

New Spittal Area 400kV Substation and HVDC Converter Station

Report on Consultation

November 2023



Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of this document

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

This Report details the consultation process undertaken, including details of consultation methods and advertising, those consulted and/or contributing to the process and it also documents the feedback received, including objections, concerns, questions and statements of support. It sets out clearly how stakeholder feedback has influenced decisions made regarding the option taken forward.

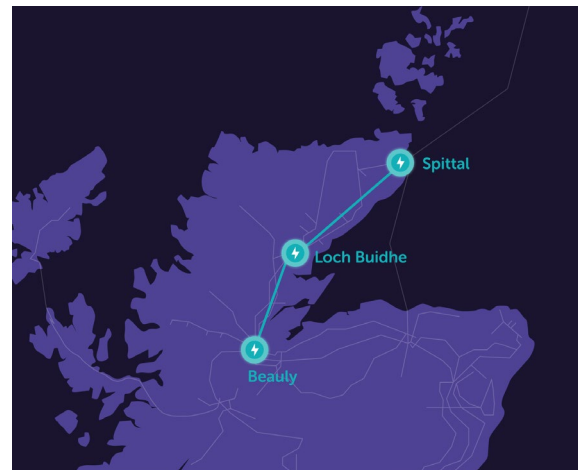
1.2. Project Overview

Based on the requirements outlined in the [ESO's Pathway to 2030 Holistic Network Design](#)¹, we have developed proposals to reinforce the onshore corridor between Spittal and Beaully, via Loch Buidhe. To facilitate this connection, and others as part of the wider strategy, new additional 400kV substations and associated infrastructure is also required in these three locations.

This RoC covers a new 400kV Substation and HVDC Converter Station², proposed in the Spittal area to connect to the proposed new 400kV overhead line from Beaully, the new Spittal to Peterhead HVDC link and the existing Spittal 275/132kV substation.

Please refer to the following project webpages for Reports on Consultation for the proposed Spittal to Beaully 400kV OHL, Loch Buidhe and Beaully 400kV Substations:

- [Spittal — Beaully 400kV OHL](#)
- [New Loch Buidhe Area 400kV Substation](#)
- [New Beaully Area 400kV Substation](#)



New SSEN Transmission projects between Spittal and Beaully

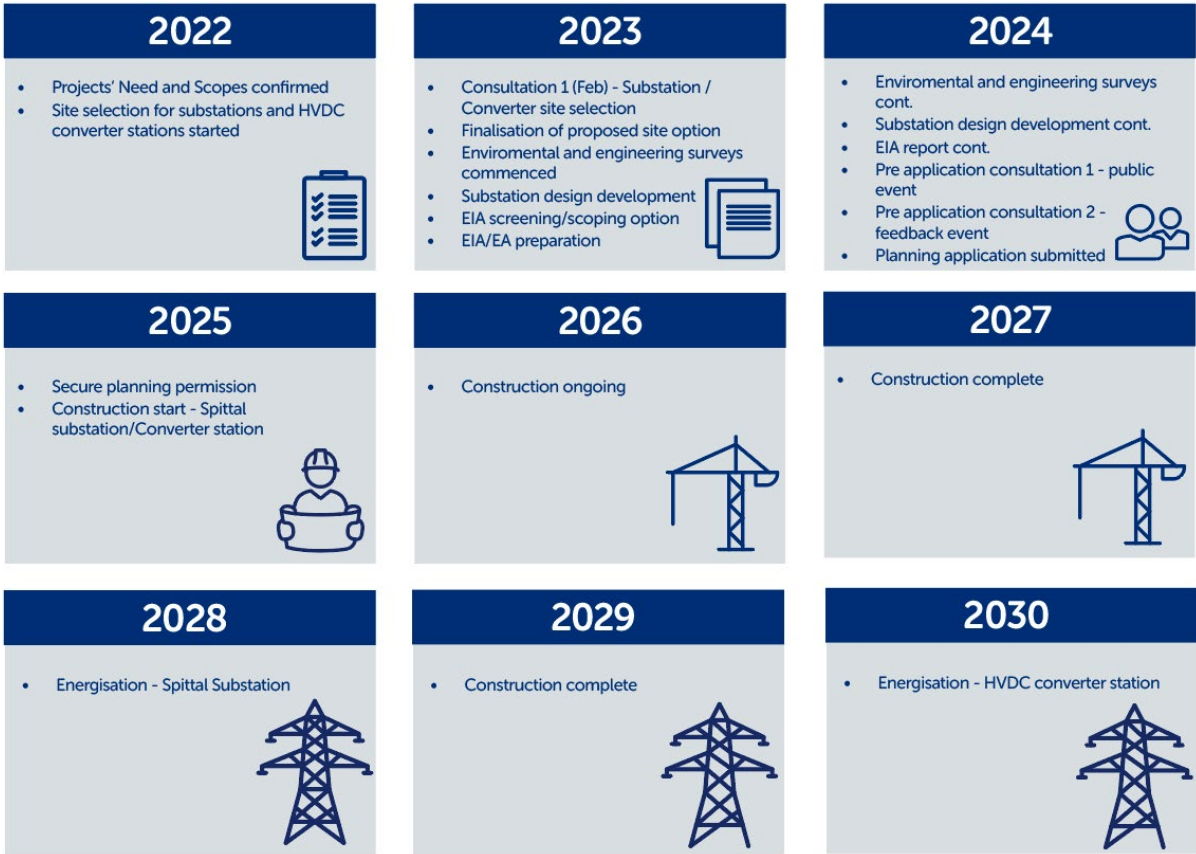
¹ <https://www.nationalgrideso.com/future-energy/pathway-2030-holistic-network-design/holistic-network-design-offshore-wind>

