

Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation Report on Consultation

November 2023



Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of this document

The purpose of this Report on Consultation (RoC) is to document the consultation responses received as part of the site selection consultation process for the proposed Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation, and where appropriate, show how the option taken forward to the next stage has been informed by this process.

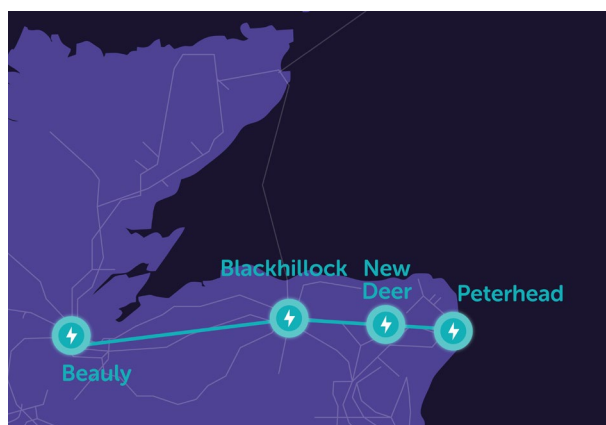
This Report details the consultation process undertaken, including details of consultation methods and advertising, those consulted and/or contributing to the process and it also summarises the feedback received, including objections, concerns, questions and statements of support. It sets out clearly how stakeholder feedback has influenced decisions made regarding the option taken forward. The document confirms which Site option for the proposed Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation is being progressed to the next stage of development and provides information on the next steps that we are implementing, leading to the next public consultation events.

1.2. Project Overview

Based on the requirements outlined in National Grid ESO's Pathway to 2030 Holistic Network Design, we have developed proposals to reinforce the transmission system between Beauly and Peterhead via Blackhillock and New Deer. To facilitate this, we are proposing to establish a new 400kV overhead line (OHL) between Beauly, Blackhillock, New Deer and Peterhead. This also requires four new 400kV substations to be constructed near Beauly, Blackhillock, New Deer and Peterhead to enable future connections and export routes to areas of demand. These are being progressed as five separate projects but projects which are intrinsically linked and which were all presented during the consultation process. This Report on Consultation relates to the proposed Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation.

Please refer to the following webpages for a summary Report on Consultation and project specific Reports on Consultations for the proposed Beauly to Peterhead 400kV OHL, new Beauly Area, New Deer 2 and Netherton Hub (near Peterhead) 400kV substations:

- [Beauly Area 400kV Substation](#)
- [Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL](#)
- [New Deer 2 400kV Substation](#)
- [Netherton Hub Report on Consultation](#)



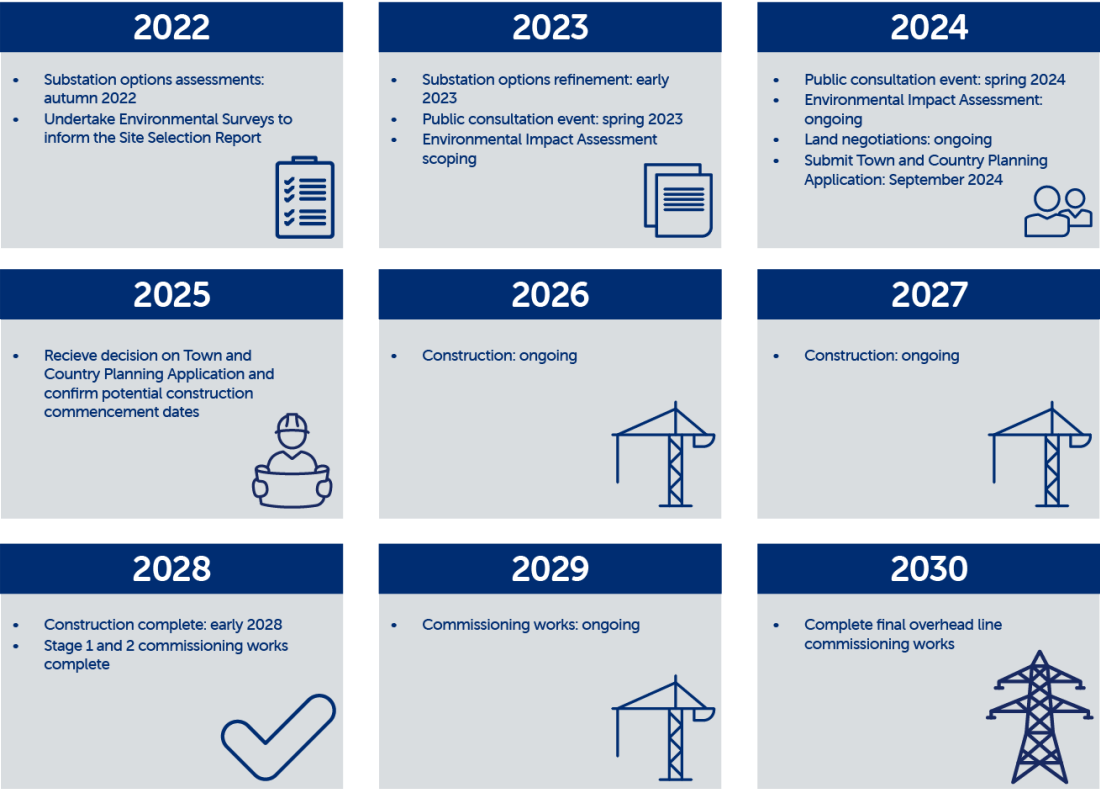
New SSEN Transmission projects between Beauly and Peterhead

The proposed Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation forms part of the Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment (ASTI) projects. The new substation is required to be built near the existing Blackhillock substation, near Keith, Aberdeenshire.

The proposed Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation project includes:

- Construction of a new outdoor, Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS), 400kV substation. The approximate maximum dimensions of the proposed substation platform are 800m x 400m, not including the groundworks required to create a level platform.
- Space provision to allow for connection of future renewable energy generation projects.
- Areas for drainage, landscaping/screening and habitat enhancement.
- Permanent and temporary access roads.
- Temporary areas required during construction for laydown and welfare.
- Diversion of the existing Blackhillock-Rothienorman OHL, to facilitate the connection between Blackhillock Substation and the proposed Blackhillock 2 Substation.

1.3. Project Timeline



Find out more about our 2030 projects: www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/2030-projects/

1.4. What we were consulting on

As a stakeholder-led business, we understand the importance of involving communities and key stakeholders throughout each stage of our development process. Relevant and insightful stakeholder feedback collected during consultations is critical to ensuring that our decision making is informed, and stakeholder concerns are taken into consideration at each stage of the project’s development.

