



# Summary Report on Consultation

## Beauly to Peterhead

November 2023

# Foreword

As well as keeping the lights on for the communities our network region serves, it is also our role to connect and transport large quantities of renewable electricity to where it's needed.

The north of Scotland's abundance of renewable resources means we have a vital part to play in helping deliver energy independence, securing future electricity supplies with homegrown low carbon energy, reducing our dependence on imported power from often volatile global markets.

As well as delivering a more secure and affordable energy system for homes and businesses across the country, our electricity network will play a leading role in harnessing Scotland's clean energy potential and delivering Scotland's and the UK's climate change targets.

To help achieve our energy independence and net zero ambitions, we are taking forward over £20bn of investment in new electricity transmission infrastructure this decade. These investments, which consist of new overhead lines, substations and HVDC subsea links and converter stations, form part of a major upgrade of the electricity transmission system across Great

Britain that is required to meet interim 2030 Government targets. This includes a new 400 kilovolt (kV) overhead line connecting Beauly to Peterhead via new substations located near Beauly, Blackhillock, New Deer and Peterhead .

Earlier this year, we embarked on the first phase of public consultation across our Pathway to 2030 programme of investments and I would like to personally thank every individual and organisation who took the time to respond and engage with us. We have carefully considered all responses which has helped inform our decisions on potential overhead line routes and substation locations.

We acknowledge that the impacts of new infrastructure on some communities are unavoidable and are committed to minimise and mitigate local and environmental impacts wherever possible, looking to avoid population centres, historical landmarks and Scotland's most precious environmental designations and landscapes.

As we build the infrastructure needed to transport our clean, homegrown energy, we are set to deliver one of the biggest investment programmes the north of Scotland has ever seen. We will ensure the benefits of this major investment programme are shared with our host communities by supporting local businesses, employment and delivering a lasting legacy for current and future generations.

We now look forward to continued engagement with our stakeholders on our Pathway to 2030 programme of investments as we start to refine our plans ahead of our next round of public consultation in early 2024.

**Rob McDonald**  
MD, SSEN Transmission



# Introduction

In early 2023, we carried out early consultation on the proposed Beauly – Blackhillock – New Deer – Peterhead 400kV overhead line and associated substations, presenting proposals which were based on initial detailed site and route selection appraisals and included extensive environmental and technical analysis.

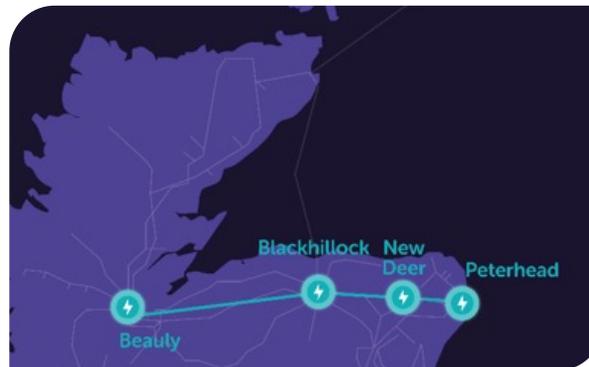
We hosted public consultation events as well as meetings with a wide range of stakeholders and welcomed feedback via a range of methods including online feedback forms, emails and letters. We have now collated this feedback, our responses and the decisions that we have made into specific Reports on Consultation which are available on each project specific webpage:

- [Beauly Area 400kV Substation](#)
- [Blackhillock 2 Substation](#)
- [New Deer 2 Substation](#)
- [Netherton Hub](#)
- [Beauly to Peterhead, via New Deer and Blackhillock 400kV Overhead Line](#)

This Report on Consultation Summary provides a summary of the individual Reports on Consultation relating to the proposed overhead line and associated substations near Beauly, Blackhillock, New Deer and Peterhead (part of the Netherton Hub). It highlights the feedback we received in response to our consultations, and how this has influenced our actions and decision-making.

Across all of our Pathway to 2030 project

consultations, we received feedback covering a number of common themes: project need, technology choice, environmental impacts, socio-economic impacts and on the consultation process. 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 at the end of this Summary Report on Consultation. In addition, we have also developed a set of responses to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that can be viewed [here](#).



## Summary of Public Consultation Engagement



**13** Consultation events



**1507** Registered attendees



**787** Pieces of written feedback

These public engagement events were supplemented by a number of online and in person meetings with a variety of stakeholders including statutory and non-statutory consultees, members of the public, Community Councils and elected members.