² <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/new-spittal-area-400kv-substation/>

The new Spittal area 400kV Substation and HVDC Converter Station project requires:

- Construction of a new outdoor, Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS), 400kV substation complete with 400kV double busbar arrangement that is approximately 530m x 340m (not including the groundworks required to create a level platform).
- Installation of 2 new super grid transformers (SGT).
- A new substation control building.
- Installation of underground cables to connect the new 400kV substation to the existing Spittal 275/132kV substation.
- Connection with the proposed new Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beauly 400kV OHL.
- A new 525kV DC 2GW HVDC converter station with a platform of approximately 325m x 290m to be located near the new 400kV Spittal substation.
- AC underground cable connections to the New 400kV Spittal substation.
- HVDC underground cables from the converter station to a new landfall in the vicinity of Sinclairs Bay.
- Areas for drainage, landscaping/screening and habitat enhancement.
- Temporary areas will also be required during construction for laydown and welfare.

1.3. Project Timeline



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

1.4. What we were consulting on

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

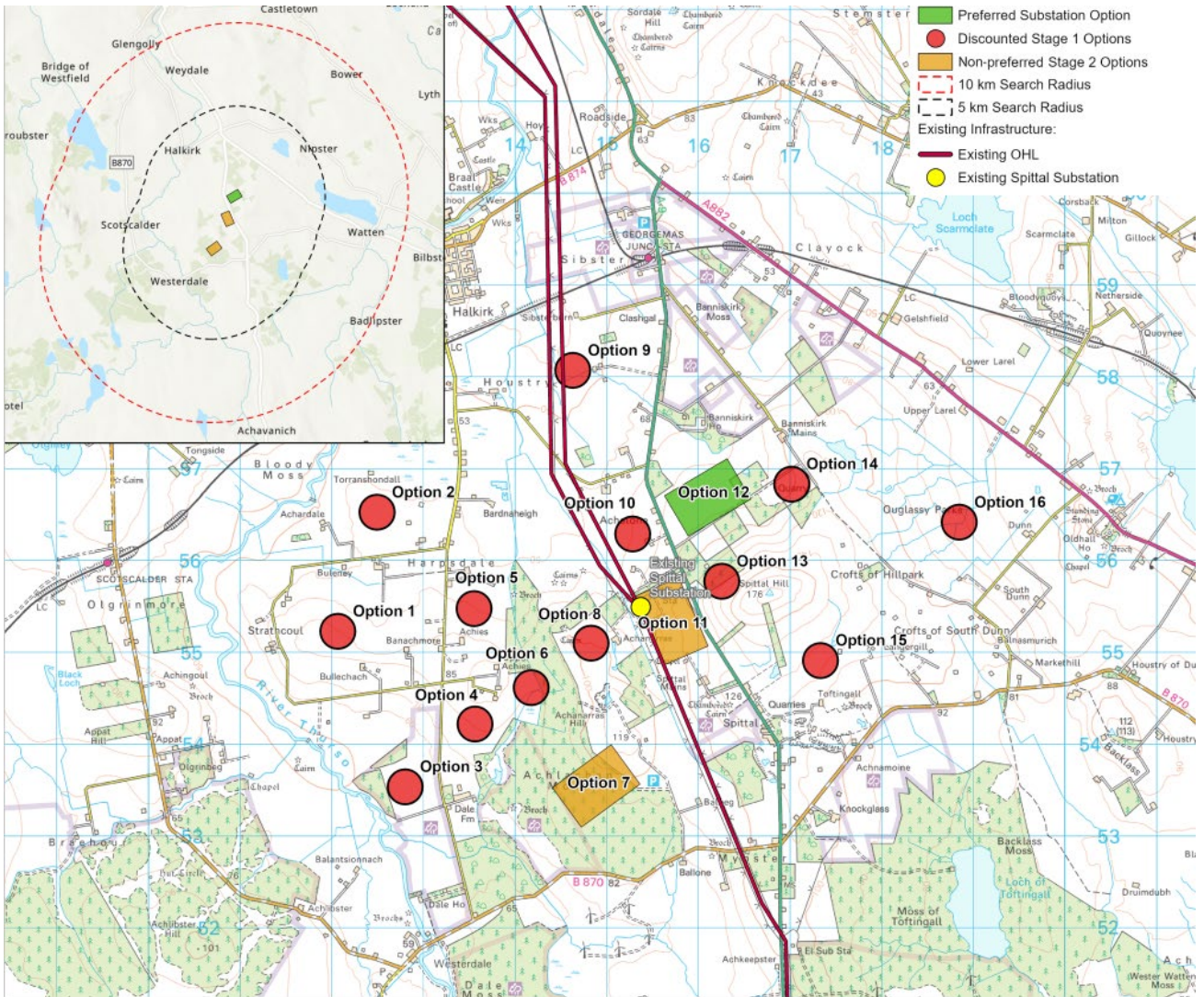
Based on the requirements outlined in the ESO's Pathway to 2030 Holistic Network Design, we developed proposals to reinforce the onshore electricity transmission corridor between Spittal and Beauly, via Loch Buidhe, through constructing a new 400kV Overhead Line (OHL). To facilitate this OHL connection, and others as part of the wider strategy, new additional 400kV substations and associated infrastructure is also required in these three locations.

