VOLUME 2: CHAPTER 9 - FORESTRY

Appendices (Volume 5 of this EIA Report)

Appendix V2-9.1: Woodland Reports

Figures (Volume 3 of this EIA Report)

The relevant figures for this Chapter are contained within the Appendices listed above

9. FORESTRY

9.1 Executive Summary

9.1.1 This Chapter considers the likely significant effects from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development on forest and woodland areas. The assessment has been undertaken by Galbraith Forestry in line with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) guidance.

9.1.2 The Applicant has produced a series of Woodland Reports (included as a series of Annexes to **Appendix V2-9.1**) to indicate the areas of forestry or woodland that would be intersected by the Proposed Development. The Woodland Reports set out details of the current baseline in terms of describing the woodland type (species, condition, current management), with reference to incorporation of the Proposed Development within ongoing forest management activities.

9.1.3 The Proposed Development is predicted to result in the direct loss of 100 ha of commercial woodland, 11 ha of ancient woodland and 7 ha of semi-natural woodland, due to the requirement to create an Operational Corridor (OC) for the construction and safe operation of the proposed OHL, including the creation of access tracks.

9.1.4 The assessment concluded that the removal of 11 ha of ancient woodland and 7 ha of semi-natural woodland, of which 0.15 ha is ancient woodland within the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills Special Area of Conservation (SAC), would result in a significant adverse effect on both woodland types across the project, despite potential opportunities to reduce the amount of felling, subject to further detailed design. No significant effects were predicted for the removal of commercial woodland.

9.1.5 Given that the Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of woodland, the Applicant is committed to making arrangements to plant off-site the equivalent area of woodland as Compensatory Planting, meeting the Scottish Government's CoWRP[1] objective of no net loss of woodland.

9.1.6 Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the creation of the OC would result in wider potential indirect effects on the surrounding woodland areas. These areas would be subject to potential increased risk of damage (windthrow). The Woodland Reports identify further areas of felling to leave a windfirm edge (categorised as an indirect secondary impact). Any felling undertaken outwith the OC would be solely under the control of the relevant landowner (and not the Applicant). It is the intention of the Applicant to encourage the landowners to follow this good practice in terms of redesign of their current Long-Term Forest Plans which in-turn would aim to follow UKFS for the implementation of the works required.

9.1.7 The assessment identified the potential for significant effects (pre-mitigation) on forest management, due to the requirement for forest managers to amend current objectives, plans and techniques for their forest, in particular, to incorporate the felling requirements for the OC into their long-term felling and landscape design plans. With the commitment to develop the 'Woodland Reports' for each of the forests and woodlands affected by the Proposed Development, this is deemed sufficient to reduce the residual effect on forest management to not significant.

9.1.8 No significant effects on forest operations access were identified.

9.2 Introduction

9.2.1 This Chapter assesses the significance of predicted residual effects of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development on forest and woodland areas within Sections 0 to 5 of the route for the Proposed Development (no felling is anticipated within Section 6). The assessment is supported by **Appendix V2-9.1: Woodland Reports** (in Volume 5 of this EIA Report). The Appendix contains a series of location specific

[1] The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal, Forestry Commission (2009)

Woodland Reports in relation to forestry and woodland that would be intersected by the Proposed Development. These Woodland Reports that are individual Annexes to **Appendix V2-9.1**, detail the current baseline in terms of describing the woodland type (including species, condition, current management), and future management under reference to the Land Management Plans (LMPs) where available. The Woodland Reports contain the detailed assessment of impacts likely to result from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. Future management proposals have been designed in conjunction with relevant landowners / forest managers to create a resilient and sustainable long term forest management system.

9.2.2 The assessment has been prepared by Galbraith Forestry in line with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) guidance[2]. All staff contributing to this Chapter have professional experience in forestry survey and environmental impact assessment (EIA). A table presenting the relevant qualifications and experience of key staff involved in the preparation of this Chapter is included in **Appendix V1-5.1: EIA Team**, contained within Volume 5 of this EIA Report.

9.2.3 Throughout this assessment, areas of ancient or semi-natural woodland are referred to as woodland and areas of predominately commercial species are classed as forests.

9.3 Scope of Assessment and Methodology

Scope of Assessment

9.3.1 This Chapter considers the significance of likely predicted effects of the Proposed Development on forestry, including cumulative effects with other developments where relevant. This includes an assessment of the sensitivity of the forestry and woodland areas located along the route of the Proposed Development and an assessment of the likely impacts that would arise from the Proposed Development, with particular emphasis on forest and woodland structure and management.

9.3.2 The assessment is based on the description of the Proposed Development that is provided in **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description (and related Appendices)** and **Volume 2, Chapter 2: Section by Section Overview**.

9.3.3 The assessment is based on the requirement to form, and maintain, an Operational Corridor (OC) along the route for the Proposed Development, while recognising the potential impacts over broader forest management areas as a result of the Proposed Development. This Chapter reports on the assessment of the effects associated with the creation of the OC only, and does not address the overall Long Term Forest Plans (LTFPs). Any felling undertaken outwith the OC would be solely under the control of the relevant landowner (and not the Applicant), and consequently, the assessment is limited to consideration of the effects of the Proposed Development on the present forest composition and yield, at the time of writing. The relevant landowners and forest managers have been consulted on the felling requirements within the OC and how these may impact the overall LTFPs. Proposals to develop the additional works required to maintain a sustainable long term resilient holding following the clearance of the OC have been developed alongside the landowners and forest managers to minimise the long term impact.