### Useful links

- [Pathway to 2030 – Projects delivering a Network for Net Zero](#)
- [Why are the Pathway to 2030 Projects needed?](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions on our Pathway to 2030 Projects](#)

# Summary of Project Specific Feedback and Our Decisions

# Beauly Area Substation

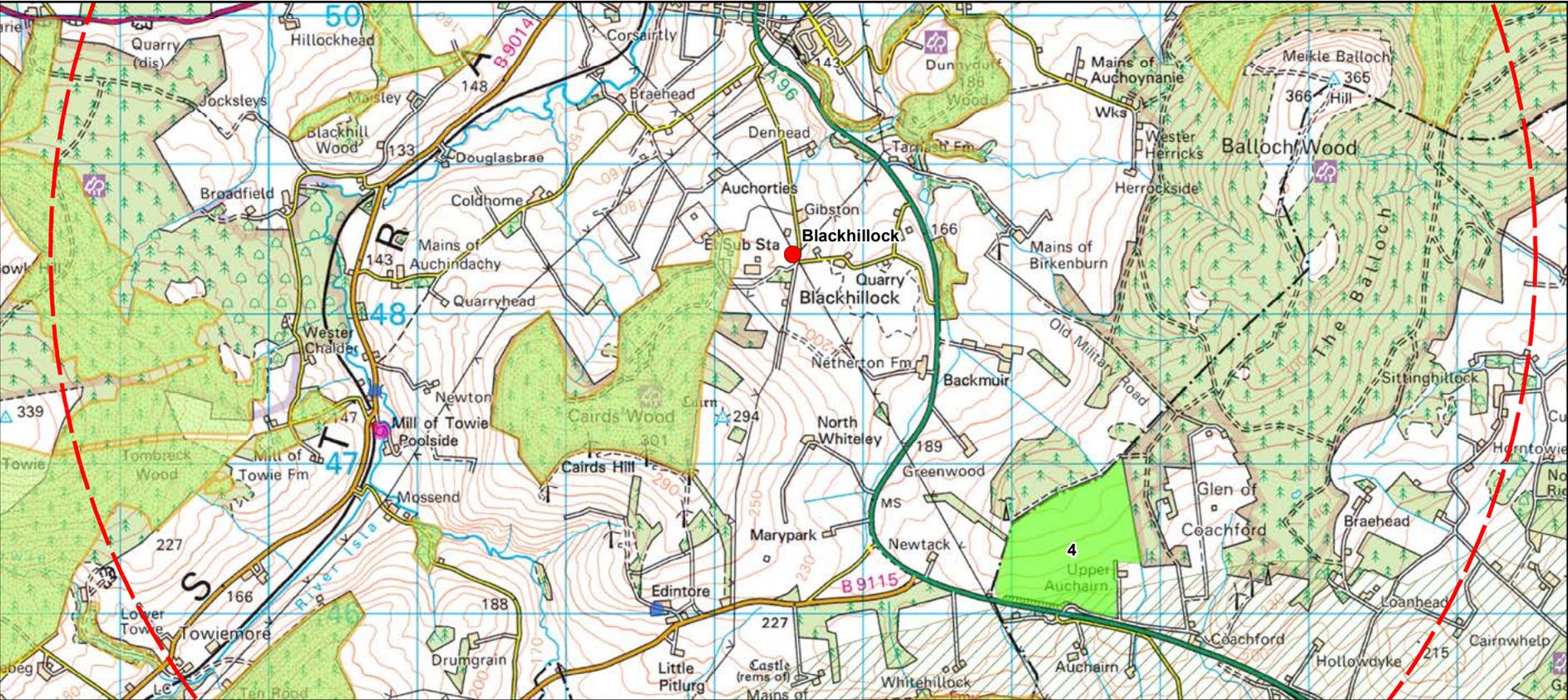
What we proposed at consultation	Feedback received 	Response to feedback 	Explanation of decision 
<p>We proposed to co-locate a new 400kV substation and HVDC converter station on a site near Fanellan, southwest of Beauly (known as Site Option 7).</p>	<p>Both The Highland Council and local community members were concerned about the visual and community impact that Site Option 7 may have and asked for suitable mitigation, such as using building materials that blend into the environment and vegetation screening, to be considered. They also requested for additional sites (including the nearby quarry) to be assessed for suitability.</p> <p>Statutory consultees SEPA, NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) were broadly supportive of our proposed site. SEPA highlighted that Site Option 4 had a potential fluvial flood risk.</p> <p>The Highland Council requested that Site Options 11 and 11A be avoided due to the significant impact this would have on current and future housing developments in the area.</p> <p>Beauly Fishery Board stated that the least preferable Site Options were 4 and 11A due to proximity to angling activities and restored wetlands.</p> <p>The community raised concerns for wildlife, access and recreation in relation to the nearby Ruttle Wood during both construction and operation.</p>	<p>In response to the feedback received, 6 additional Site Options were identified and assessed. These sites did not score more favorably than Site Option 7, mainly due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their distance from the existing Beauly to Denny Overhead Line (requiring additional overhead lines compared with Site Option 7).</li> <li>• Close proximity to residential properties and risk of adding to the current noise levels at the existing Beauly substation.</li> <li>• Engineering challenges due to either remoteness of the site or as a result of positioning on land impacted by quarry works</li> <li>• Proximity to cultural heritage</li> </ul> <p>As part of the ongoing development of this project we will undertake detailed environmental assessments and design which will propose mitigation for identified concerns such as nuisance, wildlife, habitats and visual impact.</p>	<p>Following consultation, we believe Site Option 7 is the best site, on balance, when we consider stakeholder feedback and minimising the cumulative visual impact of our proposals in the Beauly area. We will therefore progress with Site Option 7 as our proposed site for the co-location of the 400kV substation and HVDC converter station.</p> <p>Our decision to not change our preferred Option to one of the other shortlisted Options (4, 11 and 11A) based on our site selection assessments was supported by the feedback received from SEPA, NatureScot, Historic Environment Scotland, The Highland Council and Beauly Fishery Board. We did not receive material feedback specifically in relation to Site Option 9.</p>