Owing to the intrinsic connection between the proposals for delivery of new infrastructure at and between Spittal, Loch Buidhe and Beauly, we chose to consult on all elements of the proposed development at the same time; we considered this to be the most appropriate way in which to provide a holistic view of the proposals to the communities that would be likely to host the infrastructure, and to enable comprehensive discussion and feedback on all connected elements.

During the consultation, we presented options regarding our site selection for the proposed new Spittal area substation and HVDC Converter Station, which is collocated within the development area. The consultation included information regarding technology options, environmental and technical considerations, the project development process and an overview of environmental and technical matters relating to site options 7, 11 and 12, which were shortlisted from an initial series of site options and assessed as part of the Detailed Site Selection Process³. The output of our internal Substation Site Selection Report prior to the February 2023 Public Consultation identified Site 12 as the preferred site. Following these events, additional consultation was undertaken with statutory consultees including representatives from Highland Council (THC), NatureScot (NS), and Historic Environment Scotland (HES). Additional information was provided to satisfy a request by the statutory consultees in relation to the assessment of Site Option 11.

³ [0652629 - Spittal Consultation - Substation Options figure \(ssen-transmission.co.uk\)](https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk)

Figure 1: 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 public consultation period was open from 20 February until 14 April 2023. This was originally due to conclude on the 31 March, however was extended in response to stakeholder requests.

Where possible, affected landowners were contacted ahead of the consultation period opening to the public to discuss land related considerations or concerns.

Statutory Consultees were invited to provide feedback on our Consultation Document from the start of the feedback period and during the summer months; the feedback period for statutory consultees culminated in a formal Pre-Application meeting chaired by The Highland Council on 13 September 2023, after which time formal written feedback was received from the statutory bodies.

2.3. The advertising process

The advertising process for the New Spittal area 400kV substation and HVDC Converter Station was incorporated into the advertising process for the Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beaully 400kV overhead line. The consultation events were advertised extensively using the following methods:

- The consultation events were advertised in the following local and regional newspapers:
 - Press and Journal on 9 and 15 February
 - Caithness Courier on 8 and 15 February
 - Northern Times, Ross-Shire Journal and Inverness Courier on 10, 17 and 24 February
- Our social media channels and the dedicated project webpage.
- Community Councillors and Local Elected Members were emailed in advance with information they could share within their local area.
- A postcard sent to 28,309 homes and 1,133 businesses within communities potentially impacted by our proposals. Please refer to Appendix (A): Postcard invite.
- An email was sent to those signed up for project updates from the project website.

2.4. Stakeholder participation

A series of public consultation events were held between 20 February and 6 March 2023 for the Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beaully 400kV overhead line and subsequent substations and HVDC converter stations, where local stakeholders could meet with the project team to discuss the proposals in more detail.

