



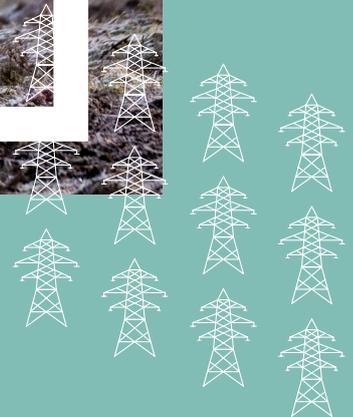
Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

Shin – Loch Buidhe 132kV Rebuild

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Event

March 2026



[ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/
shin-to-loch-buidhe-132kv-overhead-line-rebuild](https://ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/shin-to-loch-buidhe-132kv-overhead-line-rebuild)

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The consultation event will be taking place on:

Tuesday 24 March 2026, 3–7pm
 Bonar Bridge Community Hall, Lairg Road,
 Bonar Bridge, IV24 3EA



Powering change together



If we want to deliver on clean power and energy security targets and provide power for future generations, upgrade to Scotland’s electricity transmission infrastructure is needed.

The shift to a cleaner, more sustainable future is about more than tackling the impact of climate change, it’s about ensuring that future generations can thrive.

Countries around the world are investing in their energy infrastructure to support increasing electricity demands and to deliver on clean power targets and the UK is leading the way in building a modern, sustainable energy system for the future.

We all have a part to play

The UK and Scottish governments have set ambitious energy security and clean power targets, and we all have a part to play in delivering them.

At SSEN Transmission, we work closely with the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to connect vast renewable energy resources - like solar, wind, hydro and marine generation – to areas of demand across the country. Scotland will play a particularly big role in meeting increasing electricity demand.

But there is more to be done. By 2050, the north of Scotland is expected to contribute more than 50GW of low carbon power to the GB energy system. Today, the region has around 11GW of renewable generation connected to the network.

At SSEN Transmission, it is our role to build the energy system of the future. To do that, we are planning to invest around **£29 billion** in the coming years to upgrade the electricity transmission network in the north of Scotland. It’s an investment that will unlock cleaner, more secure energy for homes and businesses now, and for generations to come. **By 2050, annual electricity demand is expected to at least double** - our investment will support the connection of more clean power to meet that demand to the GB electricity network, supporting up to **17,500 jobs in Scotland**, with more than **8,000** of those in the north of Scotland, along the way.

Who we are

We are responsible for maintaining and investing in the electricity transmission network in the north of Scotland. We are part of SSE plc, one of the world’s leading energy companies with a rich heritage in Scotland that dates back more than 80 years. We are also closely regulated by the GB energy regulator Ofgem, who determines how much revenue we are allowed to earn for constructing, maintaining and renovating our transmission network.

What we do

We manage the electricity network across our region which covers a quarter of the UK’s land mass, crossing some of the country’s most challenging terrain. We connect renewable energy sources to our network in the north of Scotland and then transport it to where it needs to be. From underground/subsea cables and overhead lines to electricity substations, our network keeps your lights on all year round.

Working with you

We understand that the work we do can have an impact on communities and we are committed to minimising our impacts and maximising all the benefits that our developments can bring to your area. To do that we provide all the information you need to know about our plans and how they will impact communities like yours. The way we consult is also a two-way street and we want to hear people’s views, concerns, or ideas – and harness local knowledge – so that our work benefits communities today and long into the future. You can share your views with us at: ssen-transmission.co.uk/talk-to-us/contact-us/

Project need and overview

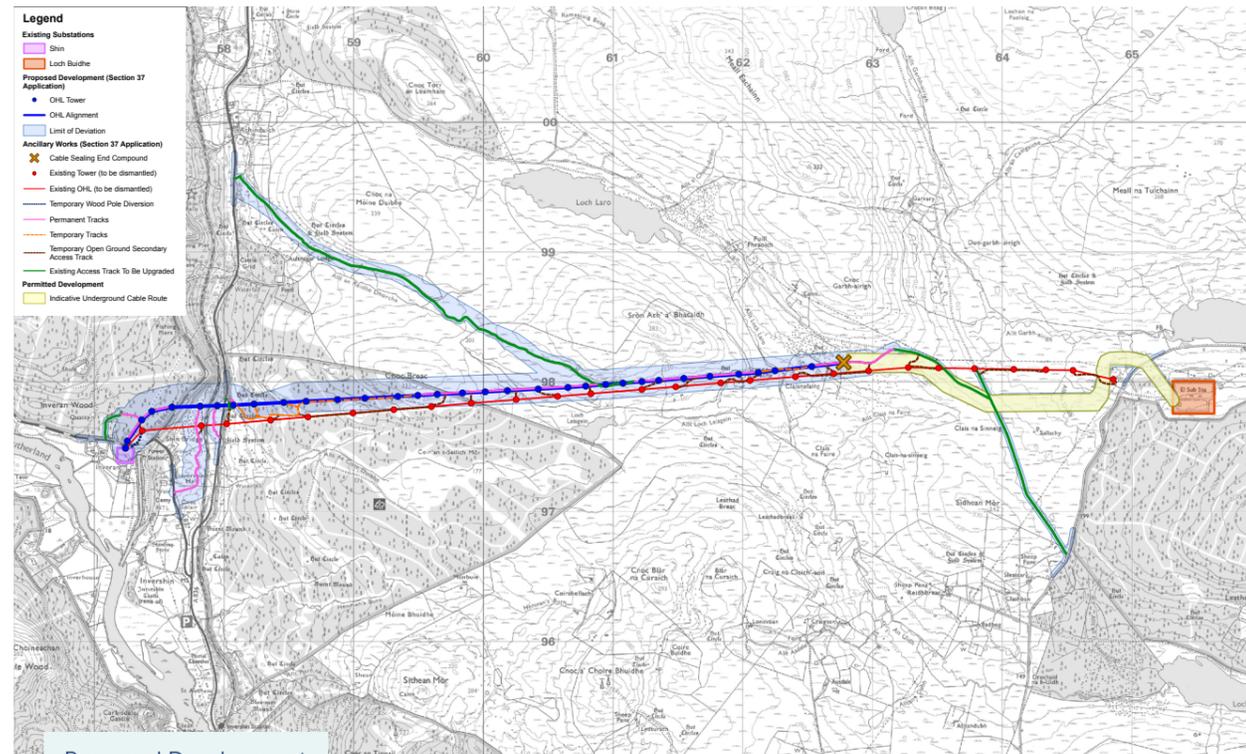
The existing 132kV overhead line (OHL) hybrid circuit which runs between Shin substation and Loch Buidhe substation was constructed in the 1960s. Due to an increase in onshore wind generation around the existing Shin and Loch Buidhe substations, our electricity network must be upgraded to ensure we can efficiently deliver this renewable energy to homes and businesses across the country.

This project plays a key role in supporting national Net Zero targets, and by strengthening our transmission network, we are not only enabling more renewable energy to connect but also enabling a secure and reliable electricity supply for the future. In compliance with our Network Operators Licence, we aim to deliver the project in an efficient, coordinated and economic manner whilst minimising impact on the environment.

