.
- 2.1.2 The consented Earba PSH Scheme, being developed by Gilkes Energy Ltd., is a pumped storage hydro scheme that would operate by transferring water between a lower reservoir, Lochan na h-Earba⁷ and an upper reservoir, Loch a' Bhealaich Leamhain (Loch Leamhain). The planning application was submitted to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) of the Scottish Government in March 2024 (ECU reference number: ECU00005062)⁸ and was consented in March 2025.
- 2.1.3 The current proposed capacity of the Earba PSH Scheme is 1,800 MW. The scheme requires connection to the electricity transmission network by the latter half of 2032.
- 2.1.4 To connect Earba PSH scheme to the National Grid, Coire Mashie substation would be required, close to the existing Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL to enable onward transmission of electricity. An UGC would also be required to commence from the Earba PSH Scheme's powerhouse located by the shore of Loch Earba at approximate National Grid Reference (NGR) 247493, 781861, to the site of the proposed Coire Mashie substation.

National Planning Policy

- 2.1.5 Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) was published by the Scottish Government on 13th February 2023⁹. NPF4 is a long-term strategy for Scotland (to 2045) that guides spatial development, sets out national planning policies, designates national developments and highlights regional spatial priorities. Alongside adopted local development plans, NPF4 now forms part of the statutory development plan for decision making in Scotland. In NPF4, transmission infrastructure is supported in both National Development ND3 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure' and in Policy 11 Energy, however proposals are required to be assessed against all relevant development plan policies.
- 2.1.6 The Proposed Development would form a vital element to deliver network and grid infrastructure required to deliver the Government's legally binding targets for net zero emissions and renewable energy generation and energy storage objectives.

2.2 Proposed Technology Solution

- 2.2.1 The proposed technology solution for Coire Mashie substation's platform¹⁰ would accommodate the operation of 24 bays of an Air Insulated Substation (AIS) at 400 kV¹¹. To facilitate this size of substation, a site of up to 1 km² would be required to accommodate the substation platform, cut and fill requirements, temporary construction area, drainage (including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)), and any immediate landscaping around the substation boundary.
- 2.2.2 In addition to the size of the site, another key design parameter in substation site selection for this project is the proximity to the existing Beauly to Denny 400 kV OHL. The proposed substation would require connection into

⁷ Referred to throughout this report as 'Loch Earba'.

⁸ ECU (2024) *Earba 1,800MW Pumped Storage Hydro Scheme*, Online, available at: <https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx?cr=ECU00005062>, [last accessed 14th October 2025].

⁹ Scottish Government (2023) *National Planning Framework 4*, Online, available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>, [last accessed 14th October 2025].

¹⁰ Area of stone platform required for the substation infrastructure.

¹¹ The number of additional bays is currently being assessed.

this OHL for onward transmission of electricity. Any site option chosen that is not adjacent to the OHL would require a new connection (likely OHL) between the chosen site and the Beauly to Denny OHL.

2.2.3 The proposed technology solution for the 400 kV Earba PSH Grid Connection is UGC.

2.3 Proposal Overview

General Substation Construction Activities

2.3.1 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 site;
- Construction of perimeter and site drainage, including sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), where required;
- Delivery of components and materials to site;
- Construction and installation of the substation components and control building;
- Installation of electrical plant;
- Erection of a palisade security fence up to a minimum of approximately 2.4 m in height;
- Remedial works to reinstate the immediate vicinity; and
- Inspections and commissioning.

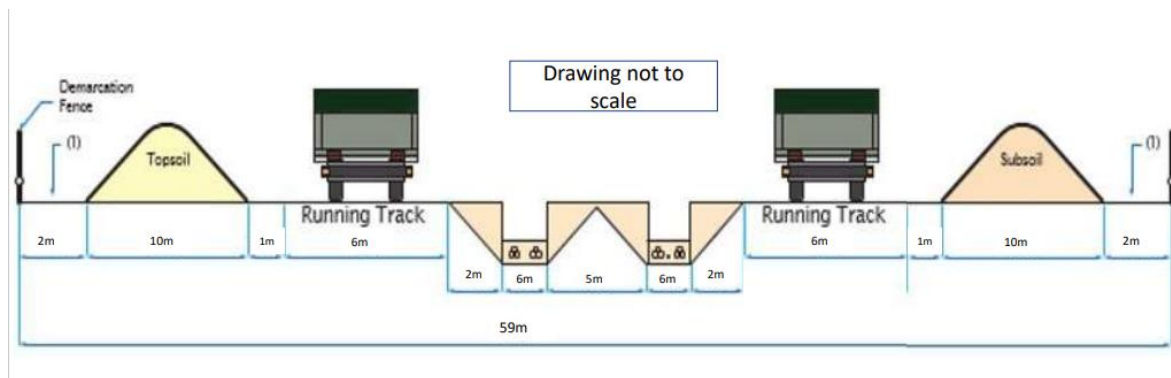
General UGC Construction Activities

2.3.2 It is anticipated that the installation of an UGC, would involve the following tasks:

- 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, widening through benching and battering where stability and safety concerns arise;
- 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;
- Transportation of and installation of power cable;
- Mobilisation of jointing containers and jointing of power cable;
- Reinstatement of joint bays and installation of fencing at link pillar locations; and
- Reinstatement excavated surface layers in reverse order.

2.3.3 **Plate 2.1** shows a diagram of a typical UGC construction corridor.

Plate 2.1: Example of a typical UGC Construction Corridor



Forestry Removal

- 2.3.4 Construction of the project may require the removal of sections of commercial forest, depending on the choice of the proposed substation site. This would be undertaken in consultation with affected landowners, and the project would comply with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP).¹²
- 2.3.5 For the UGC, an Operational Corridor (OC) would be required to enable the safe operation and maintenance. This would vary depending on the type of woodland (based on species present) in proximity to the connection. The OC that has been preliminarily assumed at this stage is 90 m.

Access Strategy

- 2.3.6 For the proposed substation, construction and operational access would be required for the site. Existing tracks, such as estate and forestry tracks, would be utilised where possible, but given the number and type of construction vehicles required it is likely that any existing tracks would be subject to upgrading. Depending on the substation location, new access tracks may also be required.
- 2.3.7 For the 400 kV UGC, a construction haul road would be required within the UGC construction corridor to facilitate its construction. Once installed, it is anticipated that the construction corridor would be reinstated, with an OC being maintained.

Programme

- 2.3.8 It is anticipated that construction of the projects would take approximately 48 months, following the granting of consents, although detailed programming of the works would be the responsibility of the Contractor in agreement with SSEN Transmission.

2.4 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 2.4.1 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was pre-development. SSEN Transmission has developed a BNG toolkit based upon the Natural England metric¹³, 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.

¹² Forestry Commission Scotland (2009) Control of Woodland Removal Policy.

¹³ Natural England Biodiversity Metric 3.1 (2022) [online] Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5450039124819968> [last accessed: 14th October 2025].

- 2.4.2 The BNG toolkit would be applied to the project to quantify the overall potential biodiversity impacts; this includes a biodiversity baseline assessment, analysis of habitat losses due to temporary works and permanent infrastructure, and analysis of biodiversity gains following reinstatement of habitats in areas of temporary construction work.

SSEN Transmission's Biodiversity Ambition

- 2.4.3 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 Sustainability Strategy (2018)¹⁴, Sustainability Plan (2019)¹⁵ and RIIO-T2 Business Plan¹⁶, 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 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.
- 2.4.4 The design and evolution of the projects will be carried out in line with these commitments.

¹⁴ SSEN Transmission (2018) *Delivering a smart, sustainable energy future: The Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Sustainability Strategy* [online] Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/media/2701/sustainability-strategy.pdf> [last accessed: 14th October 2025].

¹⁵ SSEN Transmission (2019) *Our Sustainability Plan: Turning Ambition into Action*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/media/3215/our-sustainability-plan-consultation-report.pdf> [last accessed: 14th October 2025].

¹⁶ SSEN Transmission (2022) *A Network for Net Zero* [online] Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/information-centre/riio-t2-plan-and-uncertainty-mechanisms/> [last accessed: 14th October 2025].

3. SITE SELECTION AND ROUTE SELECTION

3.1 Site Selection Overview

3.1.1 The Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ sets out the approach to the selection, consideration and appraisal of substation site options, in line with SSEN Transmission's guidance 'Substation Site Selection Guidelines for Voltages at or above 132kV'². The guidance provides a framework to ensure environmental, technical and economic considerations are identified and appraised at each stage of the site selection process.

3.1.2 The guidance splits the site selection process into stages, as follows:

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

3.1.3 Each stage is an iterative process and involves an increasing level of detail and resolution, bringing environmental, technical and cost considerations together in a way which seeks to achieve the best balance at each stage. The stages carried out can vary depending on the type, nature and size of a project and consultation is carried out at each stage of the process as appropriate.

3.1.4 The Proposed Development is currently at Stage 2: Detailed Site Selection, the objective of which is to identify a proposed site for the substation. Appraisal of each route option was undertaken against a number of environmental, engineering and cost criteria set out within the SSEN Transmission guidance, as follows:

Environmental Criteria

- Natural Heritage – designations, protected species, habitats, ornithology, hydrology, geology and hydrogeology;
- Cultural Heritage – designations and cultural heritage assets;
- People – proximity to dwellings;
- Landscape and visual – designations, landscape character and visual;
- Land Use – agriculture, forestry, recreation and infrastructure; and
- Planning – policy and proposals.

