

# **Pre-Application Consultation and Engagement Strategy**

*For submission to Energy Consents Unit of the Scottish Government*

**LT499 Shin to Loch Buidhe 132kV Overhead Line  
Rebuild**

**19 December 2025**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc (the 'prospective Applicant'), operating and known as Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission), owns, operates and develops the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands. SSEN Transmission holds a license under the Electricity Act 1989 to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission.
- 1.1.2 The prospective Applicant intends to seek consent under Section 37 to the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended) (S37) to install and keep installed a new 132 kV overhead line (OHL) connection between Shin Substation and a proposed cable sealing end (CSE) compound west of Loch Buidhe Substation, and the dismantling of the existing 132 kV OHL connection between Shin Substation and Loch Buidhe Substation, both south of Lairg in the Scottish Highlands. Hereafter referred to as 'the project'.
- 1.1.3 In May 2025, the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) published 'Electricity Act 1989 pre-application consultation and engagement guidance for electricity transmission line projects which require Environmental Impact Assessment' (S37 PAC Guidance).<sup>1</sup> This document recommends how ECU would like Transmission Operators to undertake PAC, and in section 3 (page 9), it describes the drafting and submission of a PAC Strategy in alignment with this guidance.

## 1.2 About the Project

- 1.2.1 There is a need to reinforce the online transmission infrastructure between Shin Substation and the existing Loch Buidhe Substation in the Scottish Highlands. The need for the project is driven by onshore renewable wind generation in the area around the existing Shin and Loch Buidhe substations. The volume of contracted generation has significantly increased; the increase in generation background requires reinforcement of the network for SSEN Transmission to maintain compliance with the National Electricity Transmission System Security and Quality of Supply Standard (NETS SQSS).
- 1.2.2 The existing overhead steel tower line which runs between the Shin substation and Loch Buidhe substation was constructed in the 1960s and is operated at 132 kV. The initial intention was to reconductor the existing overhead line between the Shin substation and the Loch Buidhe substation, however, it was identified that the existing towers would not be suitable for the heavier conductor proposed and unable to accommodate the new conductor rating (348 megavolt-ampere (MVA)). To meet the required ratings, this would be achieved via the construction and operation of a new offline 132 kV double-circuit OHL to replace the existing OHL. The new 132 kV double circuit OHL would be approximately 5.7 km long and supported by steel lattice towers and a CSE tower. The project would also include a short-term temporary OHL diversion including a maximum of three temporary poles with back stays to allow the permanent towers to be constructed. Access tracks would also be required to facilitate construction / dismantling.
- 1.2.3 A section of underground cable (UGC) would be required to connect the new CSE into Loch Buidhe substation. Deemed Planning Permission (as part of the application for the section 37 consent) will not be sought for the UGC, as the installation of the UGC falls under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992.
- 1.2.4 A Notification of New Project Form was submitted to the ECU on 22 May 2025, and the prospective Applicant held an introductory meeting with ECU representatives on 19 August 2025 via Microsoft Teams.

## 1.3 EIA Development Status

- 1.3.1 Compliance with the ECU's S37 PAC Guidance is only required for proposals for EIA Development.

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<sup>1</sup> See [Electricity Act 1989 pre-application consultation and engagement guidance for electricity transmission line projects which require Environmental Impact Assessment](#) (May 2025)

- 1.3.2 The project is not included within Schedule 1 (developments that require EIA) of the of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations), but is identified within Schedule 2(2a) (developments that may require EIA) as:

*“(2) An electric line installed above ground, (a) with a voltage of 132 kilovolts or more.”*

- 1.3.3 The prospective Applicant submitted a Request for an EIA Screening Opinion to the ECU on 12 September 2025 (ECU reference ECU00006257). The ECU issued an EIA Screening Opinion on 10 December 2025, which confirmed that an EIA is required for the project.

