

# Netherton Hub

## Report on Consultation

November 2023



TRANSMISSION

# Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction..... 3
- 2. The Consultation Process ..... 6
- 3. Consultation Feedback and Our Response..... 9
- 4. Summary of Key Decisions..... 24
- 5. Next Steps..... 26
- 6. Glossary ..... 28
- 7. Appendices ..... 33

|

# 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 Stage 1 and Stage 2 site selection consultation process for the proposed Netherton Hub (previously known as the Peterhead Net Zero 2030 Developments project) and show how the option taken forward to the next stage has been informed by this process.

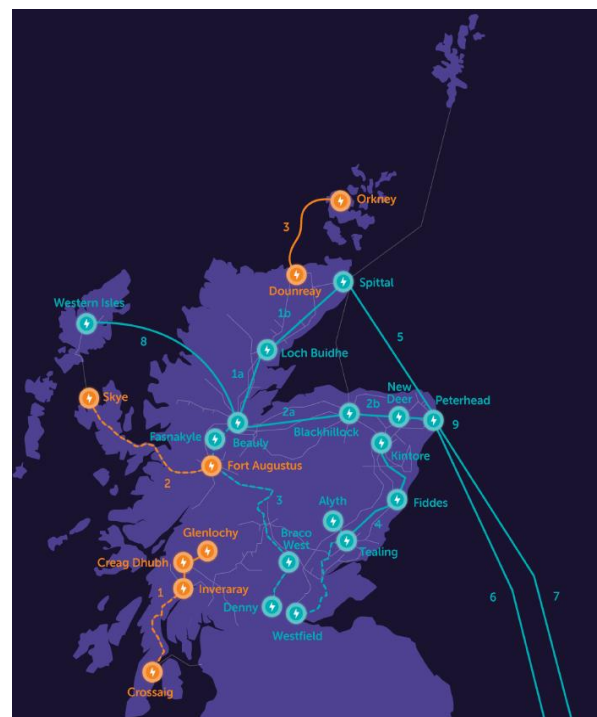
This RoC details the consultation undertaken, including details of consultation methods and advertising, those consulted and/or contributing to the process and it also summarises the feedback received, including objections, concerns and areas of support. The document confirms which Site option for the Netherton Hub is being progressed to the next stage of development and provides information on the next steps 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. This project is a proposed major upgrade of the electricity transmission network across Great Britain to help deliver UK and Scottish Government climate change and energy security targets.

The key components of the proposed Netherton Hub are:

- A new 400kV substation;
- A new 132kV substation;
- A new HVDC switching station;
- Spittal to Netherton HVDC converter station;
- Eastern Green Link 3 (EGL3) HVDC converter station; and
- Operations Depot and Store.



**New SSEN Transmission projects under the Pathway to 2030**

A new 400kV overhead line between Beauly, Blackhillock, New Deer and Peterhead is proposed to connect to the Netherton Hub. Whilst this is part of the wider Pathway to 2030 projects, this forms a separate project with a separate consultation process and is not included in this Report on Consultation. Please refer to the following webpage to access the summary Report on Consultation and project specific Report on Consultations for the proposed Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL: [Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV OHL](#).

### 1.3. Project Timeline



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

The approach to site selection was informed by our guidance on 'Substation Site Selection procedures for Voltages at or above 132kV' (July 2022). The guidelines are developed based on Holford Rule Principles, industry best practice and lessons learned.

We have undertaken a two-stage selection process, consisting of Stage 1: Initial Site Screening followed by Stage 2: Detailed Site Selection.

The initial consultation on site selection, held on 25 January 2023, included information regarding site options, environmental and technical considerations, and the project development process and explained the factors which were taken into consideration in the selection process. At this stage 13 Site Options were identified that provided potentially feasible areas for the Netherton Hub to be developed upon which stakeholder feedback was invited.

Following further review of stakeholder feedback alongside ongoing analysis of environmental, technical, and commercial factors, we undertook further consultation on 17 April 2023 to present a list of 4 Site Options. This included Site Option 4 which provided an optimum balance of environmental, technical and commercial factors and was presented as the Preferred Site Option.

Figure 1 – Substation 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. 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 consultation period for Stage 1 Initial site screening was open between 25 January and 27 February 2023.

The consultation period for Stage 2 Detailed site selection was open between 17 April and 19 May 2023.

Statutory Consultees were provided with a Consultation Document and a Digital Consultation Document, which was presented to them during online meetings on 12 April and 3 May 2023.

Where possible, landowners who were potentially affected by the proposals were contacted ahead of the consultation periods opening to the public to discuss land related considerations.

### 2.3. The advertising process

The consultation events for both stages were advertised extensively using the following methods:

- Adverts in the Press & Journal newspaper (please refer to Appendix 1 and 2).
- Our social media channels and dedicated project webpage.
- Community Councillors and Local Elected Members were emailed in advance with information they could share within their local area.
- Postcards advertising the dates, times and locations of the consultation events were sent to 1064 homes and businesses for Stage 1. Due to also consulting on the Beauly – Blackhillock – New Deer – Peterhead 400kV overhead line, for Stage 2 the distribution increased to 3625 homes and businesses (please refer to Appendix 1 and 2).
- An email notification was sent to 37 individuals for Stage 1 and 47 individuals for Stage 2 who signed up for project updates. Statutory consultees were also notified via email.