Engineering Criteria

- Connectivity – existing circuits / networks, future development possibilities, interface with SSE distribution and generation, and DNO connection;
- Footprint Requirements – technology, adjacent land use, and space availability;
- Hazards – unique hazards, and existing utilities;
- Ground Conditions – topography, and geology;
- Environmental Conditions – elevation, salt pollution, flooding, carbon footprint, sulphur hexafluoride (SF6), contaminated land, and noise;
- Construction Access – substation access road, and transformer delivery route; and
- Operation and Maintenance – access.

Economic Criteria

- Capital – construction costs; and
- Operational – inspections and maintenance costs.

3.1.5 A Red, Amber, Green (RAG) matrix was used for the appraisal, with the ratings compared, across the criteria, to examine which has the greatest and least potential for the development to be constrained¹⁷.

¹⁷ Costs were not assessed in detail as part of the site selection process. These will be considered in more detail at the detailed substation design stage when the technical and engineering specifications become clearer.

3.2 Site Options: Coire Mashie Substation

3.2.1 The original site options appraised and consulted upon in the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ are shown on **Plate 3.1** below (see also **Figure 1**).

3.2.2 As set out within the May 2025 Consultation Document (May 2025)¹, a total of five site options were originally identified and appraised. Following consultation feedback, a further two site options have been appraised. The location of these additional site options and the findings of their appraisals have been documented in an environmental addendum to Consultation Document⁵ and a separate engineering additional appraisal RAG document⁶, both available on the project website⁴. A summary of the two additional site options and the findings of their environmental and engineering appraisals is also in **Section 7.2** of this report (see also **Figure 3**).

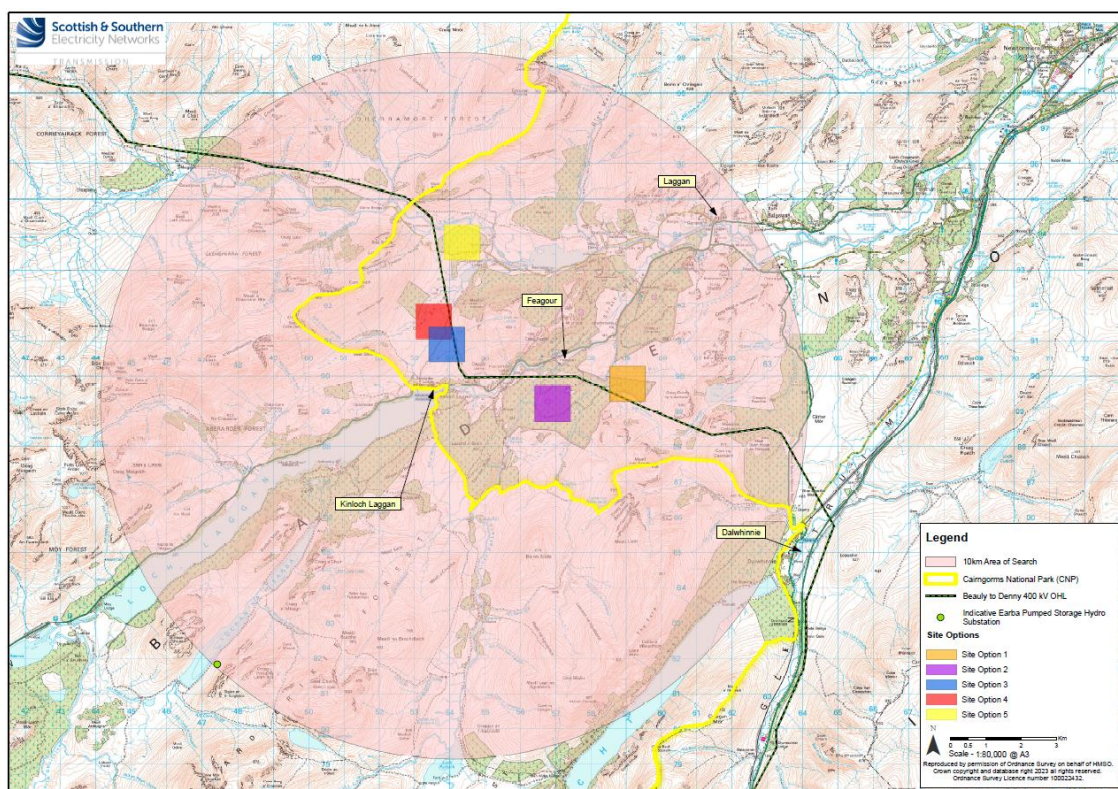


Plate 3.1: Coire Mashie Substation Site Options

3.3 Site Options: Summary of Constraints

3.3.1 The principal findings of the appraisal of site options are summarised below. Further detail is provided within the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹.

3.3.2 From an environmental perspective, of the five site options presented at consultation, it was considered that Site Options 3, 4 and 5 were highly constrained against a number of environmental topic areas. The development of a substation at Site Options 3, 4 or 5 would have the potential to be a prominent feature within the Cairngorm's National Park (CNP) with limited opportunities for screening, as well as having the potential to impact Annex 1 habitats and qualifying features of nature conservation sites of international importance. Similarly, from an engineering perspective, Site Options 3, 4 and 5 are all highly constrained, particularly regarding construction access routes, and in relation to hazards and interfaces with other infrastructure. Given the highly constrained nature of Site Options 3, 4 and 5, these sites were not considered preferred from either an environmental or engineering standpoint.

3.3.3 In contrast, Site Option 1 and Site Option 2 were considered less constrained across environmental topic areas. Both sites offered opportunities to minimise landscape and visual effects in the local area through the use of screening. Due to its more central location within the commercial forestry plantation, Site Option 2 would likely require more extensive tree felling to accommodate the proposed works. However, Site Option 1 would likely require more substantial earth works in order to establish a level site, which could increase on local landscape character. Site Option 2 also intersects with, and is sited close to, the non-designated cultural heritage asset of the Drum an Aird township, which is of Regional importance. Depending on site design, there may be opportunities to minimise impacts on this site. In terms of engineering constraints, both options received favourable ratings, albeit there were differences across the two sites in terms of topography, site clearance and earthworks requirements. Given these constraints, it was considered that Site Option 1 was slightly preferred over Site Option 2.

3.3.4 Site Option 1 was therefore considered the potential site option that offered the best balance of environmental and technical considerations, and presented as such in the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ (see **Figure 2**).

3.4 Route Selection Overview

3.4.1 Appendix 1 of the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ sets out the approach to the consideration and appraisal of route options, in line with SSEN Transmission's guidance 'Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines and Underground Cables of 132 kV and above.'³ The guidance provides a framework to ensure environmental, technical and economic considerations are identified and appraised at each stage of the routeing process.

3.4.2 The guidance splits the routeing stage of a project into four principal stages, as follows:

- Stage 0: Routeing strategy development;
- Stage 1: Corridor Selection;
- Stage 2: Route Selection; and
- Stage 3: Alignment Selection.

3.4.3 The UGC is currently at Stage 2: Route Selection, the objective of which is to identify a proposed route prior to commencing the alignment selection stage. Appraisal of each route option was undertaken against a number of environmental, engineering and cost criteria set out within the SSEN Transmission guidance. The environmental and cost criteria are as per the substation site selection criteria in **Section 3.1**. The engineering criteria though is slightly different, and is as follows:

Engineering Criteria

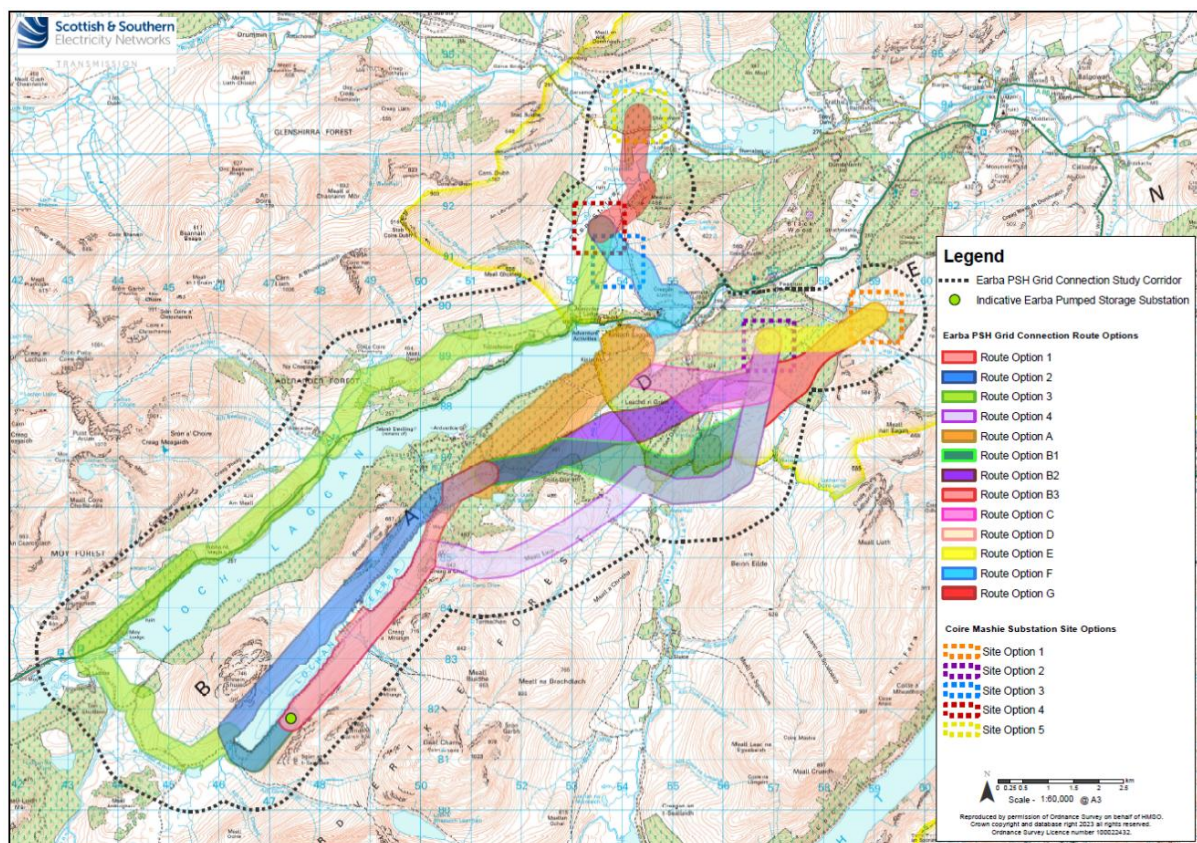
- Infrastructure Crossings – major crossings (overhead lines, rail, river, navigable canal, gas or hydro pipeline) and road crossings;
- Environmental Design – elevation, contaminated land, pollution and flooding;
- Ground Conditions – terrain and peat;
- Construction and Maintenance – access, angle support; and
- Proximity – clearance distance, windfarms, communication masts, urban areas, metallic pipes.

3.4.4 A RAG matrix was used for the route option appraisal in the same way as for the substation site option appraisal.

3.5 Route Options: Earba PSH Grid Connection

3.5.1 The route options appraised and consulted upon are shown on **Plate 3.2** below (see also **Figure 1**). The route options that originate at the proposed Earba PSH scheme connection point are numbered one to four. The remaining nine route options (lettered) either provide connections from Route Options 1 to 4, or from other lettered route options to facilitate a connection to one of the five Coire Mashie substation site options.

Plate 3.2: Earba Grid PSH Grid Connection Route Options



3.6 Route Options: Summary of Constraints

- 3.6.1 In relation to environmental considerations, Route Options 1 and 2 were similarly rated across all topic areas. However, Route Option 1 was considered slightly preferred for habitats, landscape, and visual constraints. Route Options 3 and 4 face higher limitations due to proximity to key natural heritage sites and Annex 1 habitats. Of the lettered route options, Route Options A and B3 were considered the most favourable environmentally, with B3 slightly preferred due to more Green RAG ratings overall. Route Options B2 and C were the next preferred, while the remaining options (B1, D, E, F and G) were less preferable. Route Option B1 is less preferred in relation to habitats and ornithology, while Route Option D scored poorly for landscape considerations. Route Option E is not preferable due to interaction with habitats and the cultural heritage asset of Druim an Aird, while Route Option G is affected by natural heritage sites and sensitive habitats.
- 3.6.2 Technically, Route Options 1, 2, 3, and 4 are all considered 'high' risk, but Route Option 1 is the shortest and most direct, offering the best potential for feasible cable installation despite extreme side slopes that will need careful consideration as the project progresses. Among lettered options, Route Option B2 is the most direct for cable installation, should trenchless techniques be possible for crossing the River Pattack. Although Route Option A scored better than Route Option B2 in RAG ratings, it connects with less preferred Route Option C and Route Option D, making it less technically suitable. Northern Route Option F and Route Option G face terrain, peat, and access challenges, alongside constraints from the Loch Laggan Tunnel. Route Option B3, as an alternative to reach Site Option 1, is technically preferred over Route Option E due to lower risks and costs associated with tree removal near Site Option 2. For Route Option B3, trenchless techniques would likely be used to cross the River Mashie.
- 3.6.3 The potential route option combination on the basis of environmental and engineering considerations was therefore considered to be Route Option 1, Route Option B2, Route Option B3 (see **Figure 2**).
- 3.6.4 Costs were not analysed in depth in the route selection process, but this route combination fell within mid-range of preference for cost ratings overall.

4. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 In accordance with SSEN Transmission's guidance,¹ a process of consultation at site option stage has been undertaken.
- 4.1.2 As stated in **Section 1.1**, the Earba PSH Grid connection UGC does not require statutory public consultation or specific consent as it would be expected to fall under SSEN Transmission's permitted development rights. The appraisal of route options was however presented at consultation for completeness.

4.2 Methods for Consultation

- 4.2.1 The following methods were used to consult on the potential site option, as set out below.

Pre-consultation Meetings with Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultees

- 4.2.2 Virtual and in-person meetings were conducted by SSEN Transmission with statutory and non-statutory consultees ahead of the consultation events. These meetings were held to allow SSEN Transmission to provide information on the project, and seek any early feedback and advice from consultees. These meetings with the following:
- Cairngorms National Park Authority on 22nd May 2025 at Cairngorms National Park Office, Grantown-on-Spey;
 - Laggan Community Council on 19th May at Laggan Village Hall; and
 - Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) - Scottish Wildcat Action (SWA) on 27th May 2025 via Microsoft Teams.

Consultation Document

- 4.2.3 The Coire Mashie Substation - Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ was produced detailing the appraisal of site options, taking account of environmental and technical factors. The Consultation Document was made available from 19th May 2025. A summary Consultation Booklet was also made available from 13th May 2025 via the project website⁴.
- 4.2.4 **Table 4.1** details the stakeholders in receipt of the Consultation Document or Consultation Booklet or otherwise informed of the website or public consultation events details:

Table 4.1: List of Stakeholders

Stakeholders	
Statutory Consultees	
Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)	Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
NatureScot	Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
The Highland Council (THC)	
Non-Statutory Consultees	
Ardverikie Estate	British Horse Society
Ben Alder Estate	British Telecom
Civil Aviation Authority	Crown Estate Scotland
Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS)	Fisheries Management Scotland
Glenshero Estate	Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd
John Muir Trust	Joint Radio Company
Laggan Community Council	Ministry of Defence (MoD) - Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) Safeguarding
Mountaineering Scotland	National Air Traffic Services
National Trust for Scotland	Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust
Ness District Salmon Fishery Board	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society	Scottish Water
Scottish Wild Land Group	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD)	Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) - (Scottish Wildcat Action (SWA))
Transport Scotland	Visit Scotland

- 4.2.5 Feedback on the Consultation Document was originally requested by **28th June 2025** however this was later extended to allow sufficient time for all interested parties to respond.
- 4.2.6 In the Consultation Document, stakeholders were asked a series of questions on specific aspects of the project as follows:
- Has the requirement for the project been clearly explained?
 - Are there any additional factors, or environmental features, that you consider important and should be brought to the attention of the project team?
 - Do you have any preference of which site is selected or other comments regarding the potential site or project?
 - Following review of the information provided, how would you describe your understanding of the project?
 - Do you have any preference for which UGC route option is selected or any other comments regarding the potential route options?
 - Overall, how do you feel about the project?
- 4.2.7 A feedback form was also provided on the project webpage allowing users to submit comments.

Public Consultation Events

4.2.8 An in-person consultation event took place for this project on:

- 28th May 2025: 14:00 to 19:30 at Laggan Village Hall, Newtonmore, PH20 1AN.

4.2.9 Consultation events were advertised in the local press, SSEN Transmission's social media channels and the dedicated project website. A mail drop of a booklet and letter informing of the event was also carried out to 550 households in the vicinity of the site options ahead of the consultation event.

4.2.10 Approximately 100 pieces of feedback, comments, and questions were received across a range of channels, including SSEN Transmission online feedback forms, emails, post, and comments shared at the public consultation event itself. Approximately 61 people attended the public consultation event on 28th May 2025. SSEN Transmission also trialled the use of A0 laminated sheets, which allowed community members to provide their feedback directly on the day.

4.2.11 During the consultation event, a number of members of the Laggan community arrived late afternoon (approximately 20). Since the same concerns and queries were generally shared by the community members, SSEN Transmission were asked if a "Question and Answer" (Q & A) session could be conducted. SSEN Transmission were happy to take part in this, and for the remainder of the event the community raised questions with the SSEN Transmission project team as a group. Notes were taken by the SSEN Transmission project team on the key questions and have been included in the Report on Consultation where appropriate. The list of the community's questions that were noted were supplied to the Laggan Community Council on 4th June 2025 to check that everything had been captured and to allow opportunity for more queries to be added. Further written answers in addition to what was given verbally at the consultation event to those questions and comments were then supplied to Laggan Community Council by SSEN Transmission on 13th June 2025 and a further meeting was held with them 9th July 2025.