The project will involve the construction of a new 132kV steel lattice OHL between Shin substation and Loch Buidhe substation, replacing the existing circuit. The length of the new OHL will be approximately 5.7km. The proposed works also include a new section of underground cable (UGC) (approximately 3.2km) to connect into Loch Buidhe substation.

The main elements include:

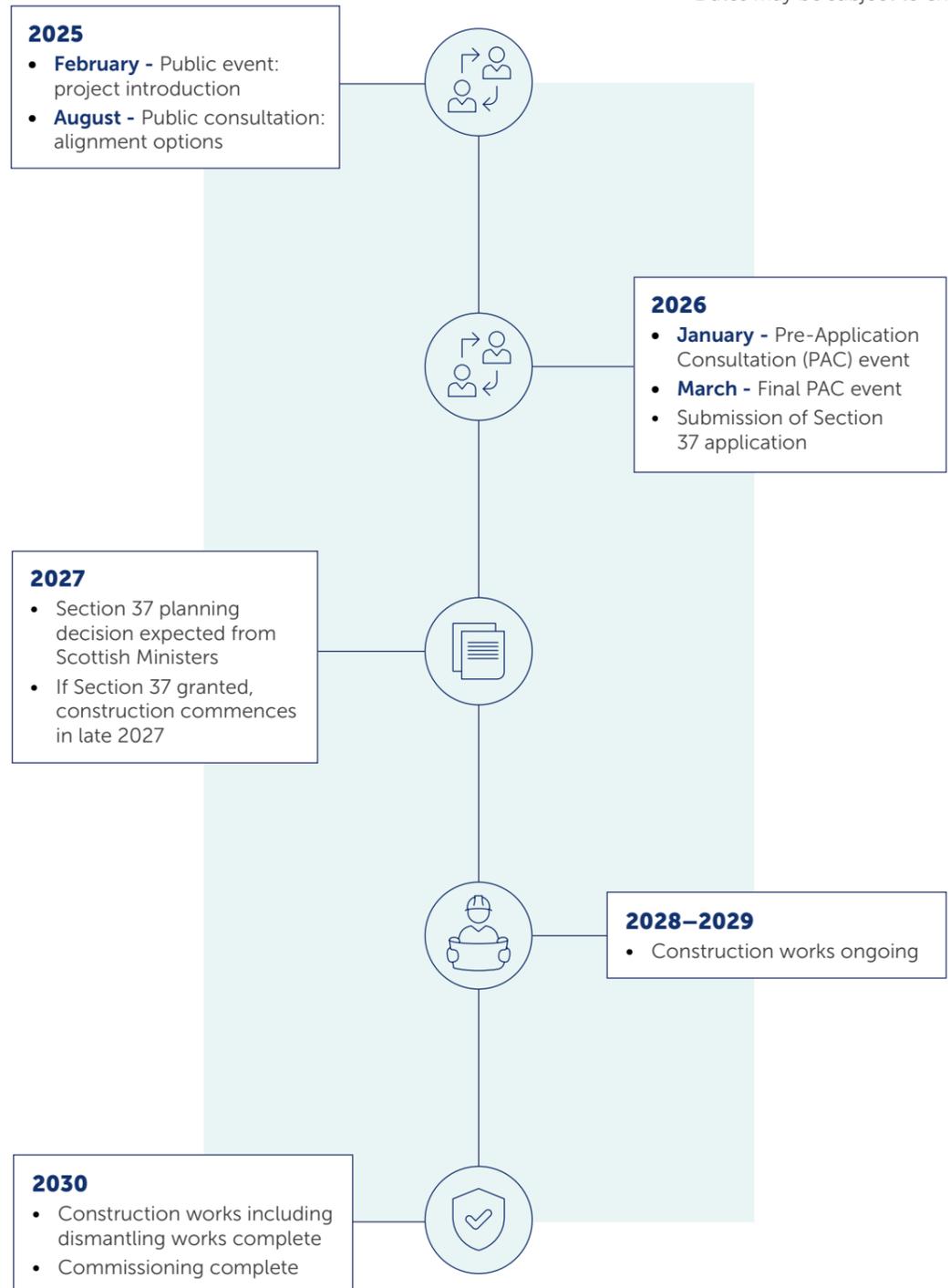
- Offline construction of a double circuit 132kV OHL on steel lattice towers and double circuit 132kV UGC
- New cable sealing end (CSE) compound to transition between OHL to UGC
- Permanent and temporary access tracks
- Dismantling of existing steel lattice tower structures, and existing CSE compound and UGC near Loch Buidhe substation



Proposed Development

Project timeline

*Dates may be subject to change.



Help shape our plans

The work we have planned has the potential to deliver massive benefits in your community, Scotland, and beyond. Yet we know that achieving our goals will require a lot of work that will impact your lives. That’s why we want to work with you every step of the way throughout the planning and delivery stages of these essential works.

Why we’re here today

We are at the alignment stage of the development of the Shin – Loch Buidhe 132kV Rebuild project and have identified the proposed alignment we are taking forward to further develop and submit as part of an application for Section 37 consent. The proposed alignment has been refined from the various options we have investigated during the development of the project.

We are implementing the Scottish Government’s Best Practice Guidance for pre-application consultation with stakeholders who may be affected by our development proposals. The pre-application consultation comprises of two consultation events that should be held in advance of applying for Section 37 consent.

Working with you

We are committed to ensuring a meaningful engagement process that actively seeks the views of everyone affected by our plans. That means making our plans clear and easily accessible, so that you can give us input throughout each stage of the development process. We appreciate any feedback regarding the project which will be analysed by the project team.

What we are seeking views on

We want you to share your thoughts and opinions on our plans, where you think we can make improvements, your concerns about the impact of our work, and what you think of the refinements or changes we have made. By telling us what you think, you can help shape our proposals. We want to harness your local knowledge/so that we identify any unforeseen challenges early and maximise the potential benefits and opportunities for your communities.

Ultimately, we want to work with you to ensure that the energy infrastructure we build will be the best it can possibly be.

Who we are consulting with

As well as from communities, we are keen to hear feedback from a broad range of other stakeholders, including but not limited to landowners, businesses, non-statutory consultees, and statutory consultees such as local authorities, NatureScot, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Historic Environment Scotland (HES), Scottish Forestry (SF) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

Meeting our obligations

Our Transmission Operators licence requires us to provide best value for customers and GB consumers.

As a natural monopoly, SSEN Transmission are closely regulated by the GB energy regulator Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem), who determine how much revenue we are allowed to earn for constructing, maintaining and renovating our transmission network.

These costs are shared between all those using the transmission system, including generation developers and electricity consumers.

We therefore work to strict price controls which means the following environmental, engineering and economic considerations form a key part of our alignment selection process.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Following the mitigation hierarchy approach, our environmental commitments mean that when developing routing and siting options for our overhead lines, underground cables and substations our projects will avoid, mitigate and restore any environmental impacts wherever possible.