## 2.4. Stakeholder participation

A series of in-person consultation events were held where local stakeholders could meet with the project team to discuss the proposals in more detail.

| Date            | Event  | Recorded attendance |
|-----------------|--|---------------------|
| 25 January 2023 | Stage 1 Initial Site Screening event at Peterhead Football Club  | 71                  |
| 17 April 2023   | Stage 2 Detailed Site Selection event at Peterhead Football Club | 96                  |

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 Stage 2 consultation events, various meetings were held with other key stakeholders such as landowners, statutory and non-statutory consultees, councillors and community councils to discuss the project proposals.

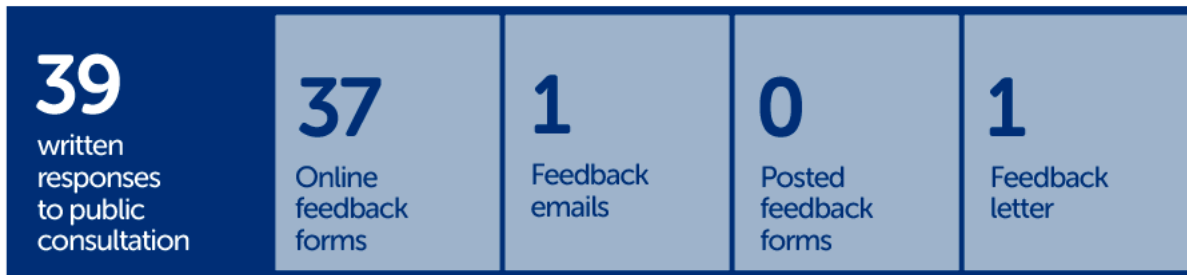
| Date          | Meeting Type   | Stakeholder group in attendance  |
|---------------|--|--|
| 12 April 2023 | Virtual Statutory Consultee Meeting (Microsoft Teams Meeting)  | Statutory Consultees (Aberdeenshire Council, NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland)               |
| 14 April 2023 | Pre-Consultation Information Sharing Meeting (Microsoft Teams) | Community Councils, local Councillors and residents<br>Statutory Consultees (Longside Community Council) |
| 3 May 2023    | Virtual Statutory Consultee Meeting (Microsoft Teams Meeting)  | Statutory Consultees (SEPA)  |
| 27 June 2023  | Public Meeting in Longside (for Longside Community Council)    | Community members and local organisations.<br>Statutory Consultees (Longside Community Council)          |

## 2.5. Feedback volume

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

Only feedback received during the consultation periods have been included in the analysis undertaken for this report. Feedback received after the consultation periods ended have been responded to and considered by the project team but have not formed part of the analysis presented in this Report.

## Responses to public consultation (Stage 2)



### Responses from statutory and non-statutory consultees (Stage 2):

Thirteen statutory bodies were contacted by us and requested to provide feedback on the proposals. One response was received for Stage 1 and three were received for Stage 2. Responses were also received from two non-statutory consultees. The feedback from statutory and non-statutory consultees and our responses is provided in Appendix 3.

### Stakeholder representations

A number of other non-statutory organisations that we did not approach directly have responded to the consultation through the public consultation channels. All their comments have been taken on board and were analysed for this Report on Consultation, along with the public consultation responses. The list of organisations considered as non-statutory consultees will be reviewed and updated for the next stage of the project.



## 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

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.

The project-specific feedback is set out in the tables that follow under the four themes:

### Stage 1

- Community Impact – see Table 3.3.
- Environmental Impact – see Table 3.4.
- Economic Impact – see Table 3.5.

### Stage 2

- Community Impact – see Table 3.6.
- Environmental Impact – see Table 3.7.
- Economic Impact – see Table 3.8.

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 |

#### Stage 1: Initial Site Screening

**Table 3.3 Community Impact**

| Summary of feedback                                     | Contributing Stakeholder Group            | Our Response   |
|---|---|--|
| Will there be any noise impacts from the Netherton Hub? | Community members and local organisations | Noise surveys have been carried out and a detailed noise assessment will be completed and included in the Environmental Impact Assessment. The assessment will consider potential noise impacts from the Netherton Hub and any relevant cumulative developments. It will also consider potential mitigation options should they be required. |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Are there any increased risks from flooding or drainage?</p> | <p>Community members and local organisations</p> <p>Statutory Consultees</p> | <p>The Scottish Environment Protection Agency's (SEPA) National Flood Risk Assessment Flood Map does not identify the Preferred Site Option as being within an area likely to experience river flooding. However, a pre-existing flooding issue within the north of the Preferred Site, adjacent to the A950, was identified by a number of stakeholder groups. Aberdeenshire Council have noted that full details of drainage proposals for the site should be accompanied by a Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA) and discussion with the Council's Flood Risk and Coast Protection team is encouraged.</p> <p>We have commissioned specialist consultants at an early stage to progress the drainage design and have early engagement with Aberdeenshire Council and SEPA. Surface water flood risk in relation to the construction and operation of the proposed Netherton Hub will be considered in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) will be developed in the pre-construction stage and our General Environmental Management Plans will be applied, which include standard mitigation measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in order to minimise the potential for impacts on surface water and groundwater during construction and operation.</p> <p>Further details around drainage strategy will be provided at the consultation event in early 2024.</p> |
|---|--|---|