During this consultation, we presented options regarding our site selection for the proposed Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation. The consultation included information regarding technology options, environmental and technical considerations, set out the project development process and explained the factors which were taken into consideration in the selection process. The consultation explained how Site Options 4, 7, 10, 12 and 13 (see Figure 1 below), were assessed as part of the Detailed Site Selection exercise. At the March 2023 consultation event, site option 10 was presented as the Preferred Option.

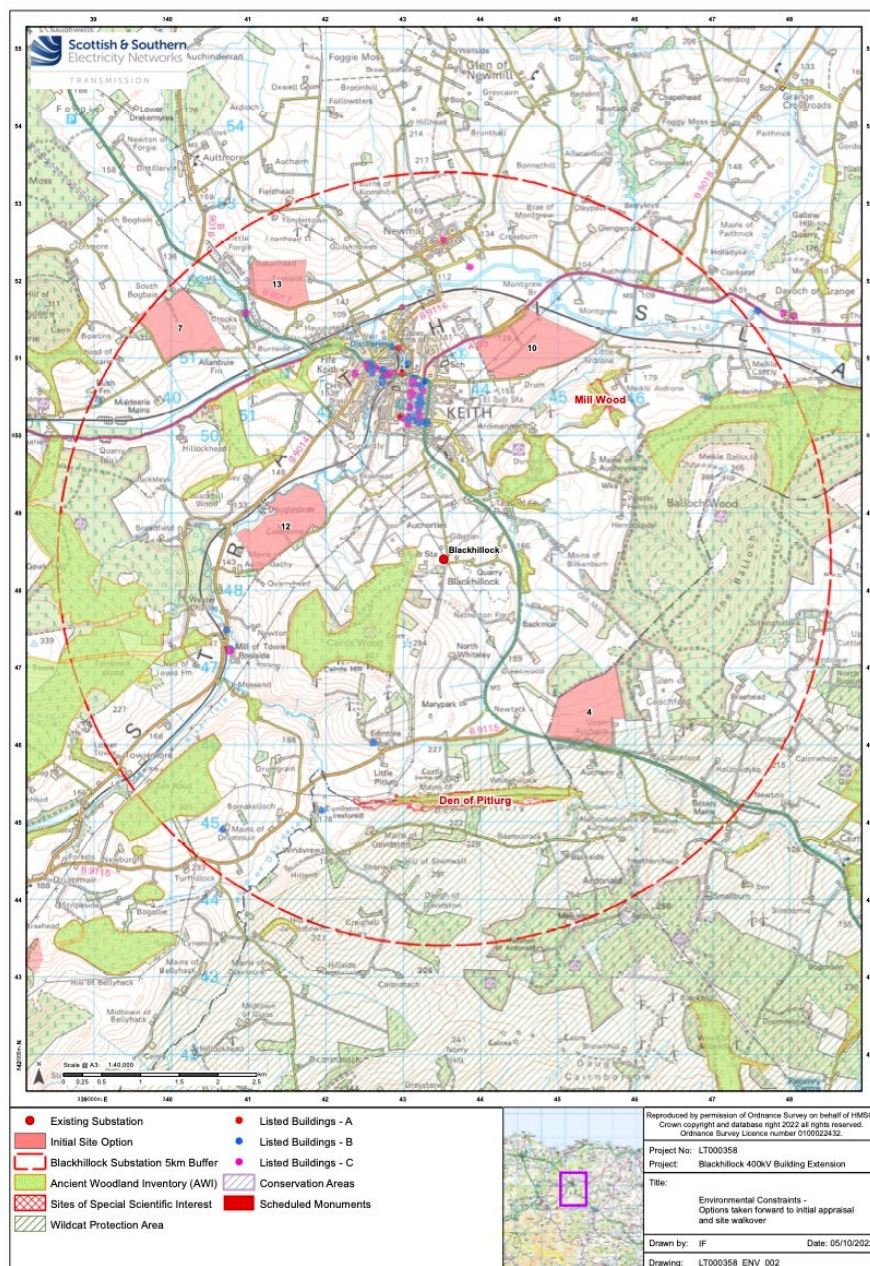


Figure 1 - Detailed Site Selection Options

2. The Consultation Process

2.1. Who we consulted with

Our consultation process sought to capture the views of anyone who had an interest in our proposals, and we invited comments from all interested parties. During our engagements we aimed to ensure that we captured the views of:

- statutory consultees
- non-statutory consultees
- community members and local organisations; including local elected members
- landowners and occupiers

2.2. Consultation feedback period

The public consultation period was open from 21 March until 21 April 2023. However, as some residents stated that they did not receive a postcard invite and were unaware of the event, we included another substation consultation event in Longmore Community Hall in April 2023 and we subsequently extended the feedback period until 30 June 2023.

Statutory Consultees were invited to provide feedback on our Consultation Document between 28 February and 14 April 2023. Where possible, affected landowners were contacted ahead of the consultation period to discuss land related considerations or concerns.

2.3. The advertising process

The consultation events were advertised extensively using the following methods:

- Press & Journal newspaper
- Our social media channels and the dedicated project webpage.
- Community Councillors and Local Elected Members were emailed in advance with information they could share within their local area.
- Postcards were sent to 3,842 homes and 178 businesses within communities potentially impacted by our proposals. Copies of the postcard invites can be found in Appendix B.
- An email was sent to people within the Keith area that had attended the previous Corridor event for the proposed Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL project in September 2022. 54 individuals were on our mailing list for project updates.

2.4. Stakeholder participation

In March 2023, we launched our initial consultation on site selection for the proposed Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation, providing an introduction and starting our engagement process. The consultation event was due to take place on Tuesday 7 March but was postponed due to severe weather. We rescheduled to allow time for redistribution of postcard invites within an 8km radius of the proposed site. The rescheduled event took place in Longmore Community Hall in Keith on 21 March 2023 from 2-7pm.

Consultation events	
<p>Site Selection Consultation Longmore Community Hall, Keith 21 March 2023 100 attendees</p>	<p>Route Options Consultation with additional site selection Longmore Community Hall, Keith 20 April 2023 114 attendees</p>

Attendance figures reflect the number of people who had registered attendance at a consultation event. For busier events, the number of attendees can often be considerably higher than recorded.

Stakeholder meetings

In the weeks before, during and after the consultation events, various meetings were held with other key stakeholders such as landowners, statutory and non-statutory consultees and councillors to discuss the project proposals.