Our environmental teams are embedded in project development to consider and consult upon the most suitable location from the very start of the optioneering phase, using well established data sets and additional detailed survey work.

We are committed to delivering 10% Biodiversity Net Gain on all sites gaining consent going forward. This ensures that we don’t just restore our natural habitats but actively improve them for the benefit of local communities, wildlife, flora and fauna.

Environmental assessments

Desk-based assessments using available mapping and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) data, together with initial site walkovers by specialists, have been undertaken to gather baseline information. This is crucial to enable us to understand the key environmental constraints and sensitivities within the route corridor.

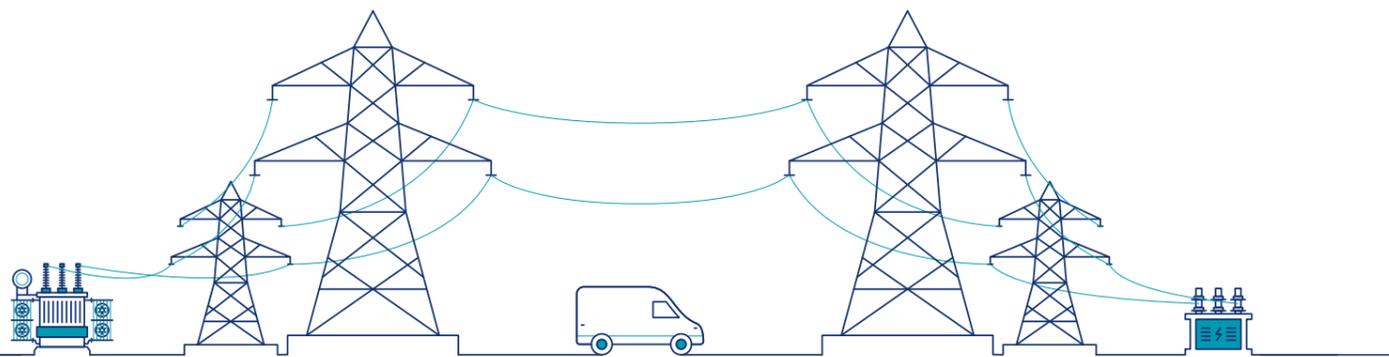
This work has been carried out between 2024 and 2025 and has helped to identify key environmental issues including landscape and visual amenity, sensitive habitats, protected species, ornithology, forestry, cultural heritage and hydrology and hydrogeology.

Following confirmation of the preferred alignment, further surveys, detailed studies and assessment work are being undertaken and will support the Section 37 Application. This includes an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report and other environmental documentation such as a Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA).

Engineering and economic considerations

In addition to the suite of environmental assessments undertaken, the following engineering and economic considerations form a key part of our alignment process:

- Construction costs and buildability (largely affected by ground conditions, such as peat/rock/flooding/contaminated land, etc).
- Operations and maintenance requirements.
- Outage requirements and network constraints.
- Proximity to other electrical OHL and underground structures.
- Proximity to any other utility, overhead or underground.
- Proximity to wind turbines and wind farm infrastructure.
- Communications masts and infrastructure.
- Urban development.
- Forestry and biodiversity.
- Technology costs and design parameters.
- Site accessibility.
- Alignment length.



Selecting an alignment

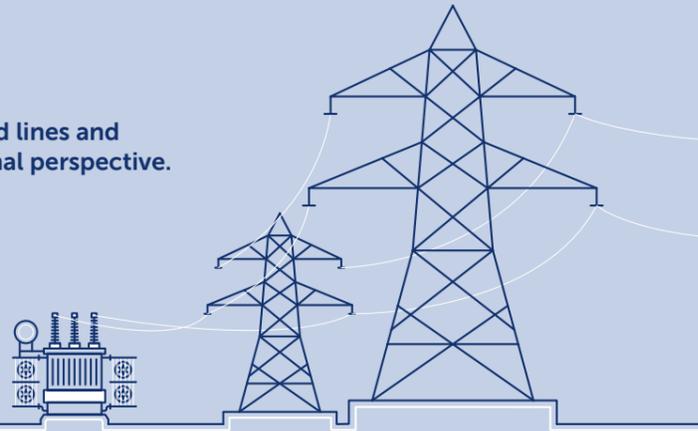
The consideration of alignment options and design solutions brings together work by four main disciplines:

Engineering Team

Who identify engineering constraints and where overhead lines and cables can be installed from a construction and operational perspective.

Key considerations include:

- Infrastructure crossings
- Environmental design
- Ground conditions
- Accessibility
- Proximity to existing infrastructure and properties



Communities Team

Who work with communities and make sure that their feedback during the consultation process is closely considered during project refinement.

Key considerations include:

- Community engagement
- Consultation responses review
- Recreational areas and areas of local interest



Land Team

Who engage with landowners to identify key land use constraints.

Key considerations include:

- Landowner engagement
- Mitigating effects of infrastructure on land and properties
- Reaching land agreements



Environmental Team

Who identify key environmental, community and social constraints along the routes which the new infrastructure could impact upon.

Key considerations include:

- Engagement with statutory consultees and planning authorities
- Results of specialist environmental surveys including archaeology, ornithology, ecology, geology and hydrology
- International environmental designations including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs - designated for habitats), Special Protected Areas (SPAs - designated for bird species), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance identified under the terms of the Ramsar Convention) and World Heritage Sites
- National designations including Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, National Scenic areas, National Nature Reserves, Gardens and Designed Landscapes
- Regional environmental sensitivities including Wild Land Areas and Special Landscape Areas
- Local environmental aspects including visual amenity, local and RSPB nature reserves, recreation uses



Striking a balance

When selecting an alignment, we need to carefully balance key considerations relating to engineering, environment, cost and social aspects, in each section of the overhead line route. We then consider the likely effect and level of impact of each consideration, which will vary from section to section. This can be based on how populated the area is, the outcomes of environmental and engineering surveys, the presence of peat, the local water environment, if there is existing infrastructure we need to avoid, if the effects on land and property can be mitigated and if a constructable alignment can be identified. Ultimately, we need to balance a range of factors and present the solution we consider most viable, to then put forward for consultation.

We consulted on our proposed alignments in August 2025, and confirmed the option we were taking forward as proposed within our Report on Consultation published January 2026.



You can download our Alignment Maps, Alignment Consultation Document and our Alignment Report on Consultation by scanning the QR code.

The consenting process

The legislation governing the consenting of overhead line (OHL) projects in Scotland is the Electricity Act 1989. Applications for consent to construct and operate new overhead lines are made under Section 37 of this Act and are referred to as “Section 37 Consents”.

The Section 37 application will be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report, as well as standalone reports such as a planning statement, and detailed design drawings. A Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report will also be provided, and this will provide details of the public and stakeholder consultation undertaken, a summary of the feedback received, and our response to that feedback.

We plan to submit our Section 37 application to the Scottish Government’s Energy Consents Unit (ECU) in Spring/Summer 2026.