# Blackhillock 2 Substation

What we proposed at consultation	Feedback received 	Response to feedback 	Explanation of decision 
<p>The location of a new 400kV substation at a site near Keith, known as Site Option 10.</p>	<p>The feedback received from the consultation demonstrated clear opposition to our preferred option from Moray Council and the local community. A petition was received from over 800 local residents, who opposed to Site Option 10 due to its proximity to the town of Keith and local amenities. There was also concern that the site would restrict any future expansion of Keith, including the potential for a new health centre.</p> <p>In contrast, SEPA agreed that Site Option 10 was the preferred option as it would have the least detrimental impact on private water supplies and watercourses in comparison to the other potential sites. SEPA did however raise concerns over Site Option 4 in relation to private water supplies and watercourses.</p>	<p>In response to the feedback we received, we took the decision to revisit site selection, and considered if one of the alternative sites may be more appropriate and help address the concerns raised.</p>	<p>In response to stakeholder feedback and following further assessment of the alternative sites, we will take Site Option 4, to the south east of Keith, forward as our proposed option to the next stage of consultation, instead of Site Option 10.</p> <p>We acknowledge that SEPA had some concerns in relation to Site Option 4 and we will continue to engage with them to address their concerns. We are confident that we can ensure satisfactory mitigations are implemented.</p> <p>Changing the proposed option to Site Option 4 means that the associated proposed overhead line route has been revised to facilitate the connection to the new proposed substation location. The changes are further detailed within the Beauly to Blackhillock to New Deer to Peterhead 400kV overhead line Report on Consultation, and briefly referred to in the overhead line summary below.</p>

# Proposed Blackhillock 2 Substation



<span style="color: red;">●</span> Existing Substation	<span style="color: red;">●</span> Listed Buildings - A
<span style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 2px;"> </span> Blackhillock Substation 5km Buffer	<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Listed Buildings - B
<span style="background-color: green; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Site 4	<span style="color: magenta;">●</span> Listed Buildings - C
<span style="background-color: pink; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Site 10	<span style="border: 1px dashed purple; padding: 2px;"> </span> Conservation Areas
<span style="background-color: yellow; border: 1px dotted green; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)	<span style="background-color: red; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Scheduled Monuments
<span style="border: 1px dashed red; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Sites of Special Scientific Interest	<span style="border: 1px solid green; width: 15px; height: 10px; display: inline-block;"></span> Wildcat Protection Area



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Project No:	LT000358
Project:	Blackhillock 400kV Building Extension
Title:	Environmental Constraints - Options taken forward to initial appraisal and site walkover
Drawn by:	IF
Date:	15/11/2023
Drawing:	LT000358_ENV_002

# New Deer 2 Substation

## What we proposed at consultation

The location of a new 400kV substation at a site to the west of New Deer village and north of the existing New Deer substation, known as Site Option 13.

## Feedback received



Aberdeenshire Council and the local community raised concerns over how the preferred option had been selected and asked for visibility of the justification for discounting the alternative sites.

SEPA did not agree that Site Option 13 was the preferred option due to potential detrimental impacts to the water environment relating to a historically straightened watercourse running through the length of the site from west to east.

Concerns and requests from the local community centered around protecting local wildlife, avoiding close proximity to residential properties and mitigating visual impacts.

## Response to feedback



Whilst we undertook the same rigorous site selection process as we do with all our projects, we acknowledge that this information was not fully provided during the initial consultation period. To address this, we have shared the results of the site selection process within the full Report on Consultation for New Deer 2. We have also taken action to ensure these assessments are visible for future consultation events across each of our projects.