Date	Meeting Type	Stakeholder group in attendance
12 April 2023	Councillors Information Event (Microsoft Teams Meeting)	Local Ward Councillors
19 April 2023	Virtual Statutory Consultee Meeting (Microsoft Teams Meeting)	Statutory Consultees including the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit, The Highland Council, The Moray Council, Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot, SEPA and Scottish Forestry
16 May 2023	Teams Meeting	Moray Council
04 September 2023	Teams Meeting	Aberdeenshire Council

2.5. Feedback volume

Feedback from our stakeholders was welcomed via a range of methods. This included online or hard copy feedback forms, emails or letters, notes from the consultation events or stakeholder meetings or from any relevant telephone conversations.

Responses to public consultation



Responses from statutory and non-statutory consultees:

Four statutory bodies of relevance to the project, were contacted and requested to provide feedback on the proposals. Three formal responses and one informal response were received, with a summary of each listed in the Project Specific Feedback Section and provided in Appendix A.

Stakeholder representations

In addition to the feedback, we also received a petition that was signed by over 800 residents in opposition to our Preferred Option. This was sent by post and recorded by the Community Liaison Manager.

3. Consultation Feedback and Our Response

3.1. Common Themes

Across all of our Pathway to 2030 project consultations, we received feedback covering a number of common themes. Although some of this feedback related to topics which fell outside of the scope of our consultations, we recognise that it is important to address the points that our stakeholders took the time to raise, which we have summarised in this section. In addition, we have also developed a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that can be viewed [here](#).

Project Need

The need for these projects has been independently assessed by both the GB Electricity System Operator, National Grid ESO (ESO); and the GB energy regulator, Ofgem.

Some responses questioned whether these projects are needed at all. In many cases, those questioning the need have done so as the electricity these projects will connect and transport is not all needed in the north of Scotland.

Under our licence, we have a legal obligation to provide connections to electricity generators looking to connect to our network and we do not determine the location of new electricity generation. This is led by generators themselves, often underpinned by Government targets and policies.

These projects - which are part of a major upgrade of the electricity transmission network across Great Britain - are needed to unlock the north of Scotland's vast renewable electricity resources and transport that power to demand centres across the UK.

The renewable electricity these projects will transport will play a key role in meeting UK and Scottish Government renewable energy and climate change targets. They will also help secure the country's future energy independence by reducing dependence on imported power from volatile wholesale energy markets.

For more details on why these projects are needed and how this need has been assessed, we have published [a short briefing paper](#).

Technology Choice

Several respondents have questioned the technology choice, particularly why the infrastructure cannot all be installed subsea or underground, instead of overhead line steel lattice towers.

Due to the significant volume of power we need to connect and transport from generation source to areas of demand the ESO concluded that there is a need for both onshore and offshore network reinforcements.

The ESO's and Ofgem's independent assessment of need for this project and our wider Pathway to 2030 programme was also based on the technology choices we are progressing.

Underground cabling is highly sensitive to ground conditions and terrain. There can be significant and lasting environmental impacts and future land use constraints associated with undergrounding; together with the technical challenges of operating, maintaining and in the event of a fault, restoring power.

Cost is also an important consideration, with subsea and undergrounding significantly more expensive than overhead. As the cost of investing in the electricity transmission network is ultimately recovered by electricity bill payers across GB, cost is one of the key factors in the ESO's and Ofgem's assessment of need, and in Ofgem's future assessment of the costs we are allowed to recover for these projects.

Environmental impacts

We have received feedback highlighting concerns about potential environmental impacts, particularly on local biodiversity.

As one of the greatest risks to our natural environment and biodiversity is climate change, these projects are part of the solution if we are to tackle the climate emergency and deliver net zero emissions in Scotland and across the United Kingdom.

However, we do recognise that in delivering these critical projects, there will be unavoidable impacts and we would like to reassure stakeholders that we take our environmental responsibilities extremely seriously.

To deliver our projects in the most sensitive way possible we ensure environmental factors are considered at every stage in the development of each project, along with technical requirements and economic considerations. A key way we do this for the environment is to follow the mitigation hierarchy. Firstly, we seek to avoid sensitive areas wherever possible and where impacts are likely to occur we seek to minimise these, provide mitigation and identify opportunities to restore.

In addition, all of our consent applications will be accompanied by detailed environmental assessments which are prepared by external specialists. These assessments will consider impacts on a wide range of environmental topics (many of which have been highlighted in the stakeholder responses to this consultation) and identify measures that may be required to mitigate any impacts.

We also acknowledge that minimising impacts is not enough on its own, and we have therefore committed to delivering a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on all our projects; as well as compensatory planting for any trees felled during the construction phase, where possible with native species. Where our projects are unable to completely avoid irreplaceable habitats (for example peatland or ancient woodland), we have also introduced a commitment to restore more habitat than we affect. You can find out more about how we are delivering a positive environmental legacy by [clicking here](#).

In the following section of this Report on Consultation, we will address any specific environmental feedback relevant to the options we consulted on.

Socio-Economic impact

Several community responses highlighted concerns about the impact on the local community, including visual and tourism impacts. We have also been asked what local benefits these projects will provide.

We acknowledge that there will inevitably be a visual impact on some local communities and are committed to do all that we can to minimise and mitigate this as part of the ongoing development of this project. The environmental assessment that will accompany our consent applications will also consider landscape and visual impacts.

From a tourism perspective, as part of our consent application, we intend to consider socio-economic and tourism impacts as part of the suite of documentation to be submitted to relevant consenting authorities. This will ensure that appropriate consideration is given to these issues in the consenting process.

These projects will also provide significant benefits to local and national economies. Independent socio-economic analysis undertaken on our Pathway to 2030 projects has estimated that they will collectively support around 20,000 jobs across the UK, around 9,000 of which are expected in Scotland, [adding billions of economic value](#) to the economy.

We also expect these projects to deliver significant local benefits, including direct and indirect job opportunities, alongside supply chain opportunities for local businesses. We will set out more details of these opportunities in due course, including ‘Meet the Buyer’ events to introduce local businesses to the opportunities presented through our main supply chain partners.

We are also committed to introducing community benefit funding, recognising the important role host communities will play in delivering the infrastructure required to meet our national endeavours to build a cleaner, more secure and affordable energy system for homes and businesses across Scotland and Great Britain in the long-term.

In the following section of this Report on Consultation, we will address any specific community feedback relevant to the options we consulted on.

Consultation process

We have received some feedback that our consultation process was not well promoted to affected communities or wider stakeholders and concerns around the timescale provided for feedback to be given.

As we set out in the 'Consultation Process' section of this Report on Consultation, we held a number of public consultation events, public meetings and bilateral and group engagements, using a range of methods to promote our consultations to our stakeholders.