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| What about Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMFs)?  | Community members and local organisations | Please refer to Question 21 of the <a href="#">FAQ</a> .   |
| Will access on the public road be maintained?  | Community members and local organisations | There is potential for travel disruption during construction, when we take delivery of key plant items or because of increased volumes of traffic on the local road network. Disruption will be minimised and typically controlled through an agreed Construction Traffic Management Plan with Aberdeenshire Council as part of any consent conditions. We aim to ensure that construction traffic uses the roads safely and that any inconvenience to the public is kept to a minimum whilst maintaining a safe environment for the workforce and others. |
| There is a lack of detail and information on what the development may look like. Is there an example layout? | Community members and local organisations | The purpose of Stage 1: Initial Site Screening was to identify a long-list of sites capable of supporting the proposed Netherton Hub. At this stage it was too early to provide indicative layouts. We did however provide an indicative Site layout and developed a 3D model for the Stage 2: Detailed Site Selection consultation event. This provided greater context and understanding of the potential layout and size of the proposed Netherton Hub and its appearance from properties.  |



**Table 3.4 Environmental Impact**

| Summary of feedback   | Contributing Stakeholder Group                   | Our Response  |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Will there be any impacts to the local environment and wildlife?</p> | <p>Community members and local organisations</p> | <p>Natural heritage was a key consideration during the site selection process. We have undertaken a number of desktop studies to assess the potential impacts of the Stage 1 site options with respect to natural heritage designations, protected species, habitats, ornithology, hydrology and geology. The Preferred Site (Site 4) compares favourably to the other Stage 1 site options with respect to natural heritage sensitivity.</p> <p>Numerous environmental surveys are underway to ensure that the proposed works will have as little an impact on the local environment as possible. The project team is in contact with the appropriate regulatory bodies and is committed to ensuring that works adhere to applicable UK and Scottish regulations, as well as industry best practice.</p> <p>Section 3.1 Common Themes (Environmental Impacts) provides further commentary with respect to the environment.</p> |

**Table 3.5 Economic Impact**

| Summary of feedback                            | Contributing Stakeholder Group            | Our Response   |
|--|---|--|
| Will the valuation of my property be impacted? | Community members and local organisations | Please refer to Question 22 of the <a href="#">FAQ</a> .   |
| Have you agreed a land deal already?           | Community members and local organisations | Our land consultants were discussing the viability of land purchase across all identified sites during the Stage 1 Site Screening process. The site selection process calls for land managers to discuss whether or not identified landowners and occupiers would consider selling their land voluntarily. A willing grantor is positive in terms of site selection but wouldn't be the sole determining factor in the overall site selection process. |

Stage 2: Detailed Site Selection

**Table 3.6 Community Impact**

| Summary of feedback   | Contributing Stakeholder Group                   | Our Response   |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Concerns were raised regarding potential disruption to neighbouring communities, in particular impacts from the construction phase and associated increase in traffic due to construction.</p> | <p>Community members and local organisations</p> | <p>As part of the Stage 2: Detailed Site Selection consultation a project timeline was provided which outlined the likely construction timescales for the proposed Netherton Hub. As the design progresses, a more detailed understanding of the construction phasing and durations will be developed. The full construction phasing and durations will be considered as part of the EIA for the consenting process which will consider all potentially significant impacts to the local community. Potential impacts resulting from roads and infrastructure will be fully assessed as part of the EIA submitted during the consenting phase. Should the EIA identify significant impacts resulting from traffic and transport, appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented by the team to ensure any such impacts are reduced or minimised as much as possible. A Construction Traffic Management Plan will be developed prior to commencement of works on site.</p> |
| <p>Potential impacts to local communities, including concerns with respect to Landscape, visual, health and wellbeing were raised.</p>  | <p>Community members and local organisations</p> | <p>Some concerns were raised with respect to potential landscape and visual impact. We recognise that this is a large development, and that landscape design will play an important role in reducing the landscape and visual impact. In response, We have commissioned landscape architects at an early stage to ensure landscape design has been factored in from the outset.</p>  |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|   |  | <p>As part of the consenting process, we will undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which will consider views from residential properties, sensitive receptors and key local viewpoints with the aim of designing a proposed Netherton Hub that limits impacts to landscape character and visual receptors. Impacts to health and wellbeing as a result of the proposed Netherton Hub will also be considered as part of the consenting process which will include the implementation of mitigation measures where required.</p> <p>Further commentary is provided in Section 3.1 (Common Themes) and further detail on landscape mitigation will be presented at the consultation event in early 2024.</p> |
| <p>Has the disruption to satellite broadband and light pollution been assessed?</p>   | <p>Community members and local organisations</p> | <p>Light pollution will be considered as part of the LVIA undertaken during the consenting process and mitigation measures to minimise light spill and/or pollution will be proposed if necessary. Satellite broadband will be assessed during the development stage.</p>   |
| <p>Queries were raised about the capacity of community facilities and accommodation to support the extra workforce during construction and how far the workforce would be travelling.</p> | <p>Community members and local organisations</p> | <p>The accumulated need for workforce accommodation in the area is being assessed for all our Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment (ASTI) developments. Discussions are taking place both with Aberdeenshire Council and contractors to develop a strategy to ensure there is no unreasonable or disproportionate impact to local services or facilities. Traffic and Travel to and from Site would involve a Construction Traffic Management Plan or Travel Plan to help coordinate and reduce traffic impacts.</p>   |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>A query was raised about what site security measures are being taken with regard to potential terrorist attack to the proposed new infrastructure.</p> | <p>Community members and local organisations</p> | <p>As part of the consenting process, an initial scoping exercise will consider impacts as a result of Major Accidents and Disasters. If deemed necessary, appropriate mitigation and safeguards will be implemented.</p> <p>Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ (formally the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)) have been consulted regarding a security designation for the Site. Based on the response, the site security will be designed accordingly.</p> |
| <p>A suggestion was made to name the project after Netherton Farm to reflect the farming heritage of the site</p>   | <p>Community members and local organisations</p> | <p>Project name was changed to Netherton Hub.</p>  |