Once an application for consent has been submitted, all documents relating to the submission will be made publicly available on the ECU portal and our own website, printed copies will also be provided at publicly accessible locations. Section 37 applications are determined on a case-by-case basis by the Scottish Ministers.

It is anticipated that the Underground Cable (UGC) works will be undertaken using permitted development rights as set out in Class 40 1(a) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Order 1992 as amended.

Please note that feedback provided as part of this final alignment consultation event are not formal representations to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU). Once an application for consent has been submitted, there will be an opportunity for the public to make formal representations to the ECU before it takes a decision.

We will update stakeholders once the application for consent has been submitted and we will also publish newspaper advertisements to inform local communities and the general public of the applications being made to Scottish Ministers.

Determining a Section 37 application and communicating outcomes

We anticipate receiving a decision on the consent application within 12 months from the application date, however timescales may vary.

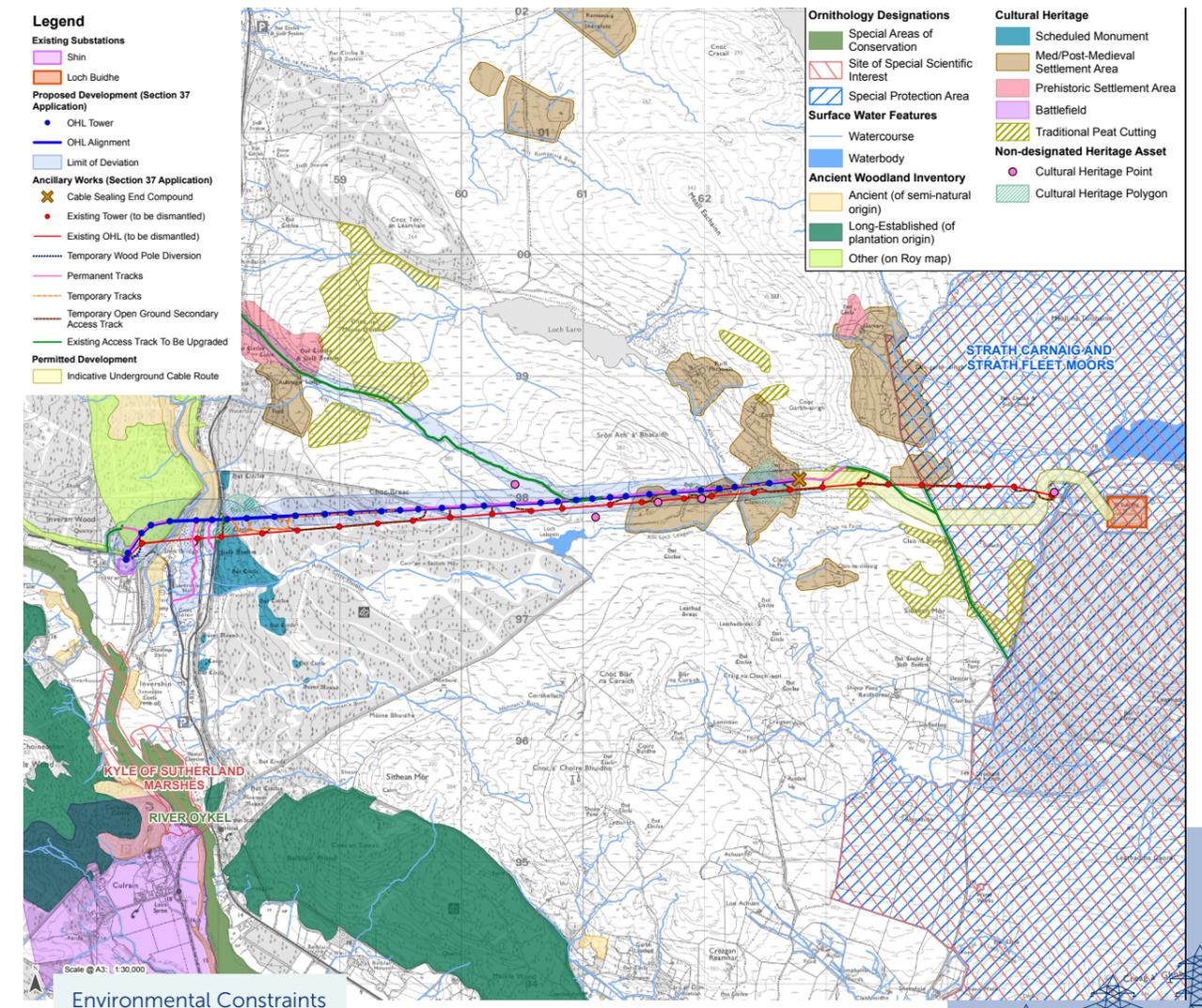
When a decision is made, the ECU will send us a decision notice, copying in the local planning authority and other consultation bodies. The decision notice is a record of the reasons for the decision and, if consent is granted, it contains the conditions that must be satisfied in order to implement the consent.

The ECU and local planning authority will publish the decision notice via their own channels, and we must publicise the outcome on our website, in the Edinburgh Gazette, and in a local newspaper. We’ll also communicate the decision by mainstream media and other various means, including email updates to Elected Members and those signed up to project updates, social media, and press releases.



[Read more here about the Section 37 process here](#)

Proposed Alignment overview



Environmental considerations

An EIA Report will be submitted with the Section 37 application and will identify mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential environmental effects. A Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) will also be undertaken to consider potential effects on the European designated sites and propose mitigation where required. Furthermore, the contractor will produce a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which will provide a framework of mitigation measures to manage potential environmental effects during the construction of the project. SSEN Transmission also have a series of General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) and Species Protection Plans (SPP), which will form part of the standard mitigation for the project.

In selecting the Proposed Alignment, consideration has been given to a number of environmental factors. Key environmental considerations include, but are not limited to, the following:

Ecology

The OHL does not pass through any sites designated for ecological importance. There are two designated ecological sites of national importance within 2km: the River Oykel Special Area of Conservation (designated for Atlantic Salmon and Freshwater Pearl Mussel) and Kyle of Sutherland Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (designated for flood-plain fen, vascular plant assemblage, and wet woodland).

Field surveys have identified presence of smooth newt, common lizard and water voles within 2km of the OHL. Although no evidence of any other protected species was observed, habitat identified was considered to be suitable for supporting otters, red squirrels and pine martens. Confirmed habitats include wet heath, blanket bog, coniferous woodland and upland birch woodland.

A BNG assessment shall be undertaken for the Proposed Development in order to leave biodiversity in a measurably better state than prior to construction of the OHL.

Ornithology

Strath Carnaig and Strath Fleet Moors Special Protected Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest, which are designated for the hen harrier species, are located within the eastern extent of the Site around Loch Buidhe substation.

Moorland breeding bird surveys have identified presence of passerine and wader species including snipe, lapwing and golden plover, and vantage point surveys have identified golden eagle, white-tailed eagle, red kite, osprey and hen harrier. In addition, breeding raptor surveys have identified active nests and territories for hen harriers and osprey, and black grouse surveys confirmed the presence of leks, with the highest number of lekking males recorded as six. Nesting diver surveys did not identify any nesting diver attempts.