The first event in Halkirk, and additional coffee morning organised in Spittal Village Hall in response to public feedback, enabled communities in closest proximity to view the site options for the New Spittal area 400kV substation and HVDC converter station.

Date	Event	Recorded attendance
20 February	Halkirk, Ross Institute	18
21 February	Spittal, Village Hall (Coffee Morning)	9
6 March	Virtual Event	23

Attendance figures reflect the number of people who had registered attendance at a consultation event.

A Consultation Summary Report⁴ was published in July 2023 which contains a further breakdown of stakeholder participation.

Virtual event

A virtual exhibition room⁵ was accessible via the project webpage, and a virtual event was held on 6 March 2023.

The virtual exhibition room contained the same information presented at the in-person events and a question-and-answer chat function was implemented during the hours of the event.

The event was attended by 23 people with 78 questions being asked. Most questions received were in relation to the overhead line and zero questions were asked regarding the Spittal substation and HVDC converter station.

⁴ [consultation-report---spittal---loch-buidhe---beaully---july-23.pdf \(ssen-transmission.co.uk\)](#)

⁵ [SSEN - Spittal to Beaully Virtual Exhibition \(3dwtech.co.uk\)](#)

Stakeholder meetings

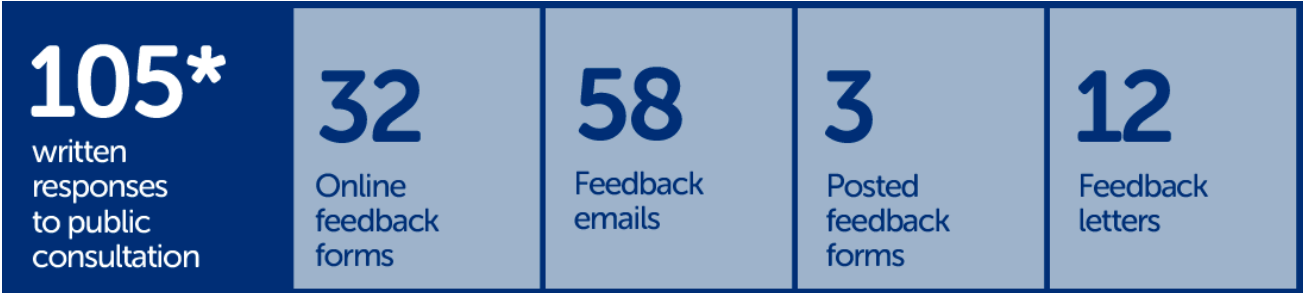
In the weeks before, during and after the consultation events, various meetings were held with other key stakeholders such as landowners, statutory and non-statutory consultees, and elected members to discuss the project proposals.

Date	Meeting Type	Stakeholder group in attendance
15 February	Pre-consultation presentation meeting with Highland Council Ward Councillors (Microsoft Teams meeting)	Elected Highland Councillors from wards potentially impacted by our proposals
7 & 10 March	Consultation event with Statutory Consultees	The Highland Council (THC); NatureScot (NS); Historic Environment Scotland (HES); apologies from Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
21 March	Meeting with cultural heritage groups to discuss potential impacts on cultural heritage, as a result of the proposed development	ARCH, NOSAS and other cultural heritage groups located across Caithness and Sutherland
13 September	Formal Pre-Application meeting with The Highland Council and Statutory Consultees to discuss the proposed development	The Highland Council (THC); NatureScot (NS); Historic Environment Scotland (HES); apologies from Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)

2.5. Feedback volume

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

Responses to public consultation



*Whilst over 100 responses to the consultation were initially analysed as referring to Spittal substation, more detailed analysis showed that the majority of these responses were talking in more general terms about the overarching overhead line project.

Responses from statutory and non-statutory consultees:

Key statutory agencies, including The Highland Council (THC), NatureScot (NS), Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) were contacted and requested to provide feedback on the proposals. Four responses were received, one of each of the consultees listed above, with a summary of each provided within the remainder of this report.

3. Consultation Feedback and Our Response

3.1. Common Themes

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

Project Need

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

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

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

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

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

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

Technology Choice

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

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

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

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

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

Environmental impacts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Socio-Economic impact

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Consultation process

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

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

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

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

3.2. Specific Project Related Feedback

Introduction

This section of the report provides our responses to the questions and themes emerging from the public consultation and the responses provided by statutory and non-statutory stakeholders. During each event, the project team directed the members of the public to the feedback forms to encourage attendees to provide their comments.