Even at this early stage of development, where our consultation activities are voluntary, we fully recognise the importance of gathering stakeholder input to help inform our development plans. In response to stakeholder feedback, we introduced extensions to our consultation period to encourage anyone interested in these projects to provide their feedback. In addition, we would like to highlight that there will be further opportunity to comment on our proposals through the consenting process and would encourage all stakeholders to fully engage in that formal consultation exercise.

We fully recognise there is always room for improvement and as we look forward to the next round of public consultations, we are committed to apply learning from our first round of consultations to increase awareness, accessibility and coverage of consultation events. We will continue to welcome feedback on how we can further improve how we consult with our stakeholders on our projects.

3.2. Specific Project Related Feedback

Introduction

This section of the report provides our responses to the questions and themes emerging from the public consultation and the responses provided by statutory and non-statutory stakeholders. During each event, the project team directed members of the public to the feedback forms to encourage residents to provide their comments. A follow up email was sent to remind attendees and interested parties to encourage them to provide feedback before the end of the feedback period.

Feedback was analysed by the project teams, supported by Information Analysts, to produce relevant data and key themes outlined in the table below.

Consultation responses have been grouped by the following project themes, ‘Community Impact’, ‘Environmental Impact’, and ‘Economic Impact’.

The stakeholders have been grouped into the categories outlined in the table below:

Stakeholder Group	Examples
Statutory Consultees	Historic Environment Scotland (HES), SEPA, NatureScot, Local Authorities
Non-Statutory Consultees	RSPB, Scottish Water, Forestry and Land Scotland
Community members and local organisations	Homeowners, local businesses, Residents Associations, elected members
Landowners & occupiers	Landowners, crofters, tenant farmers, occupiers of properties in closest proximity to substations

Community Impact

Summary of feedback	Contributing Stakeholder Group	Our Response
<p><u>Moray Council</u> The Council have concerns about the Preferred Option choice and may formally request the site selection appraisal and decision-making documentation around the Preferred Option.</p>	<p>Statutory Stakeholder</p>	<p>Moray Council’s feedback is noted. We have taken this on board, along with other feedback received through this consultation exercise identifying that the proposed location is not considered suitable and should be reassessed. In response we have revisited the site selection process and concluded that Site 4 can be taken forward as an alternative to Site 10.</p>
<p><u>NatureScot</u> NatureScot highlighted the landscape design importance for mitigating visual effects.</p>	<p>Statutory Stakeholder</p>	<p>NatureScot’s feedback is noted and we will consider landscape design for visual effects mitigation as the project progresses.</p>
<p>It was queried whether the proposals would include screening of the site.</p>	<p>Community members and local organisations</p>	<p>We will consider landscape and planting design for visual effects mitigation as the project progresses.</p>
<p>Concern was expressed over the selection of the Preferred Option without consulting on other locations.</p>	<p>Community members and local organisations</p>	<p>The project team carried out assessments on all viable sites within the 5 km radius of the existing substation. Based on scoring criteria around Environmental, Engineering and Economical consideration, on balance Site 10 was considered to be the Preferred Option. This was an initial assessment and subject to further consultation. The consultation event was the opportunity for the public to comment on the site selection process and the choice of Preferred Option. We have taken on board feedback received through this consultation exercise and concluded that Site 4 will be taken forward as a viable alternative to Site 10.</p>

Information was requested on the size of the towers for the OHL which will connect into the substation.

Community members and local organisations

The tower suite being considered for use on this project has tower heights ranging from 42m to 68m. Based on the general topography observed it is believed that the average tower height will be in the region of 57m, with some towers having a requirement to be taller and some may be less than this. As the project progresses, further work will be done to identify specific requirements in terms of tower heights and locations.

Request for detail of mitigation for noise from the project.

Landowners & occupiers

Detailed noise surveys and assessments will be undertaken to identify and address potential construction and operational noise impacts on nearby residential receptors. Appropriate noise limits will be agreed in consultation with local authorities and the proposed development will not be permitted to exceed these limits.

The Preferred Option is too close to town and amenities such as the nursery, primary school, cemetery, new housing developments and on the site of the proposed health centre. All of which may restrict future regeneration of Keith.

Community members and local organisations

Following consultation, it was clear that members of the community were concerned about the proximity of the proposed option to the town. We take this, and other feedback received through this consultation exercise, on board and have concluded that Site 4 will be taken forward as a viable alternative to Site 10.

We recognise and appreciate the constructive feedback from the community that demonstrates an understanding of the need for the project but that the proposed location is not suitable and should be reassessed.

The substation being called 'Blackhillock 2' was considered to be confusing as the sites were widespread and not adjacent to the existing Blackhillock substation; people therefore may not have engaged in the consultation who live near the sites.

Community members and local organisations
Landowners & occupiers

This feedback has been taken on board and will help shape our promotion and marketing of future events in relation to the substation development. Following on from our initial event in March 2023, we were able to target communities within the potentially affected areas to ensure they were aware of the project and were given further opportunity to feedback at the follow up event in April. On all of our marketing materials there are links to the project web pages, where all stakeholders can access information on the project, our site options and the feedback forms.

		<p>In naming the project, we used the title Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation, in reference to the Blackhillock element of the proposed Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL project but fully appreciate that this could be misleading based on the Preferred Option being the opposite side of Keith. The reason for not using a name based on the location of the Preferred Option (e.g. Site 10 - Drum Farm) was due to concerns that doing so may be interpreted as having already made a final decision on the site. Once confirmed, the selected Proposed Option name will be updated to more accurately reflect the site's location.</p>
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Maps used in your consultations are outdated and don't show my property. How can you develop route and site options if you don't know where all the properties are?

Community members and local organisations

It was brought to our attention during the events that the illustrative Ordnance Survey base maps utilised during the consultation events were outdated. The Ordnance Survey base maps utilised were from early 2022. Ordnance Survey update their maps on an ongoing basis, but only issue new versions of the map tiles once there are several changes within a map tile extent. Therefore, although some areas (e.g. new housing) may have been there for several years, Ordnance Survey may not yet have issued an updated version of the map tile showing this.

The Site and Route assessment work used OSAddressBase data which presents all properties held by Ordnance Survey at the time but is also subject to 'missing' properties due to delays in the data being made available as above. Following survey work and planning application review, additional properties have been added to our internal residential property data-set which has been used for route and site selection work.

We'd like to apologise for any alarm this may have caused and offer assurances that these Ordnance Survey base maps did not inform project assessments. Going forward, we will commit to ensuring illustrative maps used for consultations are based on the most recent Ordnance Survey data sets available.