**Table 3.7 Environmental Impact**

| Summary of feedback  | Contributing Stakeholder Group                   | Our Response  |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Concerns were raised regarding developing on Grade 3 agricultural land rather than brownfield land.</p> | <p>Community members and local organisations</p> | <p>Land use, and the presence of agricultural land has been one of the criteria addressed in the site options appraisal. All Site Options were located in whole or part in some form of agricultural land. The majority of Site Options considered were in areas of 3.1 and 3.2 Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) which is considered best and most versatile for agriculture. While we acknowledge the Preferred Site Option will result in the loss of agricultural resource, when considering all the engineering and environmental criteria together, Site 4 was identified as the overarching Preferred Site Option.</p>  |
| <p>Queries were raised regarding potential impacts on wildlife.</p>  | <p>Community members and local organisations</p> | <p>Natural heritage was a key consideration during the site selection process. We undertook a number of studies to assess the potential impacts of the site options with respect to natural heritage designations, protected species, habitats, ornithology, hydrology and geology.</p> <p>Sites 4 (Preferred Site) and Site 7 presented lower risks of impacts on ornithology, geology and hydrology than Site 8 and Site 7 and Site 8 combined. The latter two sites have a higher risk of compromising the quality and quantity of groundwater in relation to Groundwater Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems. The four Stage 2 site options scored the same for the other natural heritage criteria.</p> |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | <p>Numerous environmental surveys are underway to ensure that the proposed works will have as little an impact on the local environment as possible. The project team is in contact with the appropriate regulatory bodies and is committed to ensuring that works adhere to applicable UK and Scottish regulations, as well as industry best practice.</p> <p>Section 3.1 Common Themes (Environmental Impacts) provides further commentary with respect to the environment.</p> |
|--|--|---|

**Table 3.8 Economic Impact**

| Summary of feedback                            | Contributing Stakeholder Group            | Our Response   |
|--|---|--|
| Will the valuation of my property be impacted? | Community members and local organisations | Please refer to Question 22 of the <a href="#">FAQ</a> . |

## 4. Summary of Key Decisions

For the Stage 1 consultation event, 13 sites were initially identified however an assessment of technical and environmental impact considerations ruled out the 9 sites with 4 sites taken forward for further evaluation. There was no significant feedback from the Stage 1 consultation that prompted one of those 9 sites to be reconsidered and taken forward for further evaluation.

Ahead of Stage 2 consultation further evaluation was undertaken on 4 sites. During this evaluation Site 4 was identified as the preferred site option. This was due to its locality in relation to main access routes, the existing OHL infrastructure and local services. Site 4 can accommodate the proposed HV plant, keeping the converter stations within the site footprint and negating the need for additional voltage control plant. Site 4 supports the construction requirements (including laydown and compound) without the need to extend beyond the boundary, with this not the case for the other site options.

Site 4 was also identified as the preferred environmental choice on the basis of fewer environmental constraints being identified but equally importantly the space available for landscape mitigation and BNG enhancement. Therefore, for the Stage 2 consultation, Site 4 was taken forward as the preferred site.

During the Stage 2 consultation a pre-existing flooding issue at the north of the Preferred Site was identified by a number of stakeholder groups. In response to this we have commissioned specialist consultants at an early stage to progress the drainage design and have early engagement with Aberdeenshire Council and SEPA. In addition, concerns were raised with respect to potential landscape and visual impact at the Preferred Site. We recognise that this is a large development, and that landscape design will play an important role in reducing the landscape and visual impact. In response, we have commissioned landscape architects at an early stage to ensure landscape design has been factored in from the outset. Further details on mitigation for both items will be presented at the consultation event in early 2024.

Overall, Site 4 remained the Preferred Site from an environmental and engineering perspective following the completion of the Stage 2 consultation. Consequently, a decision has been made to progress with Site 4 (the Preferred Site) as the Proposed Site to be taken forward to the next phase of development.

In addition, we have renamed the site the “Netherton Hub” to reflect the area’s history following discussions with local stakeholder groups and will be utilising this going forward.





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

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<sup>1</sup>. As part of this PAC process, we will present indicative information on the likely extent, layout and appearance of the proposed site, 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.

<sup>1</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 (As Amended)

## 5.2. Feedback

If you have any questions or comments in relation to this document, please get in touch with us at [NethertonEngagement@sse.com](mailto:NethertonEngagement@sse.com). Or write to us:

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:  
[ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/netherton-hub/](https://ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/netherton-hub/)