## 1.4 PAC Notice

- 1.4.1 The prospective Applicant will submit a PAC Notice to the ECU no later than 21 days prior to PAC Event 2. The PAC Notice will also be submitted to the local planning authority (The Highland Council), Local MPs and MSPs, Local Councillors, and Community Councils.

## 1.5 Links to further information

- 1.5.1 The SSEN Transmission project webpage for the project is available at the following link: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/shin-to-loch-buidhe-132kv-overhead-line-rebuild/>. Relevant project information, including details of consultation events and consultation materials, can be found on the project webpage. The project webpage will be kept updated as the project develops.

## 1.6 SSEN Transmission Contact Details

- 1.6.1 The Community Liaison Manager for the project is:

**Lisa Marchi (Community Liaison Manager)**

SSEN Transmission, Grampian House, 200 Dunkeld Road, Perth, PH1 3GH

E: [lisa.marchi@sse.com](mailto:lisa.marchi@sse.com)

## 1.7 Technical Experts

- 1.7.1 The relevant contacts for the consenting stage of the project are:

**Lauren Strachan (Project Manager)**

SSEN Transmission, Grampian House, 200 Dunkeld Road, Perth, PH1 3AQ

Email: [Lauren.Strachan2@sse.com](mailto:Lauren.Strachan2@sse.com)

**Michael Sekula (Consents & Environment Manager)**

SSEN Transmission, Grampian House, 200 Dunkeld Road, Perth, PH1 3AQ

Email: [Michael.Sekula@sse.com](mailto:Michael.Sekula@sse.com)

**Stephanie Wade (Town Planning Specialist)**

SSEN Transmission, 10 Henderson Road, Inverness, IV1 1SN

Email: [Stephanie.Wade@sse.com](mailto:Stephanie.Wade@sse.com)

## 1.8 Recording of Comments

- 1.8.1 Any information or feedback given during the consultation process, through direct feedback, the use of consultation forms provided at PAC events or via online feedback forms, will be recorded in a comments register by the project team for the purposes of providing feedback and for use within the Pre-Application Consultation Report (PAC Report).
- 1.8.2 The PAC Report will summarise feedback received from each consultation event and will provide SSEN Transmission’s responses.

## 2. STAGE 1: DEFINITION OF THE PROPOSED ROUTE

### 2.1 What has been consulted upon in Stage 1

- 2.1.1 Planning of the pre-application consultation for the alignment stage of the project was already underway prior to the publication of the S37 PAC Guidance in May 2025. This section outlines the consultation undertaken to date to inform the proposed route and alignment for the project. For the purposes of this report this consultation is referred to as Stage 1 of the PAC.
- 2.1.2 A project introduction event was held in February 2025 (see Section 2.3). This event presented information on the requirement of the project, the scope of the project, the project timeline, environmental constraints and assessment undertaken to date, as well as details regarding the construction of steel lattice towers and underground cables.
- 2.1.3 Due to the nature of the project, being an OHL replacement, it was considered unlikely that the project would deviate significantly from its existing alignment, and therefore a detailed routing study was not undertaken. Instead, a high-level analysis of route options was undertaken. A specific routing consultation has not been undertaken. However, a route corridor buffer of 1km surrounding the existing OHL was subject to assessment, and alignment study focused on potential alignment options within this corridor. These alignment options were subject to consultation (Section 2.3). The alignment consultation presented information on the requirement for the project, routing constraints, and issues to take into account in developing the proposed alignment. Feedback was sought on all the alignment options and preferred alignment and the local issues that will inform the development of the proposed alignment.

### 2.2 Information made available on the project website

- 2.2.1 Dates of the events were advertised in the project updates section of the project webpage. Consultation materials were also made available on the project webpage prior to each event. Feedback forms were made available in person at each event, and online feedback forms were made available at the project webpage.