<p>How did SSEN reach the conclusion that Site 10 was the Preferred Option?</p>	<p>Community members and local organisations</p>	<p>Using a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) and digital mapping systems 17 potential sites were identified within the 5km radius of the existing Blackhillock substation. A site walkover was undertaken by a multi-disciplined team in August 2022. This enabled the 17 sites to be filtered to 5 sites. Sites No. 4, 7, 10, 12 and 13 were then assessed as part of the Detailed Site Selection Process.</p> <p>The key aim of this process is to identify a preferred substation site, which avoids where possible physical, environmental and amenity constraints, is likely to be acceptable to stakeholders, and is economically viable, taking into account engineering and connection requirements.</p> <p>The output from this process identified Site 10 as the initial Preferred Option. Site 10 was identified, on balance, as the Preferred Option following careful consideration of the environmental, engineering and cost criteria used for the site selection process.</p> <p>In environmental terms Site 10 was not identified as the Preferred Option due to the potentially significant landscape and visual impact associated with the development of this site, however from an engineering perspective Site 10 was preferred due to its size and topography mitigating the need significant cut & fill works and due to it presenting the best overhead line connection opportunities for Beauly, New Deer and existing Blackhillock Overhead Lines. These connection opportunities included a potential tie-In opportunity to the existing Blackhillock Overhead Line that passes to the south of Site 10.</p> <p>This tie-in opportunity would eliminate the requirement for a new Overhead Line connection back to the existing Blackhillock substation, reducing the amount of new infrastructure required within the area.</p> <p>This opportunity was seen as a major benefit for the community, whereby visual Impacts associated with any new Overhead Line could be avoided. Consequently, on balance, Site 10 was seen as the most suitable option to progress to consultation with.</p>
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<p>Why can't the lines coming into the substation be undergrounded?</p>	<p>Community members and local organisations</p>	<p>It is understood that this response relates to the new overhead lines that the proposed Blackhillock 2 Substation will connect into.</p> <p>As mentioned in the Common Themes section and further detailed in our supporting FAQ, there are several environmental, technical, and operational constraints associated with undergrounding at extra high voltages, particularly at 400kV, which make this option extremely challenging to deliver in many areas of Scotland.</p>
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Environmental Impact

Summary of feedback	Contributing Stakeholder Group	Our Response
<p><u>NatureScot</u> NatureScot do not have specific advice or comments regarding the Preferred Options. NatureScot suggest measures to improve Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) via opportunities to work with the communities most affected.</p>	<p>Statutory Stakeholder</p>	<p>NatureScot's feedback is noted and we will consider BNG opportunities as the project progresses. Please refer to the Common Themes Section above.</p>

<p><u>Historic Environment Scotland (HES)</u> Given the location of the proposed developments HES does not consider there to be a potential for significant impacts and have no further comments regarding the proposal at this stage.</p>	<p>Statutory Stakeholder</p>	<p>Historic Environment Scotland’s response is noted.</p>
<p><u>SEPA</u> SEPA agrees that Site 10 is the preferred option as it has less detrimental impacts on Private Water Supplies and watercourses when compared to the other sites. Regarding Site 10, SEPA provided more detail, stating that no landraising should occur within a future flood extent, and compliance with NPF4 in relation to detailed design, flood risk, watercourse protection and avoidance of culverting. SEPA also referred to a ‘Drain’ which may be a historically straightened watercourse. Further detailed information required to establish if an open watercourse diversion would be acceptable.</p>	<p>Statutory Stakeholder</p>	<p>SEPA’s feedback is noted and we will ensure that no landraising occurs within a future flood extent (1 in 200 plus climate change) and associated works will comply with NPF4, while protecting surrounding watercourses.</p> <p>We have taken all feedback on board and have concluded that Site 4 will be taken forward as a viable alternative to Site 10. We note that SEPA had concerns regarding Site 4 in relation to private water supplies and watercourses and will engage further with SEPA to minimise potential impacts based on Site 4.</p>

<p>Concern expressed over the safeguarding of property's private water supplies.</p>	<p>Landowners & occupiers</p>	<p>As the project progresses, discussions will be held with landowners and surveys completed to locate private water supply sources and infrastructure. Where there is the potential for impacts on private water supplies, assessment will be undertaken which will be detailed within the Environmental Impact Assessment Report completed to support the application for consent to the Scottish Government, with mitigation measures identified where required to safeguard private water supplies.</p>
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Economic Impact

Summary of feedback	Contributing Stakeholder Group	Our Response
<p>Request for clarification of landowner remuneration and compensation.</p>	<p>Landowners & occupiers</p>	<p>In terms of compensation for the construction of Overhead Lines and Substations, this is governed by law - Electricity Act 1989 and Land Compensation Act 1973. Compensation will be agreed on a case by case basis according to a number of factors e.g. number of towers, size of towers and type of property affected as set out in the statutory provisions.</p> <p>We seek to enter into a wayleave with owners of land that will be directly affected by an Overhead Line e.g. where towers are located on the land. Our Wayleave Payment Rates are reviewed on an annual basis.</p> <p>For new substation developments, We will seek to acquire land rights through the purchase of the land upon which the substation will be constructed.</p>

<p>Details as to how the compulsory purchase process will be conducted.</p>	<p>Landowners & occupiers</p>	<p>We will be required to carry out various engineering and environmental surveys on areas of land to inform the design process. Consent will be sought from affected landowners and occupiers in advance for these surveys by our land managers.</p> <p>Once we have finalised the design of the substation, overhead line infrastructure and associated works e.g. access tracks, we will be required to secure the appropriate land rights from the relevant parties for all infrastructure. Our land managers will endeavour to reach a voluntary agreement with each party, however, in the event that agreement cannot be achieved, we would look to utilise our statutory powers under the Electricity Act 1989 in the form of Necessary Wayleaves and Compulsory Purchase Orders.</p>
<p>This project will potentially impact the value of our property. How will SSEN compensate us for this?</p>	<p>Community members and local organisations</p>	<p>The terms of compensation is governed by law - Electricity Act 1989 and Land Compensation Act 1973. Under these regulations only the owners of land or property upon which transmission infrastructure will be constructed will qualify for compensation.</p>

4. Summary of Key Decisions

Having reviewed and considered the stakeholder feedback that we received during the consultation period in conjunction with the results from our detailed site selection process, we now propose to take forward Site 4, shown in Figure 2 below which is available to download from the [project webpage](#), as our Proposed Option for the new Blackhillock 2 Substation.

As part of our initial site selection appraisal, all site options scored equally against the Cost assessment criteria, whilst Site 10 came forward as the Preferred Option from an Engineering perspective, primarily due to the size and topography of the site and relative ease of connection to the new and existing overhead line network. Site 4 was preferred over Site 10 from an Environmental perspective due to the potentially greater landscape and visual impacts associated with the development of Site 10.