5. CONSULTATION RESPONSES FROM STATUTORY AND NON-STATUTORY CONSULTEES

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 **Table 5.1** sets out a summary of the feedback received by statutory and non-statutory consultees following the consultation period (May 2025 to September 2025). It is outlined in **Table 5.1** if the feedback is relevant to the substation, the UGC, or both. A response to the feedback is also provided by SSEN Transmission, together with confirmation of the action to be taken, where relevant.
- 5.1.2 Where a consultee is listed in **Table 4.1**, but not **Table 5.1**, this indicates that the consultee did not provide a response at this stage.

Table 5.1: Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultee Feedback

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
Statutory			
Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)	The CNPA highlighted that potential landscape and visual impacts associated with the projects is their key concern, particularly in relation to the potential visibility of the substation from Laggan Wolfrax.	Both	SSEN Transmission will seek to minimise the visual impact of the proposed substation through siting, screening, and planting. Laggan Wolfrax will be considered as the project design progresses, and a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be undertaken to support a future application for consent (as part of an EIA Report), following the conclusion of the detailed substation design stage.
	CNPA suggested it would be worth having regular update calls once the fixed design is achieved.	Both	This has been noted, SSEN Transmission will keep CNPA informed as the project progresses.
	The CNPA sought clarification on why the expansion of Melgarve Substation was discounted as an option for the substation site.	Substation	Initial studies concluded that extending Melgarve Substation was technically challenging and it was not taken forward. However, following community feedback, this option has been reviewed again. This has been called Site Option 7 and can be seen on Figure 3. The findings of the appraisal of Site Option 7 have been documented in an environmental addendum to Consultation Document⁵ and a separate engineering additional appraisal RAG document⁶. Both of these are available on the project website⁴, and the findings are summarised in Section 7.2 of this report. Further to this though, an appraisal of two site options, further to the five site options presented in the original Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ has been undertaken for the Coire Mashie substation project. One of these additional site options is situated adjacent to the existing Melgarve substation. The findings of the appraisal of the additional two site options have been documented in an environmental addendum to

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
			Consultation Document ⁵ and a separate engineering additional appraisal RAG document ⁶ . Both of these are available on the project website ⁴ , and the findings are summarised in Section 7.2 of this report.
	The CNPA raised the topic of community benefit options, particularly in relation to the potential upgrade to the A86 and that Laggan village is not connected to the Laggan Wolfrax, so the building of a new track could serve the community.	Both	These activities that could benefit the community have been noted. Information regarding SSEN Transmission's Community Benefit Funds can be accessed via the dedicated Community Benefit Fund project webpage¹⁸. SSEN Transmission are keen to work closely with CNPA and local communities in proximity to projects to understand what opportunities there may be to leave a local legacy. Any sponsorship requests can be also raised with the project Community Liaison Manager to take to the business for consideration.
	The CNPA also highlighted the potential for SSEN Transmission and CNPA to work together in relation to the necessary compensatory planting SSEN Transmission will likely need to undertake, as there might be opportunities to do it in areas where the CNPA has identified habitats disconnection. CNPA also highlighted that they would reach out to Ben Alder Estate about delivering some benefits for the area on their land between two FLS parcels that CNPA would like to explore.	Both	This has been noted. The projects may require compensatory planting, and liaison on this will continue with the CNPA the design and EIA stages. Opportunities for restoration and enhancement will be considered and delivered in line with SSEN Transmission's BNG commitments.

¹⁸ SSEN Transmission (2025) *Community Benefit Fund*, Available online at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/information-centre/community-benefit-fund/>, [last accessed 16 October 2025].

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
	CNPA highlighted that a new distillery has been consented in the area and should be considered ¹⁹ .	Both	This has been noted. Any consented infrastructure in the surrounding area will be considered as the project progresses and as a part of any future application.
Historic Environment Scotland (HES)	HES advised that SSEN Transmission obtain an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion from the planning authority, as the proposed development may meet the criteria and thresholds in Schedule 2 of the EIA (Scotland) Regulations 2017.	Substation	SSEN Transmission will request an EIA screening opinion from the planning authority for Coire Mashie substation. This is expected to be submitted in the first half of 2026.
	HES noted that the site options would have the potential to affect the following Scheduled Monuments (SMs). Dun-da-Lamh, fort (SM4361) comprising the remains of an Iron Age hillfort, situated on a northeast-facing spur of Black Craig, which commands extensive views along the course of the River Spey. HES commented that Site Options 1, 2 or 5 may have the potential to intrude in key views from the SM, appearing as new industrial development. St Kenneth's Church and cross slab, Laggan (SM5703) comprising the remains of a medieval church, situated on a plateau at the head of Loch Laggan. HES commented that Site Option 3 and 4 may appear in the background of views towards the SM from Loch Laggan.	Substation	The potential constraints associated with designated cultural heritage assets have been considered as part of the site selection stage, the appraisal of which is contained within the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹. It is acknowledged that potential for indirect visual impacts and impacts on the setting of Dun-da-Lamh, fort (SM4361) could occur for a number of the site options under consideration. Whilst it is not expected that St Kenneth's Church and cross slab, Laggan (SM5703) would be indirectly impacted by the sites under consideration, detailed consideration of the potential impacts on setting from all designated cultural heritage assets will be an important aspect in further informing substation design to ensure any potential impacts are minimised or avoided.

¹⁹ CNPA (2023) 2023/0267/DET, Online, available at: <https://cairngorms.co.uk/uploads/documents/Item6AADistilleryReport20230267DET.pdf>, [last accessed 22nd October 2025].

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
	HES noted that the site options would have the potential to affect the following Category A-listed Buildings: Garvamore 'Barracks' (LB6899) HES noted that a substation in either site option 3, 4 or 5 has the potential to create a visual impact on the two-storey range which commands views along General Wade's military road, appearing as a new industrial development in the rural landscape. Ardverkie Gate Lodge, Gate Piers and Bridge over River Pattack (LB6911) – a two-story gatehouse constructed in the late 1800 that serves as a gatehouse to Ardverkie Estate (LB6910). HES noted that a substation in either site option 3 or 4 has the potential to impact on the building's setting due to their proximity.	Substation	These Category A-listed Buildings have been a consideration in the site options appraisal process to date and Garvamore 'Barracks' (LB6899) and Ardverkie Gate Lodge, Gate Piers and Bridge over River Pattack (LB6911) were discussed in the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹. Site Option 1 which is currently considered as the potential site option would not be expected to affect these Category A-listed Buildings. Further consideration of the potential impacts from all designated cultural heritage assets will be an important aspect in further informing substation design to ensure any potential impacts are minimised or avoided.
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	SEPA commented that they are interested in ensuring that the chosen Coire Mashie substation site option has the least impact on peat and carbon rich soils, avoids impacts on watercourses and any near natural habitat and minimises impacts on GWDTE. SEPA noted that all of the site options are likely to have some impact on these parameters, and enough baseline information hasn't been collected at this stage for them to provide a view on which of the site options would be best from this perspective.	Substation	Avoiding and minimising impacts on peat and carbon rich soils, watercourses, near natural habitat and GWDTE has been a key consideration during site selection and will continue to be as the project moves into detailed design stage. Further ecology and hydrology/peat surveys will be undertaken to inform the baseline and project design to minimise impacts on peat, GWDTE and local hydrology as far as practicable.
	SEPA noted that the potential Site Option 1 is partially on forestry and partially on class 2 peat. SEPA highlighted that they will require peat depth information for the whole potentially developable area and the final location of any infrastructure should avoid the deepest areas of peat, and any near natural	Substation	SSEN Transmission undertook Phase 1 Peat Probing surveys across Site Options 1 and 2 towards the end of 2024. SSEN Transmission confirmed to SEPA that although Site Option 1 falls within Class 2 peatland, the average peat depth across the area is 0.26 m with only

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
	habitat to the north and the watercourses in the area. SEPA highlighted that they would welcome further engagement once this further level of baseline assessment has been undertaken for the potential site option and there is an initial idea of location of infrastructure.		eight records of peat ≥ 0.50 m. This additional information was provided to SEPA via email on 23 rd May 2025. As further ecology and hydrology/soils surveys are undertaken to inform substation design, SSEN Transmission will continue to liaise with SEPA in relation to their areas of interest.
	SEPA advised that the Coire Mashie substation application will need to include clear information on how the impacts on peat and carbon rich soils have been minimised (presuming avoidance is not actually possible) and proposals for use of excavated peat. Unless the waste peat is certain to be used for construction purposes in its natural state on the site from where it is excavated, it will be subject to regulatory control.	Substation	SSEN Transmission will detail how the design has accounted for and minimised the disturbance of peat and carbon rich soils. A Stage 1 Peat Management Plan and Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment, supported by an appropriate level of peat depth data, will be provided in support of a future application for consent. SSEN Transmission will refer to SEPA Triage Framework and Standing Advice as the project progresses.
	SEPA highlighted that their GWDTE and existing groundwater abstractions guidance has relatively recently been updated.	Substation	This has been noted. SSEN Transmission will use the new (February 2025) version of SEPA's GWDTE and existing groundwater abstractions guidance ²⁰ to inform any future assessments and applications for consent.
	In relation to the UGC, as this part of the project will be covered by permitted development rights, SEPA stated that they did not have any detailed comments to make but outlined that avoiding or minimising impacts on the aspects of the environment in which SEPA have an interest apply.	UGC	This has been noted. As the alignment selection of the UGC is progressed, avoiding and minimising impacts on environmental factor of interest to SEPA will continue to be a key design consideration. SSEN Transmission will detail how the design has accounted for and minimised the disturbance of peat, through a voluntary Environmental Appraisal (EA) for the UGC.