Consultation responses have been grouped by the following project themes, ‘environmental impact’, ‘community impact’ and ‘economic impact’.

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

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

Community Impact

Summary of feedback	Contributing Stakeholder Group	Our Response
Very good presentation with the need for the converter station and substation at Spittal thoroughly explained.	Community members and local organisations	We recognise the value of feedback provided by members of the public during all engagements and consultations. This feedback enables us to learn and improve presentations for our other projects. Further consultation will take place as the project progresses.

<p>The current selection seems to completely disregard impact on the houses opposite the preferred substation location.</p>	<p>Landowners and occupiers</p>	<p>An initial site screening of 16 possible site options was undertaken within a 10 km search radius of the existing Spittal 275kV substation. An assessment was undertaken against key criteria including potential effects on properties resulting from visual impact and noise. In total, 13 of these sites were discounted based on proximity to properties and ecological sensitivities.</p> <p>On balance across all factors considered, Option 12 is the environmentally and technically preferred site.</p>
<p>The impact of noise and increased traffic seem to have been dismissed for houses adjacent to the proposed location.</p>	<p>Community members and local organisations</p>	<p>Noise and traffic were considered at the site selection stage. Detailed noise surveys and assessment will be undertaken to identify and address potential construction and operational noise impacts on nearby properties. Mitigation will be identified and agreed with the Highland Council as required.</p> <p>The potential effects of construction traffic on the A9 and other minor roads will be considered during the detailed design and EIA stages of the project. Appropriate mitigation and traffic management measures will be identified to minimise any adverse effect.</p>
<p>Has the impact of EMF in close proximity to the proposed substation location been considered?</p>	<p>Community members and local organisations</p>	<p>The UK Government sets guidelines for exposure to electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) in the UK on advice from Public Health England (PHE). In March 2004 the UK adopted the 1998 guidelines published by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). These guidelines are designed to set conservative exposure levels for the general public to electric and magnetic fields, and they are endorsed by the UK's Health Protection Agency, the World Health Organisation and the UK Government. We abide by these rules.</p> <p>For further information refer to our Pathway to 2030 FAQ.</p>

Environmental Impact

Summary of feedback	Contributing Stakeholder Group	Our Response
<p>The Highland Council</p> <p>The Highland Council is supportive of renewable energy developments in principle, including the necessary grid connections. The Highland Council’s priorities at present relate to minimising the effects on surrounding landscapes and visual amenity, demonstrating biodiversity enhancement, the provision of sufficient design information and cumulative effects with other offshore wind farm connections and their associated substations.</p> <p>The Highland Council have provided constraints mapping of environmental and social baseline information including natural heritage, landscape and flood risk designations. The highland council have also identified the information</p>	<p>Statutory Consultees</p>	<p>We welcome THC’s in principle support for renewable energy projects and will continue to liaise with THC’s Landscape Officers to further develop the detailed design of the project. Photomontages and visualisations will be prepared as the project progresses.</p> <p>We are committed to 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. We have also introduced robust policies and procedures to manage and mitigate any impacts on irreplaceable habitats, like peatland and ancient woodland.</p> <p>We welcome THC’s baseline mapping, which THC acknowledges is not comprehensive but remains reflective of the constraint mapping that we have undertaken.</p> <p>We acknowledge the supporting information requirements, the full extent of which will be subject to agreement via the EIA Scoping Report.</p> <p>Concerns in relation to peatland and carbon-rich soils are acknowledged. We are aware of potential Class 2 and 3 peatland adjacent to the site. Impacts and mitigation in relation to priority peatlands will be fully assessed.</p>

<p>required in support of the consent application.</p> <p>A full description of the relevant planning policy context is provided including separate references to the landscape and design policies of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan.</p> <p>Further detail and discussion is provided on the topics of noise, dust, transport and contaminated land, providing further detail on the application requirements.</p>		
<p>Scottish Environmental Protection Agency</p> <p>SEPA note that Class 3 Peat underlies much of the site. In turn, SEPA detail the mitigation hierarchy that will need to be applied to protect peatland and limit carbon emissions from carbon rich soils.</p> <p>SEPA notes that a number of small watercourses drain the site and notes its preference against culverting and the need for appropriate buffers, that surface</p>	<p>Statutory Consultees</p>	<p>We recognise the importance of peatlands and have given significant weight to minimising the impact on this irreplaceable habitat. SSEN Transmission will undertake of the proposed site and will consult with SEPA on an appropriate method for peat probing. Minimising impact on peatland will be a central consideration during the detailed design of the site. This will include the development of a site layout plan in addition to a Peat Management Plan and Habitat Management Plan in accordance with NFP4.</p> <p>SEPA's preference against culverting and the need for appropriate buffers around the watercourses on site are noted. Surface water flooding will be considered within the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. The design advice with regards to SUDS is welcomed and will be given full consideration during the detailed design.</p> <p>A GWDTE assessment will be undertaken during the EIA stage of the project. This will include NVC mapping data and provide a description of the bedrock and superficial geology. SEPA guidance will be taken into account and further consultation will be undertaken with SEPA.</p> <p>SEPA's guidance on assessing the impacts of development proposals on groundwater abstractions is noted and will be taken into account during preparation of the EIA.</p>