A study to inform any Appropriate Assessment will be provided as part of the EIAR, taking account of the potential for connectivity with the SPAs.



Landscape and Visual

The landscape surrounding the Site is characterised by broad, rolling hills, gently rolling moorland, lochs, burns and peatland. The area is sparsely settled besides dispersed transport routes, and individual crofts and farmsteads located along key road and rail corridors. From a visual perspective, key receptors include users of the A836, A837, B864 and Lochbuie Road as well as the Loch Shin Falls Visitor Centre and National Cycle Network Route 1. Residential receptors at Inveran, Invershin, Clashban, Achinduich and Culrain are also considered.

The nearest landscape designation is Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area, located 5.8 km south of the OHL.

The EIAR will include a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment accompanied by visualisations and annotated photographs for selected viewpoints. In addition, a ground-truthing survey will verify the preliminary findings of desk-study to date.

Cultural Heritage

There are two Scheduled Monuments recorded within or in close proximity to the OHL: a prehistoric settlement (SM5498) located 600 m east of Invershin Primary School and an area of prehistoric settlement and cultivation (SM5462). There are an additional five Scheduled Monuments, six Listed Buildings (five Category B, one Category C), and one Inventory Historic Battlefield within 2 km of the Proposed Development Site.

Scheduled Monument Consent will be required for dismantling of the existing OHL where it crosses the Invershin Primary School, settlement 600m east of (SM5498). An application for Scheduled Monument Consent will be made directly to Historic Environment Scotland.

Peat

The OHL passes through areas categorised as Class 1, Class 2, Class 5, and Class 0 peatland based on the SNH Carbon and Peatland Map (2016). Class 1 and Class 2 areas are defined as nationally important carbon rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat. Class 5 areas comprise carbon rich soils and deep peat where no peatland habitat is recorded and Class 0 areas include mineral soils.

Peat depth probing surveys indicated that the majority of probing locations recorded no peat or shallow peat, typically up to 1.0m in depth, although deeper peat was also identified at a small number of locations, generally between 1.0m and 2.0m.

The EIAR will consider potentially significant effects on peat and carbon rich soils arising from construction of the OHL, including peat disturbance and stability. Potential carbon emissions from peatland disturbance associated with the Proposed Development will also be considered.

Traffic and Transport

Within the surrounding area, the road network primarily consists of the A836 (between Lairg and Easter Fearn), A837 (between the A836 and Rosehall) and the B864 (between Inveran and Achany). Sensitive receptors to be considered in the assessment will include users and residents of these road links. A Transport Assessment will be provided as part of the EIAR to review the impact of transport related matters associated with the OHL.

Water Environment

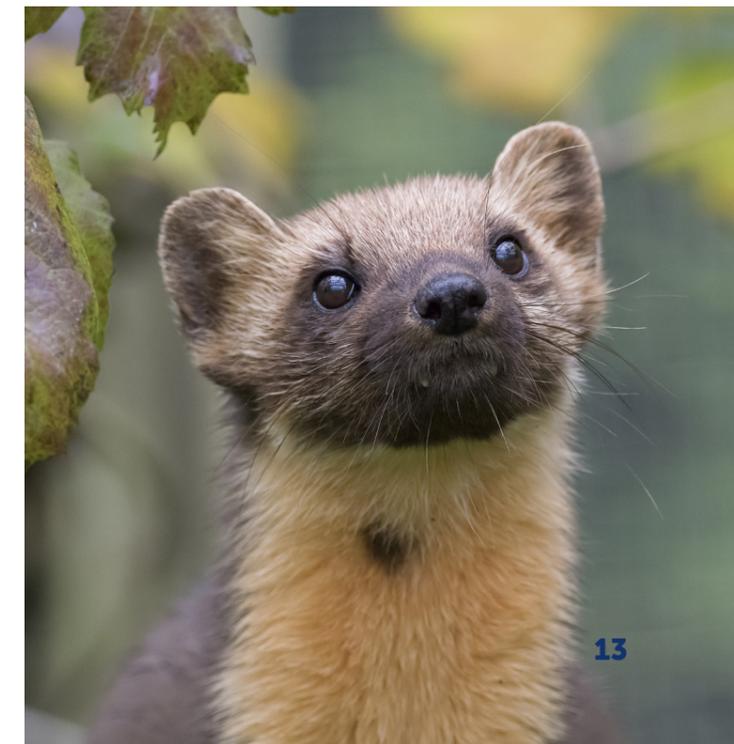
The OHL crosses the River Shin at its western extent. From west to east, the OHL and associated access tracks then crosses several smaller watercourses including a tributary of Allt Loch Leisgein and Allt Loch Laro.

The majority of the OHL is an area with a Very Low Flood Risk, with an area of High Risk of fluvial flooding where the OHL crosses the River Shin and Allt Loch Laro.

There are no Drinking Water Protected Areas within 2km of the Site. A Private Water Supply has been identified 1.3km north of the Site for Aultnager Lodge Hotel.

NVC surveying has identified the presence of potential Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE). Hydrological assessment (including surveying of the route) will confirm the degree of groundwater dependence and the sensitivity of such habitats to alterations in groundwater supply. Review carried out so far indicates that these habitats are more likely to be rain fed or dependent on surface water supplies.

An outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will accompany the EIAR which will include mitigation measures, environmental management requirements, outline method statements and environmental monitoring requirements.



Noise

The OHL is located within a predominantly rural area, with only 29 residential properties within 500m of the Site. The closest residential properties are predominately located around the village of Inveran, while other properties are clustered around the settlement of Achinduich to the north of the Site.