In relation to the concerns raised by SEPA regarding Site Option 13, we conducted further studies with an external consultant as well as undertaking further engagement with SEPA. Through this collaboration we are confident that a positive solution can be identified. We will continue to work closely with SEPA to address these concerns.

## Explanation of decision



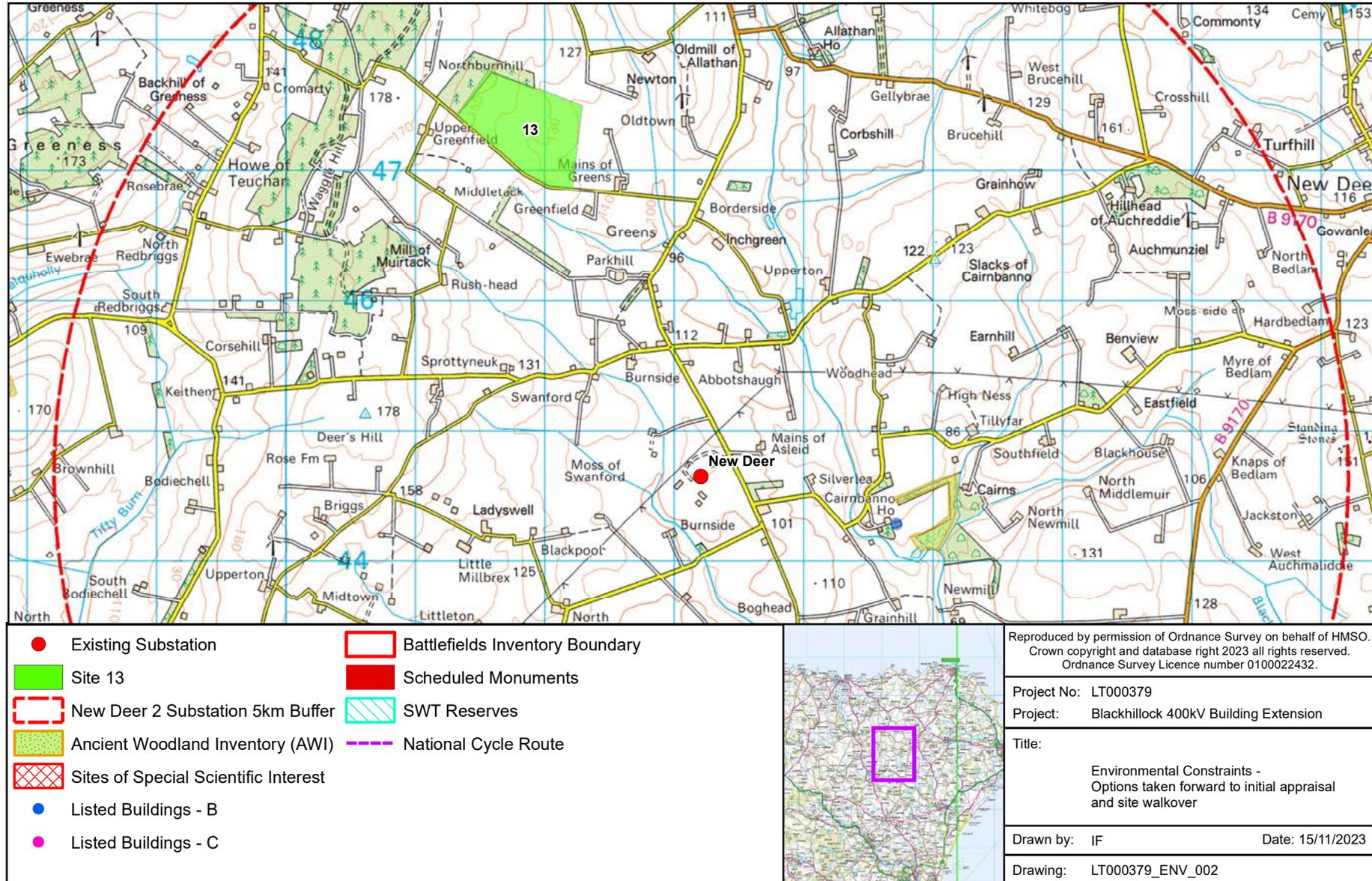
We will progress to the next round of consultation with Site Option 13 as our proposed location for the new substation.

Following a review of the feedback received during the consultation as well as a review of our site selection assessments, our decision to progress with Option 13 was based on the following reasons:

- It was the only site not to have any 'Red' (i.e. least preferred) ratings within our site selection assessments.
- It has a lesser visual and noise impact, on fewer residential properties.
- It can accommodate the platform size requirements.
- Its location means that we can explore alternative connection options to the existing New Deer substation, such as the potential to underground the cabling, potentially limiting the cumulative visual impact.
- There are fewer signs of protected species activity.
- It is not located on prime agricultural land.
- The volume of feedback was low and the issues did not have a material impact on the overall assessment of the site.