<p>water flooding will require careful consideration and that SUDS proposals should be placed online with the natural watercourses.</p> <p>SEPA note that the site comprises Wet Heather Moorland that is likely to comprise of Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) and the presence of wells to the north and west of the site.</p> <p>In addition, SEPA, have provided their general guidance with respect to peat, and pollution prevention</p>		<p>With regards to pollution prevention a schedule of mitigation will be submitted which will include best practice pollution prevention techniques and any bespoke measures identified and mapping.</p>
<p>Historic Environment Scotland (HES)</p> <p>HES notes that the Preferred Site Option (Site 12) could be accommodated without raising issues of national interest. Significant impacts on the setting of St Magnus' Church, burial ground and hospital (SM 5413)</p>	<p>Statutory Consultees</p>	<p>Site 11 has now been discounted from further consideration and Site 12 will be progressed as the proposed site.</p> <p>Wirelines and photomontages will be prepared to inform the assessment of cultural heritage and landscape and visual impact. Consultation with HES will continue throughout development of the project.</p>

<p>would be likely and lead to objection should Non-Preferred Site Option 11 be taken forward.</p> <p>HES considers that further information is required at detailed design phase, including visualisations (wireframes and photomontages), as well as the production of a detailed ZTV.</p> <p>Further consultation is welcomed as the proposals progress to develop a better understanding of potential impacts and any mitigation.</p>		
<p>NatureScot</p> <p>Detailed feedback has been provided on individual protected areas relating to the substation site options.</p> <p>NatureScot recognises that the proposal falls within NPF4 list of national developments. However, where construction and operation of the substation is unable to avoid direct or indirect effects on protected areas,</p>	<p>Statutory Consultees</p>	<p>These comments are welcomed and a suite of further environmental surveys will be undertaken to identify impacts and inform assessment and any mitigation required. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Phase 1 / UKHab survey including ground water dependent terrestrial ecosystems; • Wintering goose/swan foraging surveys; and • Breeding bird surveys. <p>It is appreciated that the proposed substation site boundary is adjacent to the Banniskirk Quarry SSSI. There is no intention to cross the SSSI with the proposed Caithness to Peterhead underground cable connection.</p>

<p>objection is likely if these effects will adversely affect their integrity and cannot be mitigated satisfactorily.</p> <p>Particular concerns relate to peatlands and carbon-rich soils as well as the need to demonstrate positive effects for biodiversity.</p>		<p>We will identify and assess any impact on peatland and biodiversity and complete a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment.</p>
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Economic Impact

Summary of feedback	Contributing Stakeholder Group	Our Response
<p>The preferred substation site selected is likely to have a detrimental impact on the saleability and value of houses next to it.</p>	<p>Landowners and occupiers</p>	<p>In terms of compensation, this is governed by the Electricity Act 1989 and Land Compensation Act 1973. Compensation will be agreed on a case-by-case basis according to a number of factors as set out in the statutory provisions.</p>