On balance, whilst the potential landscape and visual Impacts of Site 10 were acknowledged, the decision was taken to proceed with Site 10 as the Preferred Option for Consultation due to the perceived community benefits associated with the opportunity to provide the required overhead line connection to the existing Blackhillock substation through a tie-in to the existing network. This would mean that no new additional overhead lines would be required thereby minimising the amount of new transmission infrastructure required within the local landscape.

However, the feedback from the consultation stage demonstrated clear opposition to the Preferred Option from the Local Community, local organisations and elected members. In response further assessment of the previously identified alternative sites has been undertaken. This included looking at each site in further detail to determine if there were any opportunities to optimise the previously assessed layout to try and establish an alternative Preferred Option. Key criteria considered included reorientating sites, micro-siting within the existing land boundary, further assessment of potential future connection corridors and digital terrain modelling to better inform platform level and positioning. An assessment was made as to which of the feasible alternatives could adequately address the concerns raised in consultation about Site 10.

As a result of this further assessment process, Site 4 was identified as an alternative to the initially Preferred Option and the decision has been taken that Site 4 will be the Proposed Option to be taken forward to the planning application stage.

Site 4 is situated to the south-east of the settlement of Keith on the boundary of Moray Council and Aberdeenshire Council Local Authority areas. The change to Site 4 will mean that the new substation will be relocated away from the settlement boundary of Keith to a location previously identified as having a neutral landscape and visual impact overall.

Whilst Site 4 was previously discounted in the Engineering assessment due to the topography of the site, further investigations have indicated that a viable cut and fill solution can be delivered. Moreover, further detailed investigations have demonstrated that Site 4 site offers enhanced OHL connectivity and flexibility in comparison to the alternate options, which would offer more resilience and future proofing opportunities for the network. Site 4 also allows for the diversion (tie-in) of the existing Blackhillock-Rothienorman overhead line, providing greater flexibility for the connection back to the existing Blackhillock substation. Site 4 has direct access onto the A96, which is capable of accommodating traffic movements associated with the delivery of large substation equipment, without impact directly on the local highway network of Keith.

The change to Preferred Option from Site 10, to Site 4 as the now Proposed Option to be progressed, provides opportunity to directly respond to and address the concerns raised by the local community and Moray Council through an appropriate alternative solution.

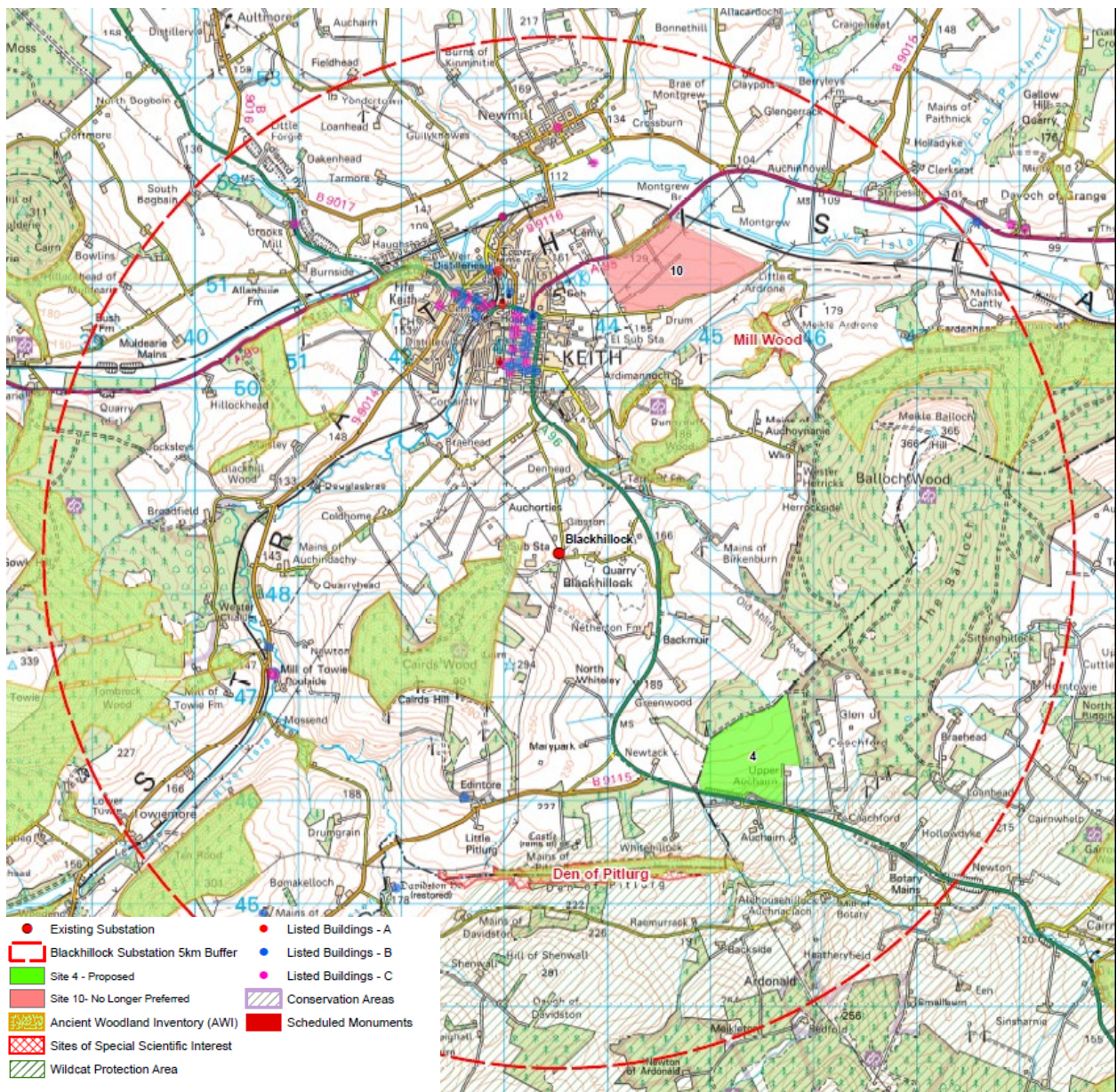


Figure 2 – Proposed Site 4

4.1. Impact on Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL

As the substation location has changed, moving to the Proposed Option at Site 4, south of Keith, the overhead line route options identification process has been revisited to identify a revised route option that connects to the new substation location. Overhead line alignment options within this revised route will be fully assessed as part of the next stage of alignment selection, with a Preferred Alignment presented at our next round of public consultation events.

Further details on the proposed overhead line options are presented in the Report on Consultation for the proposed Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL project, which has been published in tandem with this document.