This option responds to many of the requests that we received from stakeholders throughout the consultation process such as to avoid close proximity to residential properties and to mitigate the visual impacts as much as possible.

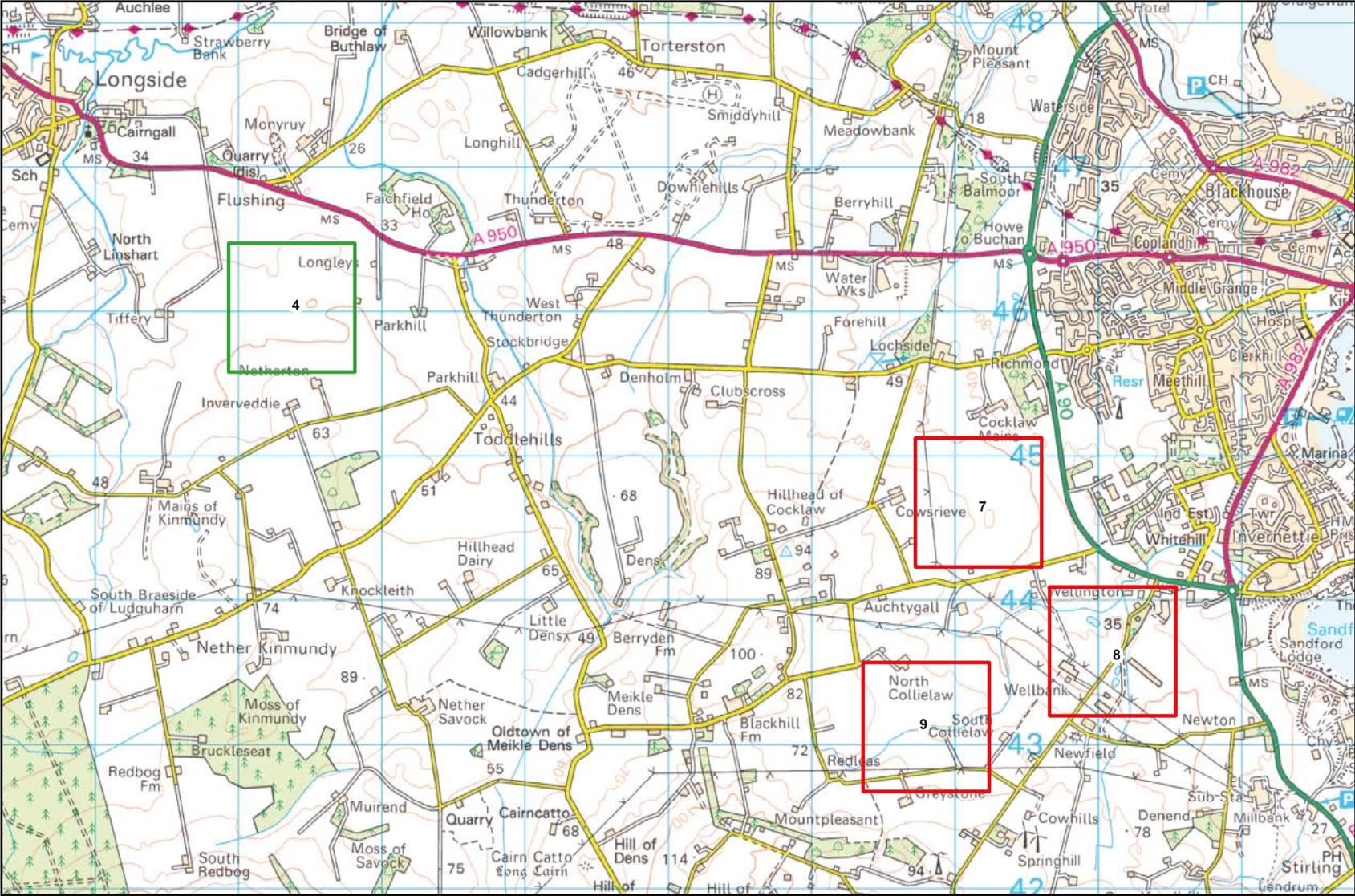
# Proposed New Deer 2 Substation



# Netherton Hub

What we proposed at consultation	Feedback received 	Response to feedback 	Explanation of decision 
<p>The location of a new 400kV substation near Longside known as Site Option 4.</p>	<p>Concerns were raised by the community over the lack of information on what the development may look like, particularly given its size.</p> <p>Concerns were also raised in relation to the loss of agricultural land.</p> <p>A pre-existing flooding and drainage issue to the north of the preferred site was identified by a number of stakeholder groups.</p> <p>Feedback from the community advised the project name should reflect the farming heritage at the site which is located on Netherton Farm.</p>	<p>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 mitigations will be presented at the consultation event in early 2024.</p> <p>Whilst we acknowledge that locating the substation on Site Option 4 will result in the loss of agricultural resource, due to the nature of land use in the area, all site options would either wholly or partly result in loss of agricultural land.</p> <p>In response to feedback relating to concerns of flooding within the proposed site, we have commissioned specialist consultants at an early stage to progress the drainage design and have had early engagement with Aberdeenshire Council and SEPA.</p>	<p>We will progress to the next round of consultation with Site Option 4 as our proposed option for the substation, which in response to feedback, has been renamed "Netherton Hub".</p> <p>Following a review of the feedback received during the consultation as well as a review of our site selection assessments, our decision to progress with Site Option 4 was based on the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is further away from more residential properties and existing industrial areas than other shortlisted sites such as Site Options 7 and 8.</li> <li>• It has less suitable habitats to support protected and/or notable species than other sites, suggesting less impact on local wildlife.</li> <li>• The site can accommodate all of the proposed Netherton Hub infrastructure, preventing the need to split the infrastructure over more than one site. Keeping the infrastructure together means that we can use underground cabling without the need for additional compensatory infrastructure that could increase the cumulative visual impact of the proposals on the wider community.</li> </ul>

# Proposed Netherton Hub



- Key**
- Preferred Site
  - Site option appraised at Stage 2

# Beauly to Peterhead, via New Deer and Blackhillock Overhead Line

What we proposed at consultation	Feedback Received 	Response to feedback 	Explanation of Decision 