## 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 dielectric 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 routing 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’.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Section 37 Application</b>                     | An application for consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 to develop an overhead electricity line.   |
| <b>Semi-natural Woodland</b>                      | 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 |
| <b>Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</b> | 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.               |
| <b>Span</b>                                       | The section of overhead line between two structures.   |
| <b>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</b>         | 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.         |
| <b>Special Landscape Area (SLA)</b>               | Landscapes designated by The Highland Council which are considered to be of regional/local importance for their scenic qualities.  |
| <b>Special Protection Area (SPA)</b>              | An area designated under the Wild Birds Directive (Directive74/409/EEC) to protect important bird habitats. Implemented under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.   |
| <b>Stakeholders</b>                               | Organisations and individuals who can affect or are affected by SHE Transmission works.  |
| <b>Study Area</b>                                 | The area within which the corridor, route and alignment study takes place.   |
| <b>Substation</b>                                 | 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.   |
| <b>Substation Site Area</b>                       | Site area identified as necessary to deliver all the substation infrastructure requirements e.g. platform, access tracks, temporary construction area, drainage including SUDS, landscaping.                                 |
| <b>Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)</b>  | Drainage solutions that provide an alternative to the direct channelling of surface water through networks of pipes and sewers to nearby watercourses.   |
| <b>Terminal Structure</b>                         | 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.   |
| <b>The National Grid</b>                          | The electricity transmission network in the Great Britain.   |
| <b>UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP)</b>       | 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

## Appendix 1

### Stage 1: Initial Site Screening Advert



# Peterhead Net Zero 2030 Developments Public Consultation Event

**SSEN Transmission invites you to come and share your views with us.**

**What is happening?**

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission) are pleased to be hosting a public consultation event for our Peterhead Net Zero 2030 developments. We are keen to receive feedback on our proposals which include new 400kV and 132kV substations, two new HVDC converter stations and a HVDC switching station. Our consultation event is focused on sharing information about the project, our vision and our journey to Net Zero.

**We would encourage all members of the local community, and all interested parties to attend the event.**

The public consultation event will be held at the following location:

**Peterhead Football Club  
Balmoor Stadium, Balmoor  
Terrace, Peterhead AB42 1EQ**

**Wednesday 25th January,  
2pm–7pm**

These are open door drop-in sessions, open to all members of the public and interested parties.

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

**Dav Lynch**  
Community Liaison Manager  
200 Dunkeld Road, Perth, PH1 3GH

 [dav.lynch@sse.com](mailto:dav.lynch@sse.com)       SSEN Community

 +44 (0) 7918 404 443       @SSETransmission



To find out more about the project please visit the dedicated project website by scanning the QR code, or use the following URL:  
[bit.ly/3PLgbjh](https://bit.ly/3PLgbjh)

[ssen-transmission.co.uk](https://ssen-transmission.co.uk)

# Appendix 2

## Stage 2: Detailed Site Selection Advert



# Public Consultation Events

## Beauly Blackhillock New Deer Peterhead 400kV & Peterhead Net Zero 2030 Developments

Following our initial public consultation events in September 2022, SSEN Transmission will present our route options for the overhead line connection between new substations at Beauly and Peterhead, via new substations at Blackhillock and New Deer.

The events will give members of the public an opportunity to view our proposals and speak with members of the project team. This will be followed by an extended feedback period from the final event, during which all stakeholders are invited to provide feedback specific to the proposals at this stage.

The Peterhead event on 17 April in Balmoor Stadium, Peterhead, will also include the Peterhead Net Zero 2030 Developments project team. Following on from our event in January 2023 this event will focus on the site location, which includes the sites for our new 400kV and 132kV substations, two new HVDC converter stations and a HVDC switching station.

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

**The consultation events will be taking place on:**

|                            |                         |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 17 April - Peterhead 2-7pm | Balmoor Stadium         |
| 18 April - New Deer 2-7pm  | New Deer Public Hall    |
| 19 April - Turriff 2-7pm   | Baden Powell Centre     |
| 20 April - Keith 2-7pm     | Longmore Community Hall |
| 21 April - Huntly 2-7pm    | Stewarts Hall           |
| 24 April - Elgin 2-7pm     | UHI Moray College       |
| 25 April - Forres 2-7pm    | Forres Town Hall        |
| 26 April - Inverness 2-7pm | Kingsmill Hotel         |
| 27 April - Beauly 12-7pm   | Phipps Hall             |

**If you have any questions, please contact the Community Liaison Managers**

**Beauly Blackhillock New Deer Peterhead 400kV**

**Ryan Davidson**  
ryan.davidson@sse.com  
+44 (0)7901 133 919  
**Project website: [rb.gy/qwr0](http://rb.gy/qwr0)**

**Peterhead Net Zero 20230 Developments**

**Dav Lynch**  
dav.lynch@sse.com  
+44 (0) 7918 404 443  
**Project website: [bit.ly/3PLgbjh](http://bit.ly/3PLgbjh)**

SSEN Community      @SSETransmission

## Appendix 3

### Stage 1: Initial Site Screening

Table 1: Statutory Consultee Feedback

| Statutory Consultee Feedback   | Our Response  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Historic Environment Scotland (HES)</b></p> <p>HES provided comments on the Site Options being considered. A summary is provided below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site 4 – HES noted that this Site Option is in relative proximity to Category A listed buildings located approximately 2km to the North West in Longside. HES advised that the listed buildings are located within Longside and it is likely significant adverse effects on their setting could be avoided, however, an initial assessment should be undertaken to determine whether effects are likely.</li> <li>• Site 7 – HES advised that the scheduled monument known as Cairn Catto, long cairn (SM3276) is located approximately 3.3km to the south west of this site. They indicated that the cairn is located on a relative high point in the landscape and has good views out over the surrounding landscape. HES advised that there could be visibility of Site Option 7 from the cairn and the potential for impacts to the setting of the cairn should be considered and assessed.</li> <li>• Site 8 – HES noted that similarly to Site Option 7, Cairn Catto, long cairn (SM3276) is located to the south west of this Site Option at a distance of approximately 3.9km. As with Site Option 7 they advised there could be potential for impacts to the setting of the scheduled monument and these should be considered and assessed.</li> <li>• Site 9 – HES stated that this site option is located 2.3km to the NE of Cairn Catto, long cairn. HES advised that as with Site Options 7 and 8 the potential for impacts to the setting of the scheduled monument should be considered and assessed.</li> </ul> | <p>The feedback received has been considered as part of the site selection process and where appropriate will be carried through to the consenting stage of the Preferred Site.</p> <p>The site options that HES recommended not progressing were not taken forward as options for Stage 2.</p> <p>No direct impacts are predicted on any cultural heritage assets from the 4 options taken forward to Stage 2. There is, however, the potential for indirect impacts from Site 7 and Site 7 and Site 8 (Combined) on the Category C Listed Cocklaw Mains (LB16391), which is located within 50m of the site options. For this reason, Site 4 and Site 8 are considered lower risk options.</p> |