5. Next Steps

5.1. Ongoing Engagement

The period of consultation described in this report is part of an ongoing engagement process that spans the full development cycle for the project, where feedback is sought at different stages and engagement with stakeholders is continuous as we refine our proposals.

Early Engagement	Ongoing Detailed Engagement	Advanced Engagement	Ongoing Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project webpage live Early meetings offered to elected members Early discussion with statutory consultees Initial Project Consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of feedback recieved from consultation Proactive and responsive stakeholder follow up meetings Engage community working groups Publish FAQs, project updates and next steps Publish a Report On Consultation Engage on the report on consultation e.g. Webinar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-consultation engagement Further project consultation Analysis of feedback recieved from consultation Follow up meetings Publish FAQs, project updates and next steps Publish a Report On Consultation Engage on the report on consultation e.g. Webinar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-submission information sharing event Targeted engagement with those most affected Working group meetings Ongoing project updates Post consent and construction

Following publication of this Report, we, alongside specialist consultants and contractors, will further develop the design of the site.

In Spring 2024, we will hold our first formal Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) event, following the statutory requirements of the planning process. As part of this PAC process, we will present the rationale for the selection of Blackhillock 2, and present indicative information on the likely extent, layout and appearance of the proposed Substation, and give stakeholders and the community the opportunity to comment on our proposals. This event will be followed by a second PAC event, where we will present our analysis of the consultation feedback and explain how that has informed our final design and proposals that will be the focus of our subsequent planning application.

A request for an EIA Scoping Opinion will be made to Aberdeenshire Council and an EIA Scoping Report will be prepared and submitted to support the request. The request for a Scoping Opinion is made to identify the scope of impacts to be addressed and the method of assessment to be applied in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report which is prepared and submitted with the Planning Application for consent.

5.2. Feedback

If you have any further views at this stage, then please get in touch with the Community Liaison Manager at ryan.davidson@sse.com.

Community Liaison Manager
Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks
200 Dunkeld Road,
Perth
PH1 3GH

Further information about the project is available on the project website:

www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/blackhillock-400kv-substation/

6. Glossary

Term	Definition
Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) Substation	An AIS substation is constructed with switchgear which relies on open air components, which can require large clearance areas for operation and safety, which takes up a larger area of land than Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS).
Alignment	A centre line of an overhead line OHL, along with location of key angle structures.
Amenity	The natural environment, cultural heritage, landscape and visual quality. Also includes the impact of SHE Transmission's works on communities, such as the effects of noise and disturbance from construction activities.
Ancient Woodland	Defined in National Planning Framework (NPF) 4 as " <i>land that has maintained continuous woodland habitat since at least 1750</i> ".
Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)	AWI is a provisional guide to the location of Ancient Woodland. It contains three main categories of woodland, all of which are likely to be of value for their biodiversity and cultural value. These include Ancient Woodland, Long-established woodlands of plantation origin (LEPO), and other woodlands.
Area of Search (Study Area)	A broad geographical area within which possible sites might be capable of identification within approximately 5km of the required connectivity point; usually determined by geographical features such as coastlines or hill/mountain ranges, or designation boundaries, such as National Park boundaries.
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	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. It focuses on the change in the biodiversity value of a site, comparing the pre and post construction biodiversity values to ensure a positive impact overall.
Conductor	A metallic wire strung from support structure to support structure, to carry electric current.
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.
Double circuit	A double circuit transmission line comprises of two independent circuits each made up of three sets of conductors (cables).

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A formal process set down in The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 used to systematically identify, predict and assess the likely significant environmental impacts of a proposed project or development.
Engagement	The establishment of effective relationships with individuals or groups.
Electricity System Operator (ESO)	National Grid is the Electricity System Operator (ESO) for Great Britain. The ESO balances electricity supply and demand to ensure the electricity supply.
Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs)	The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes lists those gardens or designed landscapes which are considered by a panel of experts to be of national importance.
Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) Substation	A GIS substation is constructed with switchgear with gaseous reliant components which allows operation and safety clearances to be reduced compared to an AIS substation.
Habitat	Term most accurately meaning the place in which a species lives, but also used to describe plant communities or agglomerations of plant communities.
Holford Rules (as modified)	Principles developed by the late Lord Holford in 1959 which continue to be employed as the basis for routeing high voltage overhead lines and include additional notes on the siting of substations.
Kilovolt (kV)	One thousand volts.
Landscape Character Type (LCT)	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in a landscape that differentiate the area from another.
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).
Micrositing	The process of positioning individual structures to avoid localised environmental or technical constraints.
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation or alleviation of adverse impacts.
National Scenic Area (NSA)	A national level designation applied to those landscapes considered to be of exceptional scenic value.
Offshore Integrated Link	Offshore cable connection between the onshore network and offshore network being developed as part of the Coordinated Offshore Network. This is being developed as a result of the Holistic Network Design (HND) publication in summer of 2022 produced by National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO) to facilitate greater co- ordination and efficiency for offshore windfarms. In the autumn of 2022 Ofgem published their Asset Classification findings which in turn

meant SSENT were tasked with delivering large parts of the Coordinated Offshore Network.

Overhead line (OHL)	An electric line installed above ground, usually supported by lattice steel towers or wooden poles.
Planning Application	Used in this context to describe an application for consent under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
Plantation Woodland	Woodland of any age that obviously originated from intentional planting.
Preferred Option	The option which SSEN Transmission believes offers the best balance of technical and environmental impact considerations identified through initial assessment. This is then subject to consultation with stakeholders, where local and previously unknown considerations may confirm or alter the initial preference. Once confirmed, this becomes the Proposed Option to take forward to the next stage of project development.
RAG Rating	A Red, Amber, Green rating provided to allow for a comparison between different options being appraised.
Red Line Boundary (RLB)	This area should include all land necessary to carry out the Proposed Development.
Riparian Woodland	Natural home for plants and animals occurring in a thin strip of land bordering a stream or river.
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 under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.
Scheduled Monument	A monument which has been scheduled by the Scottish Ministers as being of national importance under the terms of the 'Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979'.
Section 37 Application	An application for consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 to develop an overhead electricity line.
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
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Designated area of national importance for natural heritage. The aim of the SSSI network is to maintain an adequate representation of all natural and semi-natural habitats and native species across Britain.