<p>A new 400kV overhead line, approximately 180km in length connecting Beauly to Peterhead, via New Deer and Blackhillock. Due to the length of the line, the project has been divided into the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 1 – Beauly Area substation to south of Beauly;</li> <li>• Section 2 – South of Beauly to south of Inverness;</li> <li>• Section 3 – A9 and River Nairn crossing;</li> <li>• Section 4 – South of Culloden to Ferness;</li> <li>• Section 5 – Ferness to South of Forres;</li> <li>• Section 6 – South of Forres to Kellas;</li> <li>• Section 7 – Kellas to Teindland;</li> <li>• Section 8 – Teindland to Keith;</li> <li>• Section 9 – Keith to south of Turriff;</li> <li>• Section 10 – south of Turriff to New Deer; and</li> <li>• Section 11 – New Deer to Peterhead.</li> </ul>	<p>Key concerns from local councils and members of the local community across each section related to the impact on the surrounding landscape, visual amenity and local communities. In particular, Highland and Moray Councils requested for overhead lines to be undergrounded or rationalised to reduce the overall impact of the infrastructure in the area.</p> <p>The Highland Council's preference was that overhead lines should be kept within proximity of existing overhead lines. This view was in contrast to a number of other stakeholders such as some local residents and the National Trust for Scotland who had concerns about the cumulative impact of multiple overhead lines in close proximity to each other.</p> <p>There was particular concern within Section 11 about the proximity of the preferred route to villages such as Maud and Stuartfield, and the potential for this to restrict further development in the area.</p> <p>There were further concerns raised by the local community and other statutory and non-statutory consultees across various sections of the overhead line in relation to recreation, cultural heritage, wildlife, ancient woodland, tourism and visual impact.</p>	<p>Feedback received during the consultation has been reviewed and a number of changes to routes have been made as a result.</p> <p>In general, the route options selected to proceed align with stakeholder feedback.</p> <p>Adjustments have been made to some routes to increase opportunities where it might be possible to minimise the visual impact of the overhead lines or reduce the impact on environmental concerns such as woodland loss and peatland.</p>	<p>The route options identified as Preferred during the consultation have been selected to proceed to the next round of consultation (Alignment) with some adjustments. These options are detailed within the full Report on Consultation and are shown in the map on the following page.</p> <p>Sections 8 and 9 were amended to incorporate the move of the proposed Blackhillock 2 substation.</p> <p>In response to strong community feedback, the route between New Deer and Peterhead (Section 11) was expanded to provide more options for alignment with existing overhead line routes and to avoid areas of concern such as scheduled monuments and villages such as Maud and Stuartfield.</p> <p>To further develop our overhead line proposals, we will undertake in-depth assessments which will consider mitigations for identified concerns such as wildlife and habitats, landscape, design and visual. Further information on this is included in the full Report on Consultation.</p>