²⁰ SEPA (2025) *Guidance on the use of groundwater standards*. [online] Available at: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sepa.org.uk%2Fmedia%2Fsajhsp2%2Fguidance-on-application-of-standards.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK> [Accessed: October 2025].

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
THC – Strategic Projects Team	The Strategic Projects Team of THC advised that the proposed UGC may require a Prior Notification under Regulation 62 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 to determine if the proposed works would have a significant effect on any European Sites they may pass through.	UGC	This has been noted. At present, the potential route option combination would have no direct interaction or pass through any Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The potential for indirect effects will be considered as the project progresses.
Non-Statutory			
Ardverikie Estate	Ardverikie Estate highlighted that they are willing to cooperate with SSEN Transmission to facilitate the most suitable substation location and UGC alignment. The Estate noted that they would prefer for the substation to be sited in a position which requires minimal or no additional pylons (i.e. to divert the existing Beaully-Denny 400 kV OHL).	Both	This has been noted. The connection with the existing Beaully-Denny 400 kV OHL has been a key consideration in substation site selection thus far in order to minimise any additional effects associated with a potential diversion of the existing 400 kV OHL. The potential Site Option 1 would require minimal alteration of the existing Beaully-Denny 400 kV OHL as it is situated adjacent to it.
Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS)	FLS highlighted that they typically do not comment on the placement of SSEN infrastructure outside their land ownership boundaries. However, they noted that if the substation was to be located on FLS land, their preferred option would be Site Option 1.	Substation	FLS's preference for Site Option 1 has been noted. This is the currently proposed potential site option to go forwards to detailed design stage.
Glenshero Estate	Glenshero Estate outlined that they are fundamentally opposed to Site Options 4 and 5 as they lie within close proximity to the residential and letting accommodation and advise it would have a significant impact on the properties and the estate.	Substation	This has been noted. Site Option 4 and 5 are not considered as potential options for a number of key environmental and technical constraints including proximity to dwellings.
	Glenshero Estate highlighted that should a proposal be presented adjacent to the existing Melgarve substation, they would be willing to consider this positively and engage in a dialogue.	Substation	This has been noted. An appraisal of two site options, further to the five site options presented in the original Consultation Document (May 2025) ¹ has been undertaken for the Coire Mashie substation project. One of these additional site options is situated adjacent to the existing Melgarve substation. The findings of the appraisal of the additional two site options have been documented in an environmental addendum to

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
			Consultation Document ⁵ and a separate engineering additional appraisal RAG document ⁶ . Both of these are available on the project website ⁴ , and the findings are summarised in Section 7.2 of this report.
Mountaineering Scotland	Mountaineering Scotland advised that an Outdoor Access Management Plan (OAMP) should be prepared to set out how public access to the hills and crags will be maintained during construction and operation to ensure the safety of access takers. They advised that the OAMP should be prepared in line with the existing Earba PSH scheme Access Management Plan to ensure public access to the hills and crags will be maintained during the construction phase of the UGC.	Both	This has been noted. An OAMP will be included as part of the Coire Mashie substation future application for consent. The Earba PSH Scheme's Access Management Plan will be referred to within the Coire Mashie substation OAMP and both the substation and the UGC design will take it into account as design progresses.
	Mountaineering Scotland commented that popular mountain routes, Core Paths and Scottish Hill Tracks as well as popular climate venues that may be affected by the various route options were not identified in the Consultation Document, as they were for the various site options. Furthermore, it was noted that a Green RAG rating was given for recreational impacts, however, given the likely impacts on access takers during construction phase, Mountaineering Scotland strongly suggested that the RAG ratings are increased to Amber.	UGC	Figure 11 of the Consultation Document (May 2025) ¹ shows mountain routes, Core Paths and Scottish hill tracks in relation to both the substation site options and the Earba PSH Grid Connection UGC route options. With respect to the RAG ratings for the route options, this comment has been noted and impacts to recreational users during construction of the project will continue to be considered during the alignment selection and EA / EIA stages.
	In August 2025, Mountaineering Scotland also provided the grid references for climbing venues in the area and further details of the following: • Binnein Shuas • Tapered Crag • Upper Crag • Creag a Chuir • Meall Cos Charnan	Both	This additional information from Mountaineering Scotland is welcomed and has been added to SSEN Transmission's mapping datasets. These locations will be marked and considered further as both the substation and UGC projects progress.

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) – (Scottish Wildcat Action (SWA))	RZSS – SWA advised on the location of a wildcat release pen in the general vicinity of the site options. They also shared information relating to the areas traversed by the already released wildcats.	Substation	This has been noted, and the confidential location of the wildcat release pen has been considered in the selection of the potential substation site and will be considered as the project progresses to detailed design and post site selection activities stage. SSEN Transmission will continue to liaise with RZSS – SWA as the project progresses.
	RZSS – SWA advised that impacts on the wildcats may be likely, however they noted that is not possible to evaluate which of the proposed site options and route options might have the least impactful scenario. This is as the wildcat population is new and establishing.	Both	This has been noted. SSEN Transmission will continue to liaise with RZSS – SWA as the project progresses to ensure impacts on wildcat populations / territories are minimised. Wildcat specific mitigation will be considered as part of the design process, in discussion with RZSS – SWA.
	RZSS – SWA confirmed that there is the potential for a direct risk posed by the construction process and associated increase in construction traffic. They advised though, that it may be possible to manage risks created by increased construction traffic with wildcat focused mitigation and an (individual based) monitoring plan, however further groundwork is required first.	Both	SSEN Transmission acknowledge the potential for impacts on wildcats from construction. Wildcat specific mitigation will be considered as part of the design process, in discussion with RZSS – SWA.
	RZSS – SWA confirmed that they support the view of the community in relation to pressure placed on housing, medical services with increased road traffic and associated road safety concerns. They also confirmed that they support the view of the community in relation to the potential for visibility of the substation and ask that its impacts are given significant weight.	Both	Potential impacts on the local community have been considered during the site selection stage and will continue to be considered in detail as the project progresses. SSEN Transmission are willing to discuss any specific concerns in more detail to gain a full understanding of community requirements and concerns during this process.
	RZSS – SWA noted that the proposed construction of the substation and UGC may impact significantly on recreational routes and create visual impacts locally and suggest that a detailed analysis of lines of sight or visual mock-up is prepared for local residents to understand visual impacts more fully.	Both	Given the stages of the projects (site selection / route options) the production of visualisations to NatureScot and THC guidelines has not yet been undertaken. Further supporting information such as visualisations from a select number of viewpoints will be provided as part of the future applications for consent. Preliminary visualisations / modelling have been developed and uploaded to the project website ⁴ . It should be noted that the

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
			visualisations shared at this stage are indicative and subject to change following development and refinement of the substation design. Further discussion and agreement on the scope of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to support a future application for consent (as part of an EIA Report for the substation) will be carried out as the project progresses.
	RZSS – SWA confirmed that hybridisation with domestic cat species is a key threat to wildcats which is expected to be an increased risk if construction of the projects increases dispersal and disrupts territory. Furthermore, RZSS – SWA raised that the increased workforce in the area (and thus potential increase in domestic cat presence) has a potential risk to wildcats. RZSS – SWA stated that limited details are provided on the workforce but risks in association to this need to be mitigated.	Both	This has been noted. The presence of the wildcat species will form a key consideration as detailed design of the projects are progressed and as part of any future applications for consent. Any strategy to assess potential workforce housing will be the responsibility of the Principal Contractor, which has not yet been appointed.
	RZSS – SWA raised that construction corridors may contain demarcation fences, which RZSS – SWA confirm would need to be given consideration as fences have the potential to act as a full or partial barrier to the species. Wildcats often make use of linear features, which could potentially bring them into contact with construction activities.	Both	SSEN Transmission acknowledge the potential for demarcation fences to cause wildcats to come into contact with construction activities. It is expected that these effects can likely be mitigated through the implementation of best practice construction measures, the details of which will be provided as part of a future application. Ultimately the fencing approach will be responsibility of the Principal Contractor, which has not yet been appointed.
	RZSS – SWA noted that the potential removal of habitat and the potential disturbance surrounding construction and cable laying has the potential to disperse the wildcat population more widely and to scatter individual animals, even if habitat is enhanced subsequently and/or undergoes compensatory planting. RZSS – SWA highlighted that wildcat populations require a complex mosaic of woodland and grassland habitat and thus any compensatory habitat enhancement work would need to consider this along with the requirements of other	Both	As the substation design and associated UGC alignment are developed, avoiding and minimising impacts on wildcat populations will be a key ecological consideration. In future applications for consent, SSEN Transmission will set out how design choices and construction planning have sought to reduce disturbance to wildcats, including measures to maintain habitat connectivity and minimise displacement risks. Wildcat specific