4. Summary of Key Decisions

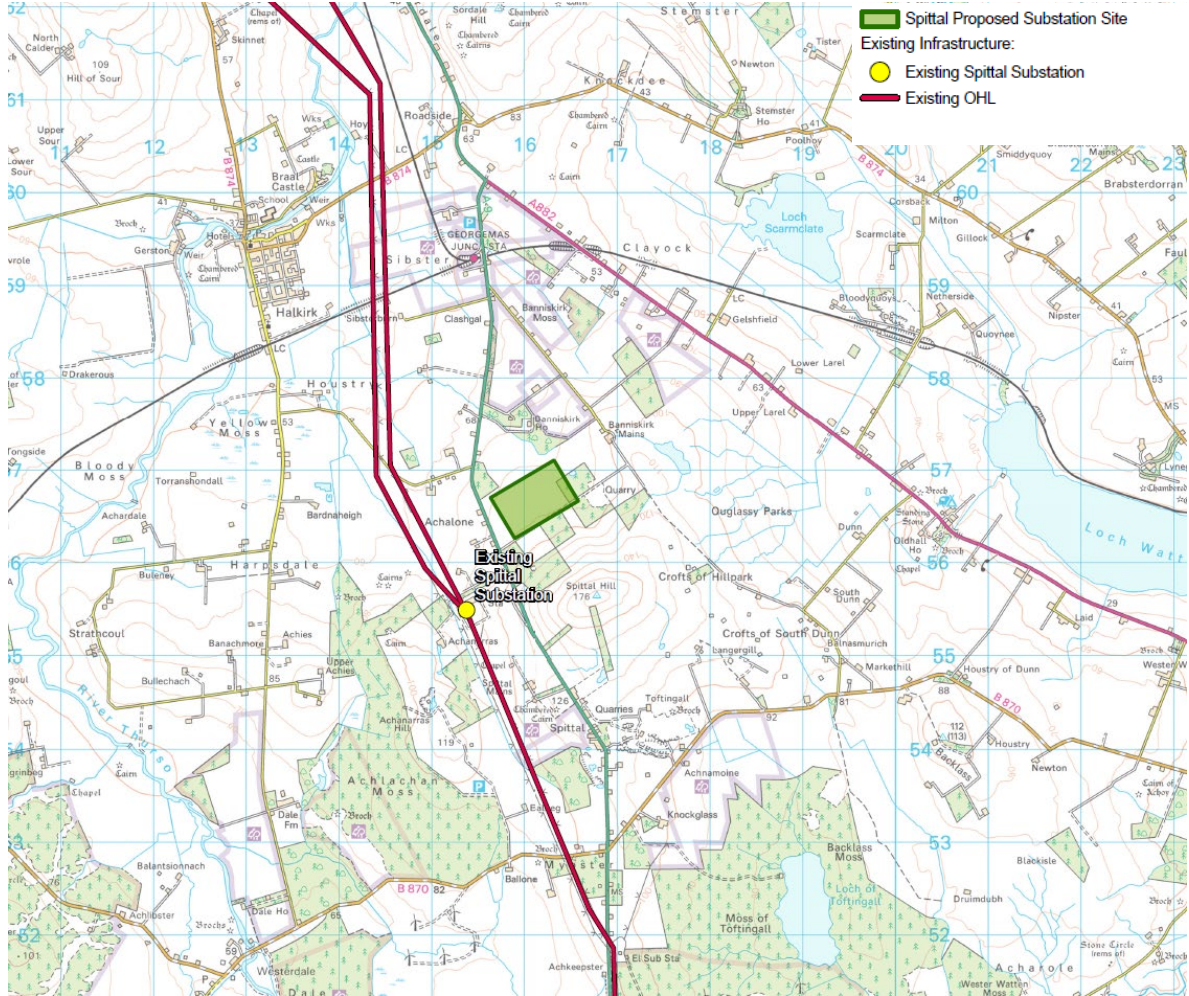
This Report on Consultation documents the consultation process which has been undertaken between 20 February 2023 and 10 November 2023 for the project.

This report has described the consultation events and the key responses received and provides detail on our responses to the point raised.

Based on the responses received during the consultation process there have been no issues raised that we believe would be of such a scale to reconsider the preferred site for the proposed new Spittal area 400kV Substation and HVDC Converter Station. We recognise concerns raised in relation to the proposed site location adjacent to residential properties, as well as those raised by SEPA and Nature Scot regarding impacts on peat and hydrology. These will be considered in further detail within our Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) developed prior to any consent application.

The consultation process has confirmed that the Proposed substation site is Option 12 as shown on Figure 2 and this will be taken forward to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and consenting stage.

Figure 2 – Spittal Proposed Substation and HVDC Converter Station Site



5. Next Steps

5.1. Ongoing Engagement

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

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

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

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

5.2. Feedback

Feedback on this Report or about the project is welcome via our Community Liaison Team who can be contacted using the details below.