### 2.3 PAC Event 1

- 2.3.1 PAC for Stage 1 was held at the following dates and locations:

Date and Time	Event	Location
27 February 2025, 15:00 – 19:00	Project Introduction Event, in person event	Bonar Bridge Community Hall, Lairg Road, Bonar Bridge, IV24 3EA
27 August 2025, 15:00-19:00	Alignment Consultation Event, in person event	Bonar Bridge Community Hall, Lairg Road, Bonar Bridge, IV24 3EA

- 2.3.2 Bonar Bridge Community Hall is a popular community owned venue located centrally within the proposed project area and is accessible locally on foot via public footpath. The venue is well situated in relation to the main road network for access by cycle, car and public transport, and has ramped access.

### 2.4 Publicity

- 2.4.1 Details of the alignment consultation event were sent to statutory consultees, the community council and local ward councillors, as well as the local planning authority (The Highland Council) via email. A mail drop of properties within a defined distance of the project was also undertaken.

## **2.5 Online consultation**

2.5.1 Online virtual consultation was not undertaken for the consultation events as it was considered that one in person event each was appropriate for the scale and nature of the project and given the low anticipated attendance at the events. However, as described in Section 2.2, consultation materials were made available on the SSEN Transmission project webpage and remain available indefinitely.

## **2.6 Feedback period for comments**

2.6.1 Following the events, a feedback period of 28 days was held. Comments were gathered at the in person events via paper feedback forms, and online submissions via the online feedback form on the project webpage were also gathered.

## **2.7 Report on Consultation**

2.7.1 A Report on Consultation is being prepared following the end of the 28 day feedback period for the alignment consultation event. This report will summarise feedback received from stakeholders and provide SSEN's responses, and will be published on the project webpage in due course.

### **3. STAGE 2: DEFINITION OF THE ALIGNMENT**

#### **3.1 What will be consulted upon in Stage 2**

3.1.1 At Stage 2 two PAC Events will be held:

- PAC Event 2 will consult on detailed alignment considerations that will help inform the final alignment.
- PAC Event 3 will summarise the final proposals that are intended to form the S37 application.

3.1.2 The final alignment will be informed by EIA survey information and studies that will feed into the EIA Report, which will accompany the S37 application.

#### **3.2 Information to be made available on the project website**

3.2.1 PAC Events 2 and 3 will be advertised in the project updates section of the project webpage.

3.2.2 Consultation materials to be made available on the project website will include:

- A Consultation Brochure, which will include information regarding the prospective Applicant, the need for the project, project timeline and consenting strategy, details of what is being consulted on, technical and environmental considerations that have informed the design of the project, an overview of project components such as the overhead line towers, cable sealing end, and access strategy, and other project details. The brochure will also include details of how stakeholders can provide feedback, and will include a copy of the feedback form, which contains a series of questions with free text response boxes where stakeholders can provide feedback.
- Maps illustrating the key components of the project, including the OHL alignment, proposed tower locations, proposed temporary and permanent access tracks, cable sealing end compound, and existing OHL to be dismantled, and key environmental constraints.

3.2.3 Consultation materials will be made available on the project webpage ideally at least two weeks prior to the event.

3.2.4 Feedback forms will be made available in person at the event, and online feedback forms will be made available at the project webpage.

#### **3.3 PAC Event 2**

3.3.1 PAC Event 2 will consult on detailed alignment considerations that will help inform the final alignment. The event will seek specific feedback on the proposed alignment and the location of structures (such as towers and cable sealing end compound) and temporary and permanent access track arrangements.

3.3.2 PAC Event 2 is currently scheduled to be held on 29 January 2026 at Bonar Bridge Community Hall, Lairg Road, Bonar Bridge, IV24 3EA. This date may be subject to change. Duplicate events are not currently planned, however duplicate events may be held if considered required following stakeholder feedback.

#### **3.4 PAC Event 3**

3.4.1 PAC Event 3 will summarise the final proposals that are intended to form the S37 application. Feedback will be provided to stakeholders on the SSEN Transmission response to earlier stages of consultation and engagement. At this event SSEN Transmission will set out the broad scope of the final proposals and advise how formal representations may be made post-application to Scottish Ministers.