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
	species. RZSS – SWA further outlined the potential impact this may have on the reproductive outcome of the wildcat population, as, typically one male wildcat will overlap multiple female territories. This means that the movement of one male wildcat could impact the reproductive outcome of multiple female wildcats.		mitigation will be considered as part of the design process, in discussion with RZSS – SWA.
	RZSS – SWA note the commitment to positively contribute to UN and Scottish government Biodiversity strategies and would request that further details on the nature of biodiversity enhancement planned, measure of specific habitats and species, the level of funding that will be inputted to each, and how these funds will be governed and distributed be outlined in detail in subsequent consultations.	Both	Opportunities for restoration and enhancement will be considered and delivered in line with SSEN Transmission's BNG commitments. The BNG toolkit will be utilised to form alignment selection of the Earba PSH Grid Connection, and at the point of application for the substation. SSEN Transmission are committed to delivering a 10% biodiversity net gain on their projects for non-irreplaceable habitats. (as mentioned in Section 2.4 of this report). No further detail on funding is available at this stage in the project.
Scottish Water	Scottish Water confirmed that the substation site options and the route options are all outwith their catchments. Specifically in relation to Drinking Water Protected Areas (DWPAs) and Scottish Water assets (including water supply and sewer pipes, water and wastewater treatment works, reservoirs, etc.). Scottish Water advised that this should be confirmed however through obtaining plans from their Asset Plan Providers, listed in the Scottish Water list of precautions for assets.	Both	It has been noted that no Scottish Water DWPAs or Scottish Water assets would be impacted by any of the substation site options or the route options. In relation to Scottish Water Assets, this will be confirmed by obtaining plans from Scottish Water's Asset Plan Providers, listed in the Scottish Water list of precautions for assets.
	Scottish Water advised that in the event that asset conflicts are identified then early contact should be made with the Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee (HAUC).	Both	This has been noted. In the event that asset conflicts are identified then early contact will be made with HAUC by SSEN Transmission.
	Scottish Water advised that the projects will be required to comply with Sewers for Scotland and Water for Scotland 4 th Editions 2018, including provision of appropriate clearance distances from Scottish Water assets.	Both	This has been noted, and the projects will comply with the Sewers for Scotland and Water for Scotland 4 th Editions 2018.

Stakeholder	Summary of Feedback	Relevant to (Substation / UGC / Both)	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
Transport Scotland	Transport Scotland noted that the site options for the Coire Mashie Substation are located between approximately 1 and 2 km from the A86(T), either north of Kinloch Laggan or southeast of the A86(T), with none of the options directly impacting the trunk road. Transport Scotland therefore confirmed that they had no comment to make on any specific site option and have no preference as to which is the chosen option. They advised, though, that any application for the substation would require to be supported by a Transport Statement which includes an assessment of the potential impact of any additional traffic generated during the construction of the project	Substation	This has been noted. A Transport Assessment (TA) will be included in the substation application EIA Report.
	Transport Scotland highlighted that in the event that any Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AIL) are required during delivery of the project components, an AIL Assessment Report should be provided which identifies key pinch points on the trunk road network. Swept path analysis should be undertaken and details provided with regard to any required changes to street furniture or structures along the route.	Substation	AILs will likely be required, for example for substation transformer delivery. An AIL Assessment Report will also be included as part of the Coire Mashie substation TA, including swept path analysis.
	With regard to the Potential Route Options for the UGC, Transport Scotland noted that Route Option 3 and Route Option F would both require to cross the A86(T). Transport Scotland advised that any proposed changes to the trunk road network must be discussed and approved (via a technical approval process) by the appropriate Area Manager. In addition, any potential traffic impact on the trunk road network will require to be assessed in a supporting Transport Statement.	UGC	This has been noted. The potential route option presented in the Consultation Document (May 2025) ¹ does not include Route Option 3 or Route Option F. In the event that either of these route options are identified as the preferred option, the Area Manager for the A86(T), would be contacted as soon as practicable to ensure that any impacts could be mitigated.

6. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION RESPONSES FROM THE PUBLIC EXHIBITION EVENT

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 **Table 6.1** sets out the feedback received by the local community and general public following the consultation period (May 2025 to September 2025), including comments received during the consultation events. It is outlined in **Table 6.1** if the feedback is relevant to the substation, the UGC, or both. Responses by SSEN Transmission are also included, setting out the action to be taken where relevant.

6.1.2 **Table 6.1** is ordered by topic. Where a point was raised multiple times, this has been combined into one entry, but the approximate number of times a point was raised has been included in the table.

Table 6.1: Public and Local Community Feedback by Topic

Topic and Feedback Comments	Approx. no. Times Raised	Relevant to Substation / UGC / Both	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
Format / Presentation of Consultation Materials and SSEN Transmission Correspondence: It was raised by a member of the public that when abbreviations are used in public communications, it would aid understanding to ensure all are defined/explained. Another member of the public noted that the laminated maps shown at consultation were printed last year. The public also raised a query in relation to the proximity of dwellings topic being marked as "n/a" on the RAG assessment for the UGC, and the methodology behind the RAG rating system, particularly how visual impacts were assessed, was also questioned.	5	Both	In consultation material and in consultation documents, SSEN Transmission endeavour to always write a full title or term followed by the acronym in first use. In notes shared with the community following the events though, this has not always been the case, and this point has been noted. The figures attached to the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ are dated between October 2024 and May 2025 as that is the period works were undertaken on the appraisals and reporting. It takes a number of months to appraise site options. The prints presented at the consultation event themselves were only printed a few weeks prior to the consultation event. The RAG assessment methodology is in line with SSEN Transmission's guidance 'Substation Site Selection Guidelines for Voltages at or above 132kV'². SSEN Transmission shared RAG methodology extracts from this document with Laggan Community Council following the consultation event in June. UGC ratings have different assessment parameters than an OHL or Substation due to the nature of the technology.
Consultation Process and Transparency: Members of the public noted that they were disappointed by the lack of consultation up to this point in the projects. It was queried by the public if SSEN Transmission noted the names and the comments of the people who attended the public consultation event at Laggan village hall on 28th May 2025. It was also queried if feedback is recorded.	18	Both	SSEN Transmission's approach to consultation is to consult the public and stakeholders once a number of site options have been identified as feasible. Members of the SSEN Transmission project team invited anyone attending the consultation event to give their contact details at the entrance to the hall. Notes were taken by the project team of key questions raised at the consultation events, and these have been included in the Report on Consultation where appropriate. SSEN Transmission welcome feedback and an online feedback form was available during the consultation period. The SSEN Transmission Community

Topic and Feedback Comments	Approx. no. Times Raised	Relevant to Substation / UGC / Both	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
There was also some disappointment raised by community members that local estates and FLS were not represented at the consultation event.			Liaison Manager for the project also listed their email address and telephone number in the consultation material and on the dedicated project webpage where members of the community can email or call with feedback and questions. It should be noted that the FLS Forest Manager attended the consultation event approximately between 4pm and 5pm. The Ardverikie Estate Manager attended the consultation event approximately between 3pm and 4pm.
Project Name: Comments on the name of the substation were raised with alternatives suggested such as “Mashie substation” to be more locally accurate and better reflect the geography of the area.	2	Substation	This has been noted. The name of the substation will be reviewed following the selection of a Proposed Site Option during detailed design stage.
Technical Design: Further information was requested in relation to why Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) has been proposed for the substation rather than Gas-Insulated Switchgear (GIS). Concerns were also raised about the level of “future-proofing” the substation with additional capacity. The public suggested that this might attract further infrastructure into the area.	10	Substation	While AIS is currently the default, the potential use of GIS, including newer SF6-free technology, is being explored. The assessments to determine which type of technology will be used for the substation will be carried out in the next design development phase. Substation “future-proofing” is required to meet regulatory obligations and ensure infrastructure is built in a coordinated and efficient manner. SSEN Transmission recognises the need to strike a balance between providing for future demand and minimising unnecessary land use and the number of additional bays is currently being assessed.
Visualisations: It was highlighted by the community, that without visualisations of the substation options, shared in advance of the consultation event, the community could not accurately visualise what they were responding to in terms of	4	Substation	Visualisations / modelling have been developed and uploaded to the project website ⁴ . It should be noted that the visualisations that will be shared at this stage are indicative and subject to change following development and refinement of the substation design.

Topic and Feedback Comments	Approx. no. Times Raised	Relevant to Substation / UGC / Both	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
the impact on nearby properties, the wider landscape and potential access routes.			Given the stages of the projects (site selection / route options) the production of visualisations to NatureScot and THC guidelines has not yet been undertaken. Further supporting information such as visualisations from a select number of viewpoints will be provided as part of the future applications for consent.
Landscape and the Cairngorms National Park: Concerns relating to the potential for visual impacts were raised by the community. Some members of the public emphasised Scotland's natural beauty as its greatest asset and opposed the construction of substations in or near the Cairngorms National Park.	18	Substation	These concerns have been noted. While some site options and route options are within the Cairngorms National Park boundary, it should be highlighted that the Earba PSH Scheme must connect into the Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL, which passes through the park. If the substation was located outwith the park, then it would likely require additional OHL infrastructure through the park to divert the existing Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL to the substation and back again to form a connection. SSEN Transmission will seek to minimise the visual impact of the proposed substation through siting, screening, and planting. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be undertaken to support a future application for consent (as part of an EIA Report), following the conclusion of the detailed substation design stage. The voluntary EA that will accompany the application for the UGC will also have a dedicated landscape and visual appraisal chapter.
Wildlife: The potential for wildlife impacts were also raised by the community as a key issue in relation to the UGC and substation, with references to wildcats, beavers, deer, and protected bird species.	10	Both	This has been noted. The site selection and route selection process to date has been informed by a series of surveys undertaken in 2024 and 2025, this includes protected species, habitat and landscape and visual walkovers. Ornithology surveys commenced in October 2024 and finished in September 2025. These surveys comprised of Vantage Point watches, walked transects, breeding bird surveys and targeted species-specific watches for flight activity.