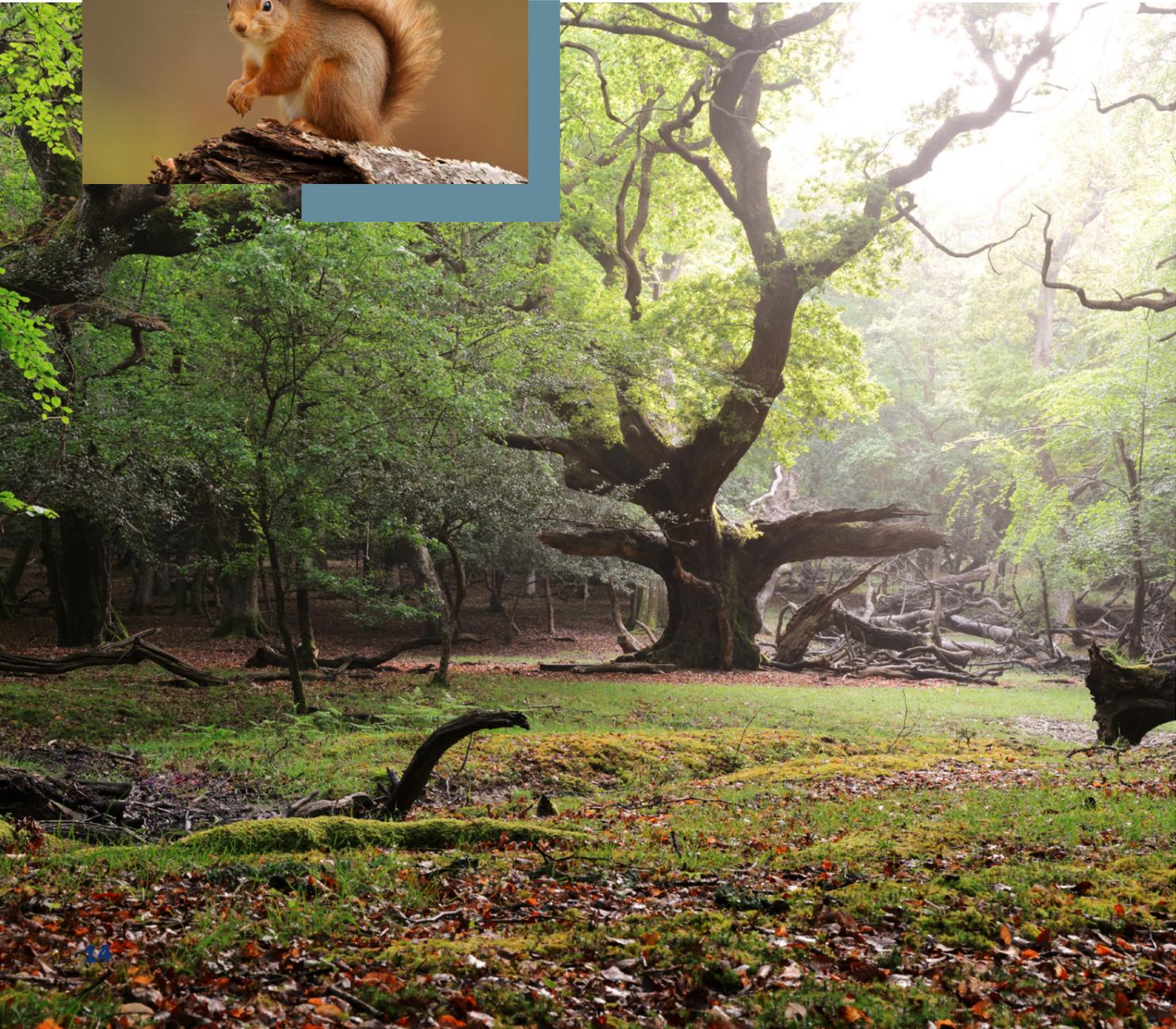
The Highland Council and Environmental Health Officer will be consulted to confirm an appropriate methodology for assessment as part of the EIAR.

Forestry/Ancient Woodland

In the surrounding area of the OHL, forestry consists of coniferous forests mainly planted in 1988 and 1989. Broadleaved woodlands are also present near to the River Shin and the corridor between the river, the railway line and the A836 public highway.

The Ancient Woodland Inventory includes areas classified as antiquity 1a Ancient (of semi-natural origin) and antiquity 3 described as 'Other.' The Native Woodland Survey of Scotland has identified native pinewood and upland birchwood.

A Forestry and Woodland Report will be developed to identify and quantify areas of forest which will need to be removed to accommodate the OHL, as well as to detail proposals for forest redesign as required and proposals for mitigation compensatory planting.



About the overhead line

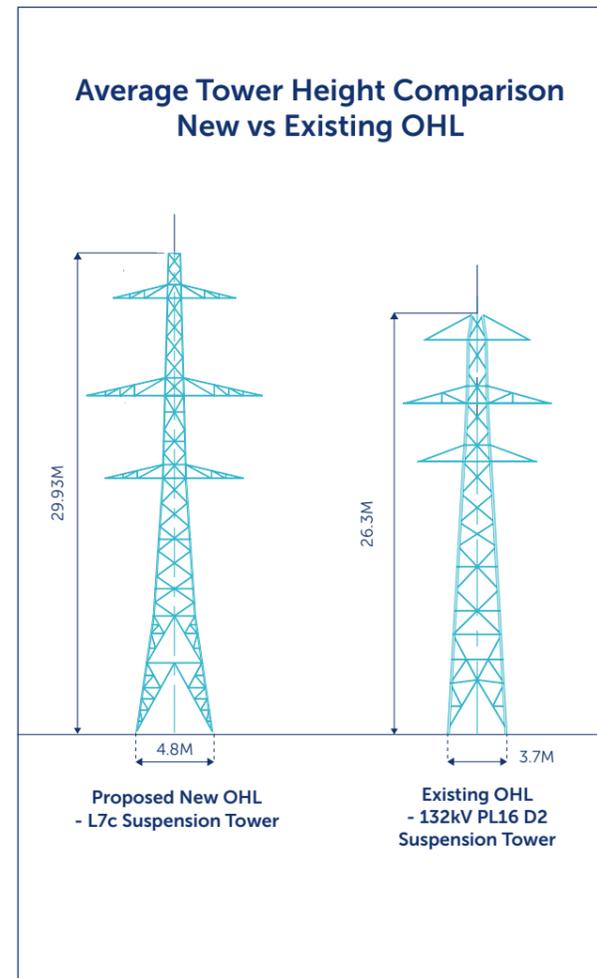
The proposed new 132kV double circuit overhead line between Shin Substation and Loch Buidhe Substation will be supported on steel lattice tower structures.

The towers will have an average height of 30m, however the height of individual towers can vary in the range of 26m to 42m depending on specific design, topography and required clearances to maintain safety standards. The average span length (distance) between towers is expected to be approximately 290m which can also vary between 100m to 350m depending on design requirements.

There will be one conductor (cable) on each of the six cross arms and an earth wire between the peaks for lightning protection and for communication purpose.

Cable sealing end

Cable sealing ends are also required at the point where the overhead line transitions to underground cable. A compound would be constructed around the overhead line tower and cable sealing ends, comprising a stoned hard standing platform with a security fence around its perimeter. The footprint of the cable sealing end (CSE) compound will be approximately 50m x 50m.



Additional considerations

Additional works that will also be required as part of the construction of the new overhead line include:

- Localised realigning or undergrounding of sections of existing overhead distribution lines that cross the alignment sections or are within safety clearances
- Woodland clearance and management
- Establishment of suitable temporary laydown areas for materials and working areas for tower foundations and erection equipment
- Public road improvements as required
- Upgrade of existing and creation of new access tracks
- Delivery of components and materials to site
- Other temporary measures such as road, railway and water crossing protection and establishment of construction compounds. Final location and design of temporary construction compounds will be confirmed by our Contractor and separate planning consents will be sought as required

Limits of deviation

Limits of deviation (LoD) define the maximum extent within which a development can be built. The location of the proposed tower positions, access tracks and associated temporary and permanent infrastructure has been determined based on environmental and technical considerations, including analysis of ground conditions and suitability based on desk studies and site walkover surveys. Investigation of sub-surface and geotechnical conditions at the proposed tower locations has not yet been completed. It is therefore possible that individual tower locations, working areas and access tracks might need to be altered following completion of these investigations (referred to as micrositing). To strike a balance between providing certainty of the location, and the need for some flexibility over individual tower locations horizontal and vertical LoD need to be defined within which the proposed development will be constructed. No towers or working areas would be located outside the LoD proposed.