They noted that the closer proximity of this Site Option to the cairn may increase the potential for impacts.

- Site 1 – HES confirmed that this Site Option is unlikely to raise significant impacts.
- Site 2 – HES advised that there are a number of scheduled monuments located approximately 2km to the east of the Site Option and should this Site Option come back into consideration they would expect that an initial assessment of potential impacts using a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV).
- Site 3 – HES noted that there are a number of scheduled monuments located approximately 2.6km to the north east of the Site Option and should this Site Option come back into consideration they would expect that an initial assessment of potential impacts using a ZTV.
- Site 5 and 6 – HES confirmed that these Site Options are located approximately 2.6km to the north of Cairn Catto (SM3276), long cairn and should they come back into consideration HES will expect an assessment of potential impacts on the setting of the scheduled monument.
- Site 10 – HES stated that this Site Option is directly adjacent to the scheduled monument known as Easterton of Lenabo airship station 750m east south-east of (SM13679). It is likely that this Site Option would have a significant adverse impact on the setting of the scheduled monument and there may be the potential for accidental direct impacts to the scheduled monument. We therefore welcome that this Site Option has not been taken forward and we would not recommend any further consideration of this option.
- Site 11 – HES advised that this Site Option is in very close proximity and just to the east of Cairn Catto, long cairn and has the potential to have significant adverse impacts on the setting of the scheduled monument. It is also located in relative proximity to Corbie Knap, cairn to the south. HES welcomed that this Site Option has not been taken forward and recommended no further consideration of this Site Option.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site 12 – HES noted that this Site Option is located in relative proximity to SM13679 and SM3276 and confirmed should this Site Option come back into consideration they would expect an assessment of potential impacts on the setting of the scheduled monuments.</li> <li>• Site 13 – HES stated that this Site Option is located in close proximity to the scheduled monument known as Boddam Den, flint mining complex, Sandfordhill (SM6137) and to the north east of SM3251. HES advised that should this Site Option come back into consideration they would expect an assessment of potential impacts on the setting of the scheduled monuments.</li> </ul>  |  |
| <p><b>Longside &amp; District Community Council</b></p> <p>Longside &amp; District Community Council accept the need for improvement of our electricity supply networks and the need to cater for the increasing amount of onshore and offshore wind and tidal energy generation. The provision of the extra land-based hardware and overhead powerline networks must however be done in an environmentally and socially sympathetic manner. One of the sites on the short list (Site 4) for construction of new substation and transformer facilities is centred at OS grid reference NK 05440 46015, south of the A950 between Longside and Peterhead. Longside &amp; District Community Council think that this site is an inappropriate site for the proposed SSEN development for the following reasons.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Of the four “preferred” sites, Site 4 is the furthest away from the existing SSEN substation adjacent to Peterhead power station. It is also the furthest away from the three existing powerlines which feed to/from Peterhead. If this site is chosen, it, and its associated new powerlines, will create the largest disturbance of rural environment compared to the other three sites which are extremely close to the existing network and sub stations.</li> <li>2. Site 4 is on agricultural land and is close to several residential properties including the hamlet of Flushing. There are no other industrial developments in the area.</li> </ol> | <p>The feedback received has been considered as part of the site selection process and where appropriate will be carried through to the consenting stage of the Preferred Site.</p> <p>Please find our response to the specific points raised below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Site 4 was identified at Stage 2 as the preferred engineering site option. This was due to its locality in relation to main access routes, the existing OHL infrastructure and local services. Site 4 can accommodate the proposed HV plant, keeping the converter stations within 1km and negating the need for additional voltage control plant. Site 4 supports the construction requirements (including laydown and compound) without the need to extend beyond the boundary, this is not the case for the other site options.</li> </ol> |

3. The A950 adjacent to Site 4 is one of the few straight sections of road between Peterhead and its junction with the A952 at Mintlaw. It is therefore subject to regular overtaking at high speed. This section of road has two Y junctions at Flushing with limited visibility for traffic joining the A950. There have been many accidents on this stretch of road over the previous years. The traffic situation has been exacerbated recently by the almost continuous stream of heavy agricultural tractor/trailer combinations transporting grass crop to the biogas production facility to the east of Site 4. The introduction of heavy construction traffic and subsequent service vehicles entering and leaving the proposed site at a new junction will increase the chance of accident significantly. The other three proposed sites identified by SSEN are located close to the existing trunk road network in the form of the A90 which has better capacity for the traffic load anticipated due to this development.

4. It is recognised that SSEN is at the very early stages of consultation, but we feel the thirteen sites originally chosen were done so in a “scattergun” approach with little thought given to their suitability. Nine of the original identified sites, which are all countryside sites, have been rejected. We consider that Site 4 should also be rejected.