Span	The section of overhead line between two structures.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	An area designated under the EC Habitats Directive to ensure that rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats or species of community interest are either maintained at or restored to a favourable conservation status.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Landscapes designated by The Highland Council which are considered to be of regional/local importance for their scenic qualities.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	An area designated under the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 74/409/EEC) to protect important bird habitats. Implemented under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
Stakeholders	Organisations and individuals who can affect or are affected by SHE Transmission works.
Study Area	The area within which the corridor, route and alignment study takes place.
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 Area	Site area identified as necessary to deliver all the substation infrastructure requirements e.g. platform, access tracks, temporary construction area, drainage including SUDS, landscaping.
Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)	Drainage solutions that provide an alternative to the direct channelling of surface water through networks of pipes and sewers to nearby watercourses.
Terminal Structure	A structure (tower or pole) required where the line terminates either at a substation or at the beginning and end of an underground cable section.
The National Grid	The electricity transmission network in the Great Britain.
UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP)	The UK BAP was published in 1994 after the Convention on Biological Diversity. It summarised the most threatened species and habitats in the UK and gave detailed plans for their recovery.
Volts	The international unit of electric potential and electromotive force.
Wayleave	A voluntary agreement entered into between a landowner, upon whose land an overhead line is to be constructed, and SHE Transmission
Wild Land Area (WLA)	Those areas comprising the greatest and most extensive areas of wild characteristics within Scotland.
Works	Constructing new transmission infrastructure such as substations, overhead lines, underground cables; major refurbishment of these; the dismantling and removal of any parts of the system; and associated works, which may include formation of access tracks, bridge and road improvements, tree cutting, drainage etc.

7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix A – Statutory Consultee Feedback

Summary of feedback	Contributing Stakeholder Group	Our Response
<p><u>Moray Council</u> The Council have concerns about the Preferred Option and may formally request the site selection appraisal and decision making documentation around the Preferred Option.</p>	<p>Statutory Stakeholder</p>	<p>Moray Council’s feedback is noted. We have taken on board this, and other feedback received through this consultation exercise and has concluded that Site 4 will be taken forward as a viable alternative to Site 10. We recognise and appreciate the constructive feedback from the Council that demonstrates an understanding of the need for the project but that the proposed location is not suitable and should be reassessed.</p>
<p><u>NatureScot</u> NatureScot highlight the landscape design importance for mitigating visual effects. NatureScot do not have specific advice or comments regarding the Preferred Options. NatureScot suggest measures to improve Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) via opportunities to work with the communities most affected.</p>	<p>Statutory Stakeholder</p>	<p>NatureScot’s feedback is noted and we will consider landscape design for visual effects mitigation as the project progresses. NatureScot’s feedback is noted and we will consider BNG opportunities as the project progresses. Please also refer to the Common Themes Section.</p>

Historic Environment Scotland (HES)

Given the location of the proposed developments HES does not consider there to be a potential for significant impacts and have no further comments regarding the proposal at this stage.

Statutory Stakeholder

Historic Environment Scotland’s response is noted.

SEPA

SEPA agrees that Site 10 is the Preferred Option as it has less detrimental impacts on Private Water Supplies and watercourses when compared to the other sites.

Regarding Site 10, SEPA provided more detail, stating that no landraising should occur within a future flood extent, and compliance with NPF4 in relation to detailed design, flood risk, watercourse protection and avoidance of culverting. SEPA also referred to a ‘Drain’ which may be a historically straightened watercourse. Further detailed information required to establish if an open watercourse diversion would be acceptable.

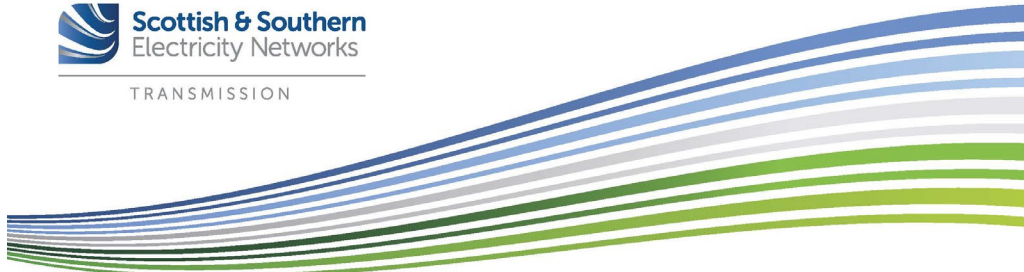
Statutory Stakeholder

SEPA’s feedback is noted and we will ensure that no landraising occurs within a future flood extent (1 in 200 plus climate change) and associated works will comply with NPF4, while protecting surrounding watercourses.

We have taken all feedback on board and has concluded that Site 4 will be taken forward as a viable alternative to Site 10. We note that SEPA had concerns regarding Site 4 in relation to private water supplies and watercourses and will engage further with SEPA to minimise potential impacts based on Site 4.

7.2. Appendix B - Postcard Invites

Invite one – 7 March



New Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation Public Consultation Event

SSEN Transmission invites you to share your views with us

What is happening?

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN Transmission) are holding a consultation exhibition event for the proposed new 400kV substation in Keith. This consultation is focused on SSEN Transmission's site selection for the project.

We would like to extend an invitation to local members of the community and all interested parties to attend an exhibition to discuss our plans with the project team and let us know your thoughts on our proposals.

At this event, attendees will also be able to interact with our bespoke 3D model, offering a 360 degree view of the proposed substation site.

<https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/blackhillock-400kv-substation/>

The face to face consultations will be held at the following location:

Tuesday 7 March 2023 2-7pm
Longmore Community Hall
Banff Rd, Keith, AB55 5HA

This is an open door drop in session, open to all members of the public and interested parties.

Scan Me



If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Community Liaison Manager:



Ryan Davidson
Scottish Hydro
Electric Transmission,
1 Waterloo St,
Glasgow, G2 6AY

Phone: 01463 728 072
Mobile: 07901 133 919
Email: ryan.davidson@sse.com





New Blackhillock 2 400kV Substation Rescheduled Public Consultation Event

SSEN Transmission invites you to share your views with us

What is happening?

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN Transmission) are holding a consultation exhibition event for the proposed new 400kV substation in Keith. This consultation is focused on SSEN Transmission's site selection for the project.

We would like to extend an invitation to local members of the community and all interested parties to attend an exhibition to discuss our plans with the project team and let us know your thoughts on our proposals.

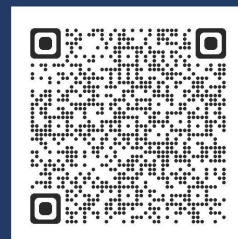
At this event, attendees will also be able to interact with our bespoke 3D model, offering a 360 degree view of the proposed substation site.

<https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/blackhillock-400kv-substation/>

The face to face consultation will be held at the following location:

Scan me

Tuesday 21 March 2023
2-7pm
Longmore Community Hall
Banff Rd, Keith, AB55 5HA



This is an open door drop in session, open to all members of the public and interested parties.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Community Liaison Manager:



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SSE Community