# Proposed Beauly to Peterhead, via New Deer and Blackhillock Overhead Line

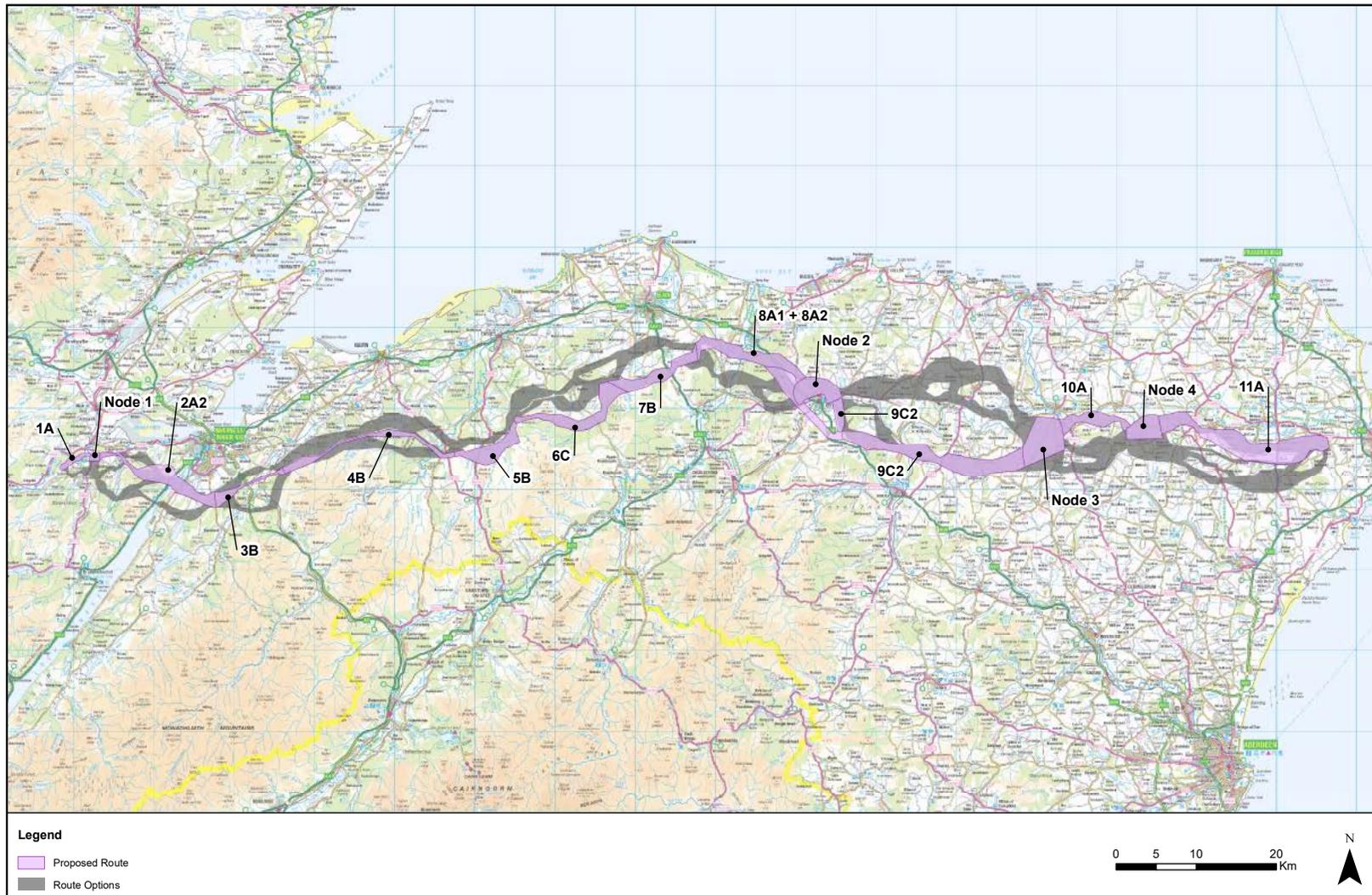


Image confirming the proposed route to be taken forward to the next round of consultation whereas the route options in grey show the options which we are no longer progressing.

# Next Steps

Engagement with communities and other stakeholders is essential in planning the delivery of this critical national infrastructure. We will now work with stakeholders to refine the plans for these projects ahead of our next round of consultation in early 2024. This engagement will be undertaken through in person and virtual meetings as well as an online webinar.

The webinar is open for all to join and will be held on **Wednesday 13 December between 2pm-3.15pm**, where SSEN Transmission colleagues will describe some of the primary changes to Pathway to 2030 projects that are being proposed following consultation. This webinar will be recorded and made available on our website.

We will be consulting further with local communities and stakeholders early in the new year, where we will seek feedback on specific alignments within the route corridor and all associated proposed substations. Further to this, there will be another opportunity for communities and stakeholders to engage with us on the projects as we host our final round of public events before the end of 2024.