As we undertake our EIA and more detailed design work, we are working to identify the exact LoD required to allow for micrositing due to any localised constraints and to ensure minimum statutory ground clearances can be maintained. The LoDs will be further refined and confirmed within our consent application.

Managing construction impacts

We are committed to minimising the impact of construction through avoiding potential issues by designing them out, undertaking thorough environmental assessments and working closely with the local community. Where we cannot avoid impact, our focus includes mitigating effects, for example to people, biodiversity, water, soil, and traffic disturbances. A Construction Environment Management Plan will be produced and implemented, to ensure mitigation is put in place and its effectiveness is monitored throughout the construction phase.

During construction, expected short-term impacts may include noise and traffic disruptions. Prior to commencement, we'll have a plan to manage these, including organising deliveries and travel to avoid busy times and sensitive areas. We'll work closely with community groups and contractors to ensure adherence to mitigation measures.

Temporary overhead line diversions

In order to avoid the outage on existing circuits and to allow for the optimal construction sequencing of the new OHL tower, temporary diversion of one existing circuit could be required. This would involve the installation of temporary wooden poles near Shin substation with the use of back stays. Once the new tower construction and installation is complete, the temporary wood pole diversion would be dismantled.

Woodland clearance and management

When developing the proposed alignment, we have sought to avoid and minimise impacts on woodlands and forestry where possible, however given the numerous environmental and technical constraints, impacts on forestry are unavoidable. Where the proposed alignment passes through woodland and commercial forestry, an Operational Corridor is identified to ensure the safe operation of the overhead line and trees are removed within the Operational Corridor to facilitate this. The operational corridor width will typically be 40m either side of the overhead line centreline, but this will vary depending on the type of woodland/ forestry and local topography. As a result, there will be a loss of woodland area.

In accordance with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy, we are committed to providing appropriate compensatory planting for any net loss of woodland and a specific chapter on Forestry will be included within the EIA Report.

Existing overhead line crossings

Works will be required to some existing distribution network infrastructure (voltages of 66kV and below) to facilitate safe working and operating conditions for the new overhead line. These works are likely to include short sections of undergrounding in the vicinity of the new overhead line and will be undertaken by Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution (SHEPD).



Construction access strategy

We are planning how construction and maintenance teams will safely reach towers, cable sections, and compounds for the project. In general, proposed construction site access would be taken via the existing public road network and would make use of existing forest and estate tracks as far as practicable, upgraded as required. Existing bellmouths would be utilised where possible, subject to improvements. New bellmouths will however still be required at some locations.

Design methodology

We have identified access routes for each tower location, noting where existing tracks will be upgraded or new temporary or permanent tracks required. A Traffic and Transport Assessment will form part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), considering construction traffic impacts and the capacity of local roads.

For the overhead line, a combination of permanent and temporary access tracks will be used. Permanent access will be provided to key structures such as angle towers to support future inspection and maintenance. Temporary access will be used during construction at intermediate tower locations and reinstated once work is complete. Along the cable route, access will be entirely temporary using nearby public and estate roads to reach joint bays, with permanent access required only at the Cable Sealing End (CSE) compounds for maintenance.

Permanent tracks are designed for long-term use by maintenance vehicles and temporary tracks are used during construction and reinstated afterward.

Decommissioning of the existing 132kV line/ maintenance of the new line will use existing wayleaves and All-Terrain Vehicles, with no new tracks anticipated.

Construction methods

Access roads and temporary working areas will be constructed according to local ground conditions. Soft or sensitive ground will use trackway or bog mats to spread loads and reduce disturbance. Stone tracks may be constructed with or without geogrid reinforcement depending on load requirements. Asphalt will be used at junctions with public or estate roads and for permanent access to CSE compound.

Operational/maintenance access

Where operational access is required, this would likely range from All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) routes with no formal track, to a stone road suitable for 4x4 and wagon access. The selection of the type of track required will consider the proximity to a public road, environmental impacts, structure type and potential maintenance activities/ vehicles required in future to a given location (taking legal health and safety requirements into account). General access track details will be included in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) stage of the project and presented to illustrate where each access type will be deployed, and the rationale for that selection.

Stone tracks

Typically, new temporary stone tracks are required to access each steel tower location, as well as the requirement for inline access between towers. Stone tracks are designed to suit the heavy plant loads required for construction works for steel towers and varied ground conditions along the route. On completion of construction, unless required for operational access, the stone tracks would be removed and reinstated. Where access to tower positions is difficult due to steep terrain, alternative methods would be proposed such as using smaller items of plant specialist tracked plant, and in some cases using helicopters for moving materials.

Temporary trackways

Temporary trackways are an alternative access method, dependent on ground conditions. Although there may be localised areas where trackways may be suitable and used for certain tasks, they are not considered appropriate for construction of steel lattice towers in their entirety, due to the length of time they are required to be in place and the weight and size of construction plant required to track over them.

Addressing feedback

Consulting on the Alignment

In August 2025, we launched our Alignment Consultation, seeking comment on the Potential Alignment identified for the rebuild 132kV overhead line (OHL) proposed between Shin substation and Loch Buidhe substation.

We presented a Potential Alignment for the OHL, alongside identified alternatives which had also been considered. We sought comments from statutory authorities, key stakeholders, elected representatives, the public and landowners on the alignment selection process undertaken and the Potential Alignment.

Comments received then informed further consideration of the proposed development, with a view to confirming a Proposed Alignment to be taken forward to consent application.

What you told us at the public consultation event in January 2026

A consultation event was held at Bonar Bridge Community Hall on Thursday 29 January, attended by 12 people. An online feedback option was also available, and the consultation period closed on Thursday 26 February.

A summary of feedback received and our responses are below.

Feedback

Throughout the consultation process, all feedback received has been reviewed and analysed by the project team to determine where changes could be considered, and to address queries in relation to the proposed development. The following is a high level overview of feedback received throughout the consultation process.

Feedback	Response
Why is there a lot of development in the north of Scotland?	We manage the high-voltage transmission network in the north of Scotland. While we don't decide where energy is generated or used, we have a legal duty to provide generators with access to our network so electricity can be transported across Great Britain. The north of Scotland is rich in renewable resources making it vital for Scotland's and the UK's climate targets. Covering a quarter of the UK's landmass, our region will play a crucial role in the transition to a low-carbon future.
Concerns regarding potential impacts of construction traffic in the local area	The forthcoming Section 37 application will include an Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan, and a Transport Assessment to consider the traffic impacts of any nearby development, and shared traffic management measures may be provided to address any cumulative traffic issues. Construction traffic will be robustly controlled by a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP). This will control what routes construction traffic can take and what mitigation measures are required. Local road enhancements may be provided where required and in discussion with The Highland Council. SSEN Transmission will enter into a "Wear and Tear" agreement with The Highland Council under Section 96 of Roads (Scotland) Act to ensure that public road does not deteriorate during the construction period. This ensures that where the road deteriorates, SSEN Transmission will be responsible for any damage that their traffic causes, rather than the Council.