Topic and Feedback Comments	Approx. no. Times Raised	Relevant to Substation / UGC / Both	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
			As the project progresses, design will be guided by both desk-based review, surveys results and further ecological and ornithological surveys as required, and SSEN Transmission will liaise with NatureScot, Saving Wildcats, and other statutory and non-statutory bodies to ensure ecological concerns are considered.
Forestry and Cultural Heritage: Queries were also raised about the treatment of forestry and archaeological heritage in the area of Site Option 1 and Site Option 2.	4	Substation	These concerns have been noted. Forestry and cultural heritage have been a key consideration in the site selection process thus far. Site Option 1 would minimise felling requirements compared to Site Option 2, and Site Option 2 is also constrained due to the presence of the Druim an Aird township.
Site Option 1: Numerous community members raised concerns related to the site options, in particular to the Potential Site Option 1. Concern was raised by the local community and businesses over the potential to be negatively impacted by the construction of the substation in relation to proximity, visual impact, operational and construction noise, as well as potential effects on property values and health. One of the online feedback forms that was returned was in favour of Site Option 1 and stated that they were happy with the project thus far.	25	Substation	Impacts to local businesses and accommodation will be considered in further detail throughout the development process and discussions will be undertaken with THC. SSEN Transmission are willing to discuss any specific concerns with the community in more detail to gain a full understanding of community requirements and concerns during this process. Community feedback is an essential part of this process, and all concerns raised will be fully considered as part of the site appraisal and project stages moving forwards. Feedback in favour of Site Option 1 has also been noted.
Ardverikie Estate Land for Substation: A member of the public requested that SSEN Transmission find out if the	1	Substation	Ardverikie Estate has raised no objection in principle to hosting the substation as can be seen in Table 5.1 above. Site Option 3 and Site Option 4 that were

Topic and Feedback Comments	Approx. no. Times Raised	Relevant to Substation / UGC / Both	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
owners of the Ardverikie Estate would be willing to have Coire Mashie substation within their land.			presented at consulted are entirely within the estate and Site Option 1 falls partially within the estate.
Additional Site Options: A significant amount of feedback was raised in relation to the community's desire to have additional site options introduced for appraisal and consideration. Two site options were proposed by the public, as follows: 1. An additional site option to be appraised on Ardverikie Estate was called for by several members of the public. It was suggested that a site on the estate to the south of Site Option 2 would be much less visible for the nearby dwellings. 2. A community preference for extending the existing Melgarve substation rather than constructing a new facility was also highlighted.	25	Substation	The additional site options (further to the five site options presented in the May 2025 Consultation Document (May 2025)¹) that the public proposed were considered by SSEN Transmission. An appraisal of both has been undertaken. 1. An additional site option has been developed to the south of Site Option 2 within Ardverikie Estate. This has been called Site Option 6 and can be seen on Figure 3. 2. Initial studies concluded that extending Melgarve Substation was technically challenging and it was not taken forward. However, following community feedback, this option has been reviewed again. This has been called Site Option 7 and can be seen on Figure 3. The findings of the appraisals of the additional two site options have been documented for environmental and engineering considerations. The appraisals are both available on the project website⁴, and the findings are also summarised in Section 7.2 of this report.
Noise Impacts: Further information was requested in relation to the potential noise generated from substations.	3	Substation	The primary noise source within a substation is generally a transformer and reactor. There are anticipated to be 2 reactors at the new Coire Mashie substation and future space provision for 2 transformers. Noise assessment will be undertaken as part of the EIA, which is required for the planning application.
Roads and access: Community feedback related to the potential for an impact of construction traffic on the community and it was highlighted that improvements to the	4	Substation	This has been noted. A traffic management plan will be undertaken and submitted to the governing roads department for approval and comment on any public road improvements that will be required.

Topic and Feedback Comments	Approx. no. Times Raised	Relevant to Substation / UGC / Both	Response / Action by SSEN Transmission
local road may be required in advance of the projects. Comments also related to the lack of clarity on access routes to reach the substation site options.			In relation to the access routes to reach the substation site options, this concern was noted and following the public consultation event a plan was uploaded showing a proposed access route to each of the site options and uploaded to the project website to allow the community to assess the site options taking into account the access routes ⁴ .
Temporary Workforce: Queries around the temporary workforce for the construction of the projects and where they would be housed was raised by members of the public. It was also raised if this housing could be provided in a way which could be kept by the community after completion to allow for affordable housing in the area. It was queried whether local healthcare, housing, and amenities could cope with the influx of construction workers.	4	Both	Any strategy to assess potential workers' accommodations will be the responsibility of the Principal Contractor, which has not yet been appointed.
Community and Economic Impacts: The community requested information related to economic and social benefits. Questions were raised about whether a Community Benefit Fund would be established.	10	Both	Information regarding SSEN Transmission's Community Benefit Funds can be accessed via the dedicated Community Benefit Fund project webpage¹⁸. SSEN Transmission are also keen to work closely with local communities in proximity to their projects to understand what opportunities there may be to leave a local legacy. Any sponsorship requests can be also raised with the project Community Liaison Manager to take to the business for consideration.
Project Risk Register: It was queried by a member of the public if SSEN Transmission will share the Coire Mashie substation project risk register with the public.	1	Substation	SSEN Transmission cannot share the internal risk register as it contains potentially sensitive and confidential information.

7. IDENTIFICATION OF A PROPOSED SITE AND ROUTE

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 SSEN Transmission has reviewed and considered the responses provided by all stakeholders following the identification of a potential substation site, as set out within the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹. Responses and detail of any relevant SSEN Transmission action to each of the points raised by stakeholders through the consultation process are included in **Sections 5 and 6** above. Those points raised in relation to the Earba PSH Grid Connection UGC have also been included where appropriate.

7.1.2 The below paragraphs outline how the project(s) have / will implement consultation feedback considerations and move forwards.

7.2 How the Project has been Informed by the Consultation Process – Coire Mashie substation

7.2.1 The consultation process for the project raised a number of comments from Statutory and Non-Statutory bodies as well as from the local community and landowners.

7.2.2 Responses related to the substation site selection from statutory and non-statutory bodies, as seen in **Table 5.1**, centred on cultural heritage, proximity to dwellings and habitats and protected species. HES raised concerns about potential visual impacts on scheduled monuments and category A-listed buildings, particularly for Site Options 3, 4 and 5. Glenshero Estate would also not be in favour of Site Options 4 and 5 being taken forwards due to proximity to the residential and letting accommodation. In relation to ecology and protected species concerns raised, SSEN Transmission confirmed that it will continue close liaison with RZSS – SWA and NatureScot as the project progresses, ensuring wildcat-specific mitigation and monitoring measures are researched and potentially developed as part of the future project application. The location of a wildcat release pen in the vicinity of the site options has also been considered when determining the selection of a proposed site. On balance, Site Option 1 would likely limit the potential for the impacts as described by statutory and non-statutory consultees should it be taken forwards.

7.2.3 The public and local community raised questions about consultation methods and the clarity of information provided by SSEN Transmission, to which SSEN Transmission provided responses to in **Table 6.1**. As stated in **Section 4.2**, during the consultation event, a Q & A session was conducted with the SSEN Transmission project team and a number of community members. Notes were taken on the key questions by the SSEN Transmission project team and have been included in this Report on Consultation where appropriate and answers were supplied by SSEN Transmission to the Laggan community council further to those answers given at the event.

7.2.4 Public and local community feedback raised concerns in relation to the site options in general and in particular, for Site Option 1. Although one feedback form received was in favour of Site Option 1, the primary concerns related to landscape effects and proximity to dwellings. Additional topics such as road access, worker accommodation, and community benefit opportunities were also raised. As described in **Table 6.1**, for the Coire Mashie substation project, in response to this community and stakeholder feedback, two additional site options have been brought into consideration and appraised. These are described below and can be seen on **Figure 3**:

- **Site Option 6:** An additional site option situated entirely within Ardverikie Estate, approximately 3 km to the south of Strathmashie and the A86. The site option is located partially within the CNP boundary to the south of the originally appraised Site Option 2. Site Option 6 is located approximately 3 km to the south of the existing Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL²¹ and would therefore require additional OHL infrastructure to divert the existing Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL to the substation and back again to form a connection. This could see a requirement of up to approximately 10 km of additional OHL to allow for deviation from the current Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL to reach the substation and then back again to rejoin the Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL.
- **Site Option 7:** An additional site option located within the vicinity of the site of the existing 400 / 132 kV Melgarve substation. The appraisal assumed that Site Option 7 would either comprise an extension to the existing Melgarve substation or would be located adjacent to it. Approximately 5 km of additional UGC would be required to connect to Site Option 7 compared to what would be required for the other, previously appraised site options, resulting in a total length of UGC connection of approximately 21 km (depending on route selected).