Community Liaison Manager

slbb@sse.com

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks

10 Henderson Road,

Inverness

IV1 1SN

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

ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/new-spittal-area-400kv-substation/

6. Glossary

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

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A formal process set down in The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 used to systematically identify, predict and assess the likely significant environmental impacts of a proposed project or development.
Engagement	The establishment of effective relationships with individuals or groups.
Electricity System Operator (ESO)	National Grid is the Electricity System Operator (ESO) for Great Britain. The ESO balances electricity supply and demand to ensure the electricity supply.
Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs)	The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes lists those gardens or designed landscapes which are considered by a panel of experts to be of national importance.
Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) Substation	A GIS substation is constructed with switchgear with gaseous reliant components which allows operation and safety clearances to be reduced compared to an AIS substation.
Habitat	Term most accurately meaning the place in which a species lives, but also used to describe plant communities or agglomerations of plant communities.
Holford Rules (as modified)	Principles developed by the late Lord Holford in 1959 which continue to be employed as the basis for routeing high voltage overhead lines and include additional notes on the siting of substations.
Kilovolt (kV)	One thousand volts.
Landscape Character Type (LCT)	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in a landscape that differentiate the area from another.
Listed Building	Building included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest and afforded statutory protection under the 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997' and other planning legislation. Classified categories A – C(s).
Micrositing	The process of positioning individual structures to avoid localised environmental or technical constraints.
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation or alleviation of adverse impacts.
National Scenic Area (NSA)	A national level designation applied to those landscapes considered to be of exceptional scenic value.
Offshore Integrated Link	Offshore cable connection between the onshore network and offshore network being developed as part of the Coordinated Offshore Network. This is being developed as a result of the Holistic Network Design (HND) publication in summer of 2022 produced by National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO) to facilitate greater co-ordination and efficiency for offshore windfarms. In the autumn of 2022 Ofgem published their Asset Classification findings which in turn

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

Overhead line (OHL)	An electric line installed above ground, usually supported by lattice steel towers or wooden poles.
Planning Application	Used in this context to describe an application for consent under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
Plantation Woodland	Woodland of any age that obviously originated from intentional planting.
Preferred Option	The option which SSEN Transmission believes offers the best balance of technical and environmental impact considerations identified through initial assessment. This is then subject to consultation with stakeholders, where local and previously unknown considerations may confirm or alter the initial preference. Once confirmed, this becomes the Proposed Option to take forward to the next stage of project development.
RAG Rating	A Red, Amber, Green rating provided to allow for a comparison between different options being appraised.
Red Line Boundary (RLB)	This area should include all land necessary to carry out the Proposed Development.
Riparian Woodland	Natural home for plants and animals occurring in a thin strip of land bordering a stream or river.
Route	A linear area of approximately 1 km width (although this may be narrower/wider in specific locations in response to identified pinch points / constraints), which provides a continuous connection between defined connection points.
Routeing	The work undertaken which leads to the selection of a proposed alignment, capable of being taken forward into the consenting process under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.
Scheduled Monument	A monument which has been scheduled by the Scottish Ministers as being of national importance under the terms of the 'Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979'.
Section 37 Application	An application for consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 to develop an overhead electricity line.
Semi-natural Woodland	Woodland that does not obviously originate from planting. The distribution of species will generally reflect the variations in the site and the soil. Planted trees must account for less than 30% of the canopy composition
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Designated area of national importance for natural heritage. The aim of the SSSI network is to maintain an adequate representation of all natural and semi-natural habitats and native species across Britain.
Span	The section of overhead line between two structures.

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

7. Appendices

Appendix A – Postcard Invite



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New Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beaully 400kV Reinforcement Public consultation events

We have developed proposals to reinforce the onshore transmission network between Spittal and Beaully, via Loch Buidhe. To enable this connection, new additional 400kV substations and associated infrastructure is also required near the three locations mentioned above.

We are inviting interested parties to attend our drop-in consultation events, where the project team will be in attendance to answer any questions and discuss the details of the following proposed projects:

- Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beaully 400kV connection
- New Loch Buidhe area 400kV substation
- New Spittal area 400kV substation and HVDC converter station
- New Beaully area 400kV substation and HVDC converter station

We are seeking feedback regarding our preferred route for the new overhead line and our preferred locations for the new 400kV substations and converter stations listed above.

The consultation events will be taking place on:

20th February (2.30–7pm)	Halkirk – Ross Institute
21st February (2.30–7pm)	Helmsdale – Bunilidh Social Club
22nd February (2.30–7pm)	Dunbeath – Dunbeath Hall
23rd February (2.30–7pm)	Golspie – Fountain Road Hall
27th February (3.30–7pm)	Bonar Bridge – Community Hall
28th February (2.30–7pm)	Ardross – Community Hall
1st March (2.30–7pm)	Dingwall – Legion Hall
2nd March (2.30–7pm)	Beaully – Kilmorack Hall
6th March (5–7pm)	Virtual event*

*Joining details available on website

If you have any questions, please contact the Community Liaison Manager:

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Find out more and register for project updates, visit the project website by scanning the QR code, or use the following URL:
ssen-transmission.co.uk/north-highlands

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