# Common Themes

## 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 that these projects will transport will play a key role in meeting UK and Scottish Government renewable energy and climate change targets. It 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](#).



# Common Themes

## 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 that 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 that we are allowed to recover for these projects.



# Common Themes

## Environmental impacts

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

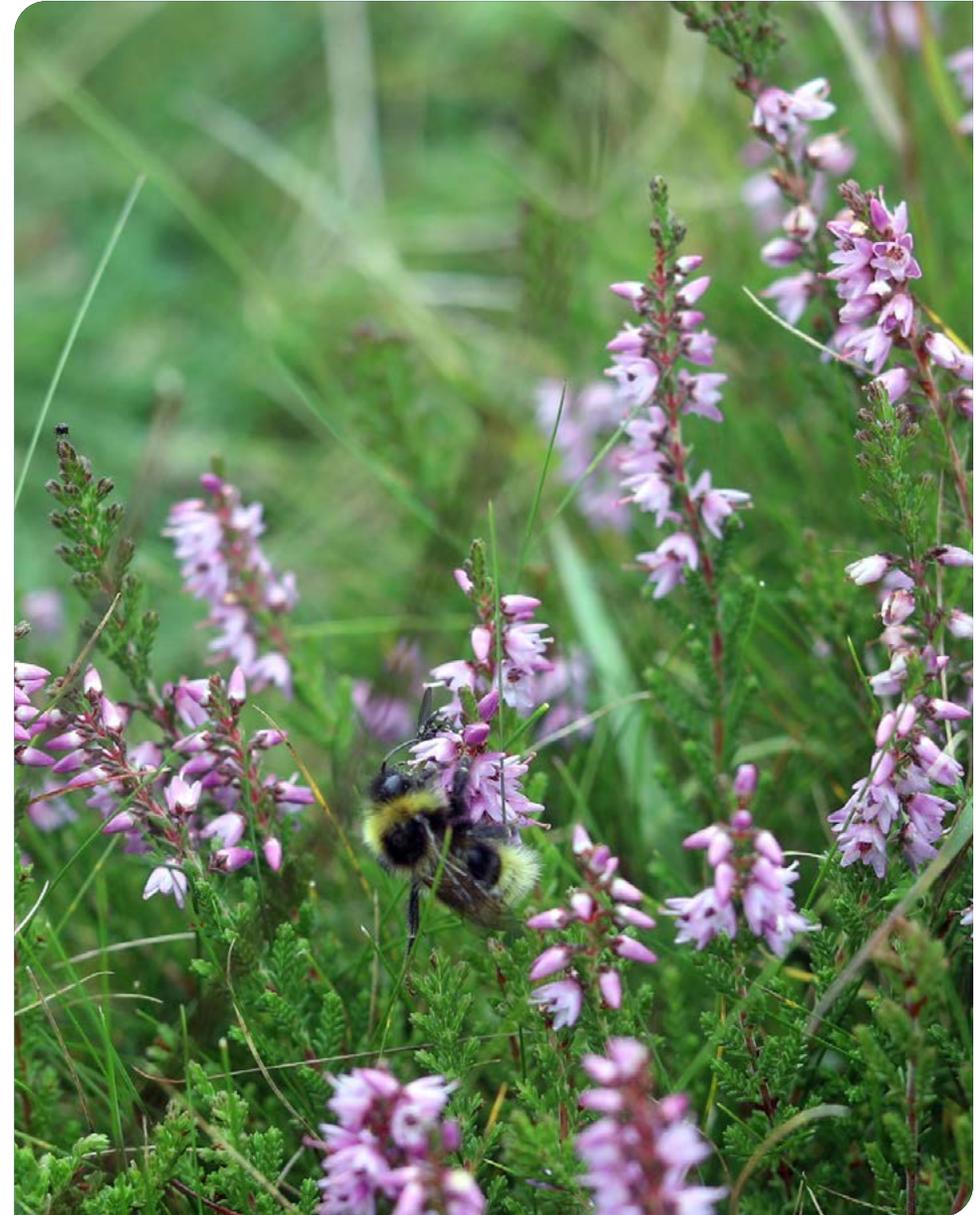
As one of the greatest risks to our natural environment and biodiversity is climate change, these projects are part of the solution if we are to tackle the climate emergency and deliver net zero emissions in Scotland and across the United Kingdom.

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

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 that 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.

You can find out more about how we are delivering a positive environmental legacy by [clicking here](#).



# Common Themes

## 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 are committed to do all that we can to minimise and mitigate the visual impact on local communities as part of the ongoing development of the 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 that host communities will play in delivering the infrastructure required to meet 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.



# Common Themes

## 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 recognise that there is always room for improvement and as we look forward to the next round of public consultations, we are committed to applying 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.