3.4.2 PAC Event 3 is currently scheduled to be held on 24 March 2026 at Bonar Bridge Community Hall, Lairg Road, Bonar Bridge, IV24 3EA. This date may be subject to change. Duplicate events are not currently planned, however duplicate events may be held if considered required following stakeholder feedback.

### **3.5 Publicity**

- 3.5.1 Notice of PAC Events 2 and 3 will be placed in the Press & Journal newspaper no later than 21 days prior to the date of the events. The information in the notices will contain the information prescribed in the S37 PAC Guidance on page 19. A copy of the notice will also be sent to the local planning authority (The Highland Council), statutory consultees, local councillors, community councils, MSPs and MPs.
- 3.5.2 A mail drop will be undertaken to mail properties within a defined distance of the project ahead of the events. The events will be advertised on the project webpage and SSEN Transmission's social media channels. Interested parties who have attended previous events will also be contacted, as well as stakeholders who have signed up for project updates through the SSEN Transmission project webpage.
- 3.5.3 A copy of the newspaper notice and any other publicity materials will be retained to attach to the PAC Report, which will accompany the S37 application.

### **3.6 Online consultation**

- 3.6.1 It is not proposed to hold online virtual consultation for the project as it is considered that one in-person event is appropriate for the relatively small scale and nature of the project and anticipated low attendance. However, as described in Section 3.2, the same consultation materials as presented at the public in-person events will be made available on the SSEN Transmission project webpage and will remain available indefinitely. Stakeholders will be able to submit an online feedback form to provide feedback on the project proposals. This form will be reviewed by the project team and feedback provided within the PAC Report.
- 3.6.2 Stakeholders will also be able to get in contact with the project team through the Community Liaison Manager and specific queries or issues raised will be responded to by technical specialists within the project team. It should be noted that this engagement does not only occur within the feedback period of the PAC events; stakeholders can get in touch with the project team at any time through the contact details provided on the project webpage.

### **3.7 Report on Consultation**

- 3.7.1 Feedback from PAC Events 2 and 3 will be summarised in the PAC Report, which will accompany the S37 application.

### **3.8 Feedback period for comments**

- 3.8.1 Following PAC Event 2, a feedback period of 28 days will be held. Comments will be gathered at the in person events via paper feedback forms, and online submissions via the online feedback form on the project webpage or sent to the project team via email will also be gathered.
- 3.8.2 There is no set feedback period following PAC Event 3, however the prospective Applicant proposes that a feedback period of 5 days will be sufficient to gather comments following the event for reporting within the PAC Report, which will be submitted with the S37 application.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

### **4.1 PAC Strategy Approval and Future Amendments**

- 4.1.1 The S37 PAC Guidance explains that, following submission, the ECU will review and approve the proposed PAC Strategy within three weeks, or, if any modifications are sought to the PAC Strategy to ensure compliance with this guidance by the ECU these will be communicated within 2 weeks following submission. The prospective Applicant looks forward to feedback from the ECU in either case.
- 4.1.2 This PAC Strategy is intended to be a live document should amendments be required. Any subsequent amendments to the PAC Strategy will be agreed with the ECU case officer in writing. This document, once approved, and any future revised versions, will be published on the SSEN Transmission project webpage in due course.

### **4.2 PAC Report and S37 Application**

- 4.2.1 Having carried out the PAC contained in this document, the prospective Applicant will submit an application for S37 consent. The S37 application will contain a PAC Report with the contents prescribed on pages 19-20 of the S37 PAC Guidance.
- 4.2.2 The S37 application is anticipated to be submitted in Spring 2026, though this may be subject to change. The project is considered to be a priority application for transmission infrastructure as it is a strategic project increasing system capacity or security of supply, and is therefore anticipated to be subject to a 52 week determination period.