Site 4 was identified at Stage 2 as the preferred environmental choice on the basis of fewer environmental constraints being identified but equally importantly the space available for landscape mitigation and BNG enhancement.

2. Land use and the presence of agricultural land has been one of several criteria considered in the appraisal of Site Options. All Site Options taken forward to Stage 2 were located in whole or in part on some form of best and most versatile agricultural land (3.1 and 3.2 ALC). We acknowledge that Site 4 (as with the other Stage 2 site options) will result in the loss of agricultural resource, however, when considering all the engineering and environmental criteria together, Site 4 was identified at Stage 2 as the overarching Preferred Site.

We recognise that this is a large development, and that landscape design will play an important role in reducing the landscape and visual impact. In response, we have commissioned landscape architects at an early stage to ensure landscape design has been factored in from the outset. Further details on landscape mitigation will be presented at the consultation event in early 2024.

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|  | <p>3. We aim to ensure that construction traffic uses roads safely and any inconvenience to the public is kept to a minimum while maintaining a safe environment for the workforce and others. Potential impacts resulting from roads and infrastructure will be fully assessed as part of the EIA submitted during the consenting phase. Should the EIA identify significant impacts resulting from traffic and transport, appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented by the team to ensure any such impacts are reduced or minimised as much as possible. A Construction Traffic Management Plan will be developed prior to commencement of works on site.</p> <p>All of the sites taken forward to Stage 2 were considered favourable in terms of construction access.</p> <p>4. Our approach to site selection was informed by our guidance on <i>'Substation Site Selection procedures for Voltages at or above 132kV' (July 2022)</i>. The guidelines are developed based on Holford Rule Principles, industry best practice and lessons learned. Further details are provided in Section 1.3.</p> |
|--|---|

**Table 2: Non-statutory Consultee Feedback**

| Non-statutory Consultee Feedback | Our Response |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| None received.                   | N/A          |

## Stage 2: Detailed Site Selection

**Table 3: Statutory Consultee Feedback**

| Statutory Consultee Feedback   | Our Response   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Aberdeenshire Council</b></p> <p>A response from Aberdeenshire Council provided comments on the Preferred Site Option under three themes as provided below.</p> <p><i>Natural Heritage, Landscape and Access</i></p> <p>Aberdeenshire Council stated while not within an area designated nationally or locally for its landscape value, views of the Preferred Site from Special Landscape Areas (SLA) on the Buchan coast should be considered. A submission should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). There appear to be no core paths or rights of ways. Any informal access routes used by residents in the area should be discussed with Aberdeenshire Council’s Environment Planner. Consideration should be given to indirect impacts from the Proposed Development that may impact the Skelmuir Hill, Stirling Hill and Dudwick Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS). Based on the size of the site, it is likely that protected species, breeding birds and ecologically valuable habitat will be present. Ecological surveys will be required to identify these and suggest appropriate mitigation. Given the size of the Site, there are opportunities to significantly improve biodiversity of the Preferred Site which should be explored, there is best practice advice ‘PA2023-10 Securing Positive Effects for Biodiversity’ and advice prepared by NatureScot to support the application of Policy 3c of NPF4. Aberdeenshire Council noted fluvial flood risk is not anticipated but surface water flooding has been noted within the Preferred Site, particularly at the northern boundary along the A950 roadside opposite Flushing. Full details of drainage proposals for the site should be accompanied by a Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA) and discussion with the Council’s Flood Risk and Coast Protection team is encouraged.</p> | <p>We will be undertaking a LVIA as part of the consenting process for the Preferred Site Option. Consideration will be given to Skelmuir Hill, Stirling Hill and Dudwick LNCS and ecological surveys will be undertaken during the consenting process to inform the planning application. We will be undertaking a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment for the Proposed Site and have already appointed a landscape architect to develop landscaping proposals on the Preferred Site Option. We have commissioned specialist consultants at an early stage to progress the drainage design and have early engagement with Aberdeenshire Council and SEPA and will consider flood risk as part of the consenting process including the submission of a Flood Risk Assessment and DIA. The planning application will be supported by a Habitats Regulations Assessment which will consider any potential impacts to the Loch of Strathbeg SPA.</p> |



Although not protected or designation for any qualities, the Preferred Site does include various pockets of Class 3.1 prime agricultural land. Consideration of the Loch of Strathbeg SPA should be made including any safeguards to protect the interest of the Special Protection Area (SPA).

#### *Historic Environment*

Aberdeenshire Council confirmed there are various Historic Environment Records (HER) within the Preferred Site and its surrounding area, however none are regionally significant or scheduled records within the Preferred Site. Cropmark sites surrounding the Preferred Site suggest potential for previously unrecorded archaeological finds and so a trenching evaluation is suggested by the Council's Archaeology Service. The Council confirmed that impacts on setting of Listed Buildings is unlikely but elevation drawings would assist a more thorough pre-application assessment of the impacts, particularly for Listed Buildings in Longside.

#### *Technical Constraints*

Aberdeenshire Council's response highlighted several constraints to the Proposed Development including several residential properties where impacts to these should be considered and technical assessment provided where required. Any private water supplies should be identified within the application. There are pipelines extending through the Preferred Site and consultation with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and relevant operators may be required. Shell extended an offer to discuss proposals prior to an application submission and National Gas Transmission require further information before ensuring no objection. The Site is within a safeguarded area for RAF Buchan and within a civil radar blanking zone, consultation for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is encouraged.