Feedback

Has undergrounding the overhead line been considered?

Response

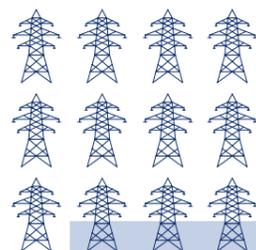
Undergrounding has been considered as part of the options appraisal process for this project. As the licensed Transmission Owner in the north of Scotland, SSEN Transmission has a statutory duty under the Electricity Act 1989 to develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated and economical transmission system. In doing so, we also take account of environmental considerations and the views of the local community.

As part of the development of the Proposed Development, we have undertaken a comprehensive options appraisal which assesses different technology types (overhead line and underground cable), routing options, environmental constraints, technical feasibility, system operability, deliverability and whole life cost. This process is carried out in accordance with the Holford Rules (and subsequent guidance), National Planning Policy and relevant National Policy Statements.

While it is technically feasible to underground high voltage transmission infrastructure, placing the entire route underground presents a number of significant challenges. These include substantially higher costs, greater land disturbance, more complex construction requirements, longer repair times in the event of faults, and sensitivity to a range of ground conditions. These considerations apply along the full length of the route but are particularly relevant at Shin, where site specific engineering constraints mean that undergrounding is not feasible at the connection point.

At Shin substation, the surrounding terrain presents steep slopes and hard rock, making excavation extremely difficult and introducing elevated construction safety risks. The area also includes several major crossings including three public roads, the railway line and the River Shin, all of which would require complex trenching or drilling techniques. These activities would significantly increase engineering risk, construction impact and programme uncertainty. An overhead line avoids many of these obstacles by spanning over challenging terrain and infrastructure.

In line with industry practice and regulatory expectations, undergrounding is therefore normally considered only for specific, sensitive locations where there is a strong planning or environmental justification, rather than for the entire route. This helps ensure that environmental impact, technical requirements, system reliability and cost to consumers are appropriately balanced.



Feedback

Potential Impacts on Scheduled Monuments

During the pre-application consultation process, concerns were raised regarding the proposed new access routes within the Scheduled Monument SM5498 boundary, and the dismantling methodology proposed to dismantle an existing overhead line tower within the Scheduled Monument. Feedback identified that these proposals could have physical impacts on the Scheduled Monument. The feedback suggested that the access proposals should be redesigned to avoid scheduled areas where possible, and alternative routes identified to comply with national policies in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Scheduled Monument Consents Policy, and for alternative dismantling methodologies to be identified to avoid physical impacts on the Scheduled Monument during dismantling works.

How is the environment being considered?

Response

Based on the feedback received, the project team have reviewed the access proposals and identified alternative access proposals that would wholly avoid the Scheduled Monument while providing suitable access to tower locations.

The project team are also reviewing the dismantling methodology proposed for the dismantling of the existing OHL tower within the Scheduled Monument boundary and will have further engagement with HES to refine the proposed methodology.

We prioritise environmental protection in all our projects, following strict policies and regulations. Our approach uses the avoid, minimise, mitigate, and restore hierarchy to safeguard protected areas and wildlife.

We have taken into account feedback received from stakeholders regarding potential environmental impacts, and amended the project design where practicable. For example, we have taken on board feedback from Historic Environment Scotland and amended our access proposals to avoid the construction of new tracks within a Scheduled Monument.

We are currently finalising the EIA Report to submit alongside the Section 37 application. The EIA Report will contain environmental assessment information regarding environmental topics such as ecology and ornithology, the water environment, cultural heritage, geology and soils, and other topics. The EIA Report will also contain a Schedule of Mitigation Measures to reduce potential environmental effects.

Further details regarding key environmental topics and how these are being considered in the EIA can be found in the Environmental Considerations section.

We are leading the way on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), committing to deliver at least 10% more biodiversity on all projects gaining consent.

Feedback	Response
<p>Where will the tower locations be and what is the limit of deviation (LOD)?</p>	<p>We have included a map of the indicative tower locations; however, exact locations won't be finalised until the Section 37 application is submitted. There may be some element of micrositing depending on environmental, technical, land, and community constraints. Once the Section 37 application has been submitted, you will be able to view all documentation on the ECU portal and there will be a formal opportunity for representations.</p> <p>When we apply for consent, we include an LoD, which is a defined area or "corridor" within which the final infrastructure can be built. The LoD varies in location in response to constraints, such as sensitive receptors, and technical/engineering constraints. For example, the LoD has been reduced where the new OHL alignments passes near to the two Scheduled Monuments. This was done to restrict the siting of the new OHL towers and to avoid the Scheduled Monument boundaries.</p>
<p>How do you consider carbon calculations for the project?</p>	<p>Carbon in materials and components for OHLs is acknowledged in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) as requiring consideration for adverse climate effects.</p> <p>The Proposed Development is required to facilitate the connection of distributed renewable energy generation to the electricity transmission network, falling with the (NPF) 4 designation relating to the development of 'Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Infrastructure'. This states that additional electricity generation from renewables and electricity transmission capacity of scale are fundamental to achieving a net zero economy and supports improved network resilience in rural and island areas. The Proposed Development therefore comprises a nationally significant development in planning terms and will play an important role in facilitating the transition to net zero emissions. As a result, a climate change assessment to consider GHG emissions is not proposed, and this topic is proposed to be scoped out from further assessment.</p> <p>Additionally, as included in the Scoping Report, an assessment of the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to climate change hazards is not proposed as part of the EIAR.</p> <p>The Scoping Report can be viewed on the ECU's website (https://www.energyconsents.scot/) under reference ECU00006257.</p>

Stakeholder Engagement and Next Steps

As we prepare to submit a Section 37 Application, we have been engaging with statutory bodies, the public and landowners and reviewing feedback to finalise our proposal.

This is the final pre-application consultation (PAC) event for the project, the purpose being to share the feedback we have received and our responses. We are very grateful for the time taken to share your views with us, both in person and online. Environmental assessments will continue as we move toward submission of our application in 2026. Comments made to us throughout the consultation process do not constitute representation to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU). Once the Section 37 application has been submitted, there will be a formal opportunity for representations via the ECU online portal, as well as by email and post. If you have any further questions, please contact the Community Liaison Manager who works closely with community members to make sure they are well informed of our proposals and that views, concerns, questions or suggestions are put to the project team.

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Additional information:



The best way to keep up to date is to sign up to project updates via the project webpage:
[ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/shin-to-loch-buidhe-132kv-overhead-line-rebuild](https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/shin-to-loch-buidhe-132kv-overhead-line-rebuild)

You can also follow us on social media:



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Notes