7.2.5 A full description of the additional site options, the environmental appraisal process and the environmental findings is documented in an environmental addendum to the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ available on the project website^{4,5}. A separate engineering additional appraisal RAG document also summarised the engineering RAG ratings available on the project website^{4,6}.

7.2.6 The additional **environmental** RAG appraisal identified that both Site Option 6 and Site Option 7 present considerable constraints across a number of environmental topic areas. Whilst Site Option 6 offers some potential for mitigation and carries fewer constraints than Site Option 7 overall, the option intersects areas of ancient and native woodland, would affect Annex 1 habitats including blanket bog and wet heath, and would likely be visible from a number of recreational routes. The proximity of Site Option 7 to the River Spey SAC / SSSI increases the potential for this site to both directly and indirectly adversely affect the qualifying / notified features of these designated sites. Furthermore, Site Option 7 is constrained by existing infrastructure and further substation development of the scale proposed would likely result such infrastructure becoming a dominating feature in the local landscape, with visual effects difficult to mitigate. Neither of the additional site options are considered preferable over Site Option 1 for environmental considerations.

7.2.7 In relation to the additional **engineering** RAG appraisal, both Site Options 6 and 7 present a high potential for development constraints due to the surrounding terrain and access considerations. The steep topography and elevated position of both sites would highly constrain construction. Site Option 6 is particularly constrained by footprint requirements and ground conditions. Although some flatter areas exist, these coincide with SEPA mapped floodplains and two watercourses associated with the River Pattack. Site Option 6 slopes sharply, with gradients up to 20 degrees, so substantial earthworks would be required to achieve a level platform. Low-lying areas to the west would also face flood risk, while the flatter ground to the east lies within peat deposits, further reducing suitability. Access would also be a significant challenge for Site Option 6, with around 4 km of road upgrades needed from the A86. Site Option 7 performs slightly better in terms of access but is still located approximately 10 km from the A86 via General Wade's Military Road. Site Option 7 involves crossing to the North of the A86, Loch Laggan and Kinloch Laggan via UGC which has previously been discounted due to technical difficulties. Overall, from an engineering perspective, Site Option 7 is the more favourable of the two, though both present notable topographical and logistical challenges. Neither of the additional site options are considered preferable over Site Option 1 for environmental considerations.

²¹ Beauly–Denny 400 kV overhead transmission line began pre-construction work in November 2010, with the first tower erected in February 2012, and full energisation occurred in December 2015. The OHL was a joint venture between SSEN Transmission and Scottish Power Transmission Ltd (SP Energy Networks). Balfour Beatty were the main contractor / constructor.

- 7.2.8 The additional electrical infrastructure connection requirements (deviation of the existing Beauly – Denny 400 kV OHL in relation to Site Option 6 and up to 21 km of UGC through a sensitive landscape for Site Option 7) would also lead to the potential for increased habitats, protected species, ornithology, visual and forestry constraints for Site Option 6 and increased natural heritage designation, habitats, protected species, ornithology, visual and forestry constraints for Site Option 7.
- 7.2.9 Thus, the introduction of Site Option 6 and Site Option 7 into the site selection process does not alter the conclusions of the May 2025 Consultation Document (May 2025)¹. Site Option 1 remains the preferred option on an environmental and engineering basis, as reflected in the RAG ratings.
- 7.2.10 Therefore, having considered the consultation feedback, and having appraised an additional two site options, SSEN Transmission has concluded that the proposed substation site option to be taken forward is **Site Option 1** (see **Figure 4**).

7.3 How the Project has been Informed by the Consultation Process – Earba PSH Grid Connection UGC

- 7.3.1 The responses related to route selection from statutory and non-statutory consultees, as seen in **Table 5.1**, primarily centred on transport, recreation and protected species. Transport Scotland noted that Route Option 3 and Route Option F would both require a crossing of the A86(T). These route options are not anticipated to be proposed though, as they pass through sensitive landscapes and would not serve the Proposed Site Option 1. Mountaineering Scotland strongly suggested that the RAG ratings for the route options should be increased due to construction disturbance that could be expected. Mountaineering Scotland also provided the grid references for the climbing venues in the area that could be affected. These points have been noted and added to SSEN Transmission's mapping datasets and will be a key consideration on the assessment of recreation in the alignment selection for the UGC. As per the substation progression, SSEN Transmission will ensure close liaison with RZSS – SWA and NatureScot is maintained as the project progresses, ensuring wildcat-specific mitigation and monitoring measures are researched and potentially developed.
- 7.3.2 The public and local community had no feedback in relation to preference for specific route options as seen in **Table 6.1**. Community concerns centred around visual and ecological considerations as per the substation feedback.
- 7.3.3 Following review of the consultation feedback, SSEN Transmission concluded that the potential route option combination presented in the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹ of **Route Option 1, Route Option B2, Route Option B3** could be maintained as the preference to take forwards to alignment selection stage. However, preliminary work to access the potential for alignment options revealed that Route Option B2 faced very challenging technical constraints, making it unsuitable for further consideration.
- 7.3.4 The primary challenges with Route Option B2 are associated with crossing the River Pattack and the limited opportunities to launch or receive a trenchless crossing due to steep gradients and topography. The only feasible launch and receive area in the route option is located approximately 40 m upstream of the Falls of Pattack, and forestry removal would be required both on the approach to the river crossing and beyond the crossing. Ground investigations would be required to determine a feasible construction method at the crossing location and if ground conditions are found to be unsuitable for a trenchless solution, then there are no alternative crossing points available while remaining within Route Option B2.
- 7.3.5 Given these challenges, it has been determined that an alternative route option will need to be taken forward to the alignment selection stage. Following further engineering assessment, Route Option B1 is now considered to provide the most technically achievable means of connecting to the proposed site option, offering a more feasible solution to overcome the constraints encountered with Route Option B2. Route Option B1 passes through similar areas to Route Option B2 in relation to environmental and engineering constraints, but would have a less constrained crossing of the River Pattack due to more crossing options being available with more

favourable terrain either side of the river. Any localised environmental constraints are expected to be able to be avoided by careful alignment design. This is particularly in relation to habitats, ornithology and areas of peat. SSEN Transmission undertook Phase 1 Peat Probing surveys through these route options at the end of 2024, and alignments which avoid areas of deep peat as far as possible will be generated and taken forwards to further assessment. Further peat probing and ground investigations will be required, and it will be necessary to show that the deepest peat has been avoided. A peat management and peat landslide and hazard risk assessment will be required where peat deposits are crossed.

- 7.3.6 Therefore, following review of the consultation feedback and accounting for the additional engineering constraints associated with Route Option B2, SSEN Transmission concluded that the Proposed Route Option to take forwards to alignment selection stage is **Route Option 1, Route Option B1, Route Option B3** (see **Figure 4**).

8. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

8.1 Conclusion

- 8.1.1 The proposed Earba PSH scheme requires connection to the electricity transmission network. It is anticipated that this will be achieved via the construction and operation of a new 400 kV substation located within close proximity to the existing Beaulay – Denny 400 kV OHL to enable onward transmission of electricity. A new 400 kV UGC routed between the proposed scheme and the new substation would also be required. The UGC would be expected to fall under SSEN Transmission's permitted development rights, therefore, these works do not require statutory public consultation or specific consent, but have been included for completeness.
- 8.1.2 This Report on Consultation documents the consultation process which has been undertaken for the Coire Mashie substation project between May 2025 and September 2025. The programme of consultation was designed to engage with stakeholders including statutory and non-statutory consultees, local communities, landowners and individual residents in order to invite feedback in response to the site options identified for the proposed Coire Mashie substation, as set out in the Consultation Document (May 2025)¹. Any comments relevant to the UGC Earba PSH Grid Connection received during the consultation period have also been reviewed.
- 8.1.3 This report has described the key responses received and how statutory, non-statutory and public feedback has informed the identification of a proposed site to be taken forwards. The consultation process and the further appraisal of two additional site options have confirmed that **Site Option 1** should be taken forward as the proposed site within which to progress post site selection activities.
- 8.1.4 In relation to the UGC following review of the consultation feedback and accounting for the additional engineering constraints associated with Route Option B2, SSEN Transmission concluded that the Proposed Route Option to take forwards to alignment selection stage is **Route Option 1, Route Option B1, Route Option B3**.
- 8.1.5 The proposed site and proposed route can be seen on **Figure 4**.

8.2 Next Steps

- 8.2.1 The substation project will now progress into the detailed design and post site selection activities stage. Formal Pre-application consultation (PAC) events for the proposed substation under the *Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997* (as amended) ('TCPA 1997') are expected to take place in Spring 2026.
- 8.2.2 The Earba PSH Grid Connection UGC will progress into alignment selection stage, commencing with the identification of alignment options within the proposed route. These will be informed by this consultation exercise and through detailed surveys. Updates in relation to the UGC are expected to be presented to stakeholders at the Coire Mashie substation PAC events, though, as the UGC is expected to be permitted development, these works do not require statutory public consultation.