The consultation response from Aberdeenshire Council concludes:

*"Overall, the [Preferred] Site is not allocated, protected or reserved for any land use and is generally unremarkable in that there are no local or national designations covering it.*

We will be undertaking an impact assessment on cultural heritage assets and archaeology in relation to the proposed Netherton Hub. This will include setting impacts to any heritage assets likely to be affected and consideration of archaeological trenching.

We recognise that residential properties are a key consideration as part of the impact assessment. These properties will be considered as part of the LVIA during the consenting process. Consultation with the HSE, Shell, National Gas Transmission and other operators and the MoD and CAA will occur as part of the project development and consenting process.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><i>There are aspects that should be looked into further, for example the pipelines and safeguarded areas, along with the additional information requests highlighted.”</i></p>   |  |
| <p><b>Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)</b></p> <p>SEPA welcomed the opportunity to provide their comments and stated it would be unlikely they would object to the Proposed Development on the Preferred Site, however provided further advice and considerations as the Proposed Development progresses. This includes consideration of flood risk from several watercourses and drains that are too small for inclusion within SEPA’s Future Flood Risk Maps and they noted a large surface water flooding extent to the north of the Preferred Site on the A950 by Flushing which requires consideration. SEPA provided advice in relation to impacts on the water environment including:</p> <p>Encouraging SSEN Transmission to seek opportunities to incorporate improvements to the water environment within and/or adjacent to the Preferred Site as part of mitigation measures or as compensation, for example fencing off watercourses and creating buffer strips to reduce the risk of diffuse water pollution and protection to riparian habitats.</p> <p>There are several small watercourses and drainage ditches on the Preferred Site and we will expect these and their associated banks to be included in an National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey to inform a Habitat Management Plan and environmental enhancements and Biodiversity Net Gain in the detailed design.</p> <p>They would welcome the investigation into the renaturalisation and removal of man-made features within a watercourse running south-north through the Preferred Site to Flushing and a watercourse to the southwest of the Preferred Site running SE to NW to Mill of Tiffern. This has the potential to add to biodiversity net gain but also could help mitigate surface water flooding downstream.</p> | <p>We have commissioned specialist consultants at an early stage to progress the drainage design and have early engagement with Aberdeenshire Council and SEPA. Flood risk will be considered as part of the consenting process and will include the submission of a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Impact Assessment. Opportunities to renaturalise watercourses will be considered by the team during the consenting process. An ecological survey of habitats on Site Options has been undertaken at the Site Selection Stage. The requirement for further surveys will be reviewed in order to inform the consenting process and BNG requirements.</p> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>SEPA requested a map demonstrating all existing groundwater abstractions are outwith a 100m radius of all excavations shallower than 1m and outwith 250m of all excavations deeper than 1m and proposed ground water abstractions. If the minimum buffers cannot be achieved, a detailed site specific qualitative and/or quantitative risk assessment will be required. SEPA will likely seek conditions securing appropriate mitigation for all existing groundwater abstractions affected.</p> <p>SEPA advised on a consultation call on the 3rd of May 2023 that they have no major concerns over site selection.</p>  |   |
| <p><b>NatureScot</b></p> <p>A response from NatureScot noted that the Preferred Site Option will not directly impact on any protected areas for nature conservation, however it is located within 20km of two SPA's designated for their goose interests. An assessment of the Proposed Development and its potential effects to loss of foraging resource should be presented at the application stage informed by an appropriate level of survey work. The response also noted that the competent authority will require sufficient details about all aspects of the Proposed Development and how it will be carried out in order to complete their habitats regulations appraisal (HRA). NatureScot are happy to continue engagement with SSE on the gathering and production of information to inform the HRA. NatureScot's response also provided reference to standing advice and guidance to be referred to and stated their intention to defer any comments on landscape and visual impacts to Aberdeenshire Council.</p> | <p>We will prepare a HRA as part of the consenting process which will consider impacts to loss of foraging resource for geese among other relevant considerations. We welcome the opportunity to consult with NatureScot on this further during the consenting process.</p> |

**Table 4: Non-statutory Consultee Feedback**

| Non-statutory Consultee Feedback   | Our Response  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>National Gas Transmission</b></p> <p>An assessment has been carried out with respect to National Gas Transmission plc's apparatus and the proposed work location at the Preferred Site. Based on the location entered into the system for assessment the area has been found to be within the High Risk zone from National Gas Transmission plc's apparatus and you must not proceed without further assessment from Asset Protection.</p>   | <p>We will seek to consult with National Gas Transmission regarding their assets and to develop asset protection measures where required. We have commissioned specialist consultants to carry out Quantitative Risk Assessment (QRA) on the gas pipelines with recommendations to inform protection of the asset as well as general arrangement of site layout, encouraging minimal interaction with National Gas Transmission assets. Undertaking these assessments is a standard element of project development and it is fully expected a suitable design can be developed.</p> |
| <p><b>Shell</b></p> <p>As the proposal at the Preferred Site is in close proximity to the Shell pipelines, we offer the following observation: whilst we have no objection in principle to the erection of a National Energy Hub, the areas of particular concern are;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 The development does not encroach into the pipeline servitude.</li> <li>2 Potential pipeline crossings during construction.</li> <li>3 The risk of AC and DC induced interference affecting the integrity of our pipelines.</li> </ol> | <p>We will seek to consult with Shell regarding their assets and to provide the additional information required.</p>  |