9.3.4 As provided in terms of the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (ESQCR) 2002[3] and Schedule 4 to the Electricity Act 1989[4], the Applicant has the necessary statutory powers to remove woodland for the purposes of construction and on-going maintenance of new overhead lines (OHLs), and/or protection of electrical plant.

[2] United Kingdom Forestry Standard (UKFS), Forestry Commission (2017)
[3] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2665/contents/made - accessed 15/07/2022
[4] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/29/contents - accessed 15/07/2022

Extent of the Study Area and Operational Corridor

9.3.5 The study area for this assessment initially focussed on a 100 metres (m) area either side of the centre line of the OHL alignment and ancillary infrastructure, where relevant, prior to the identification of an OC. The OC is defined with reference to the distance at which a tree could fall and cause damage to the OHL, resulting in a supply outage. As a result, the final OC width would be based on the safety distance required to allow for a mature tree falling towards the OHL at the mid-point on an OHL span between two towers, taking account of topography and tree height at maturity.

9.3.6 The typical OC required within areas of commercial conifer forestry for a 132 kV OHL is 80 m, (i.e. 40 m either side of the centre line). Where the OC passes through areas of native woodland, it is proposed that the extent of woodland removal is likely to be reduced due to the lower height of the tree species present. The proposed OC for the Proposed Development through areas of native woodland has been reduced to 60 m (i.e. 30 m either side of the centre line of the OHL). This has been based on the likely height of the woodland at maturity. In native broadleaved areas of high sensitivity (i.e. Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) / Special Area of Conservation (SAC)), it is proposed to reduce the OC to 15 m either side of the centre line of the OHL.

9.3.7 By definition the OC is deemed to include any tree with the potential to become a "Red Zone" tree as defined within the Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA), Guidance note 804[5]. This refers to any tree with the potential to fall into the vicinity zone of the overhead line conductors or directly onto the conductors causing damage or failure. Within the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC, this is adjusted to allow for vegetation management to occur to maintain the vicinity zone of the OHL conductors rather than whole tree clearance of the Red Zone. Therefore, in these areas, trees can grow freely vertically or horizontally as long as the 3.5 m vicinity zone isn't and cannot be breached by tree fall or branches, as to prevent an OHL safety issue. Should trees encroach near the 3.5 m safe electrical clearance zone of the OHL conductors, then there would be a requirement for maintenance and the possible cutting back or crown reduction of some of the trees/branches.

9.3.8 The forestry assessment has been limited to the woodland removal required to create the proposed OC for the OHL and required access tracks, as set out in **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description**. It is acknowledged that the creation of the OC would result in wider potential indirect effects on the surrounding woodland areas. These areas would be subject to potential increased risk of damage (windthrow). As a result, the assessment work includes a series of Woodland Reports (see the Annexes to **Appendix V2-9.1**), in respect of the forests and woodlands affected by the Proposed Development. The Woodland Reports demonstrate how the Proposed Development would be incorporated within ongoing forest management activities. They also identify further areas of felling to establish and leave a windfirm edge for the remaining forestry or woodland; (categorised as an indirect effect). Any felling undertaken outwith the OC would be solely under the control of the relevant landowner (and not the Applicant) (see paragraph 9.3.3).

9.3.9 It should be noted that of the woodlands affected by the Proposed Development, sixteen of these are private woodlands and four are within the ownership of the Scottish Ministers and are managed by Forestry and Land Scotland.

Consultation and Scoping

9.3.10 The scope of the assessment has been determined through a combination of professional judgement and consultation with stakeholders through a formal EIA scoping process and pre-application advice, and is based on the formal Scoping Opinion issued by the Scottish Ministers dated 26 April 2022.

9.3.11 Scoping responses, relevant to forestry, are provided in **Table V2-9-1** below.

[5] Safety Guide 804 Electricity at work: Forestry, Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA)

Table V2-9-1: Scoping Responses

Organisation	Response	Comment
The Highland Council (THC)	THC advise that a specific chapter on forestry is included in the EIA Report. The Chapter should provide a baseline survey of the plants (including fungi, lichens and bryophytes) and trees present on the site to determine the presence of any rare or threatened species and indicate areas of woodland / forestry plantation which may by felled. Full details of commercial forest management, including intended felling and replanting cycles, should be provided with the application. The EIA Report must consider the need for compensatory planting in line with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal policy and associated windthrow risk and identification of windfirm boundaries.	This Chapter provides a specific assessment on forestry interests, including commercial forestry plantations, areas of native woodland, areas of Ancient Woodland, and woodland within the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). A baseline survey of habitats and species is included in **Volume 5, Appendix V2-4.3: National Vegetation Classification and Habitats Survey Report.** There is also a separate survey report in relation to fungi, lichen and bryophytes within the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC and SSSI in **Volume 5, Appendix V2-4.6: Bryophyte and Lichen Survey Report**. Compensatory planting requirements and potential windthrow effects form part of the forestry assessment and associated Appendix and Annexes.
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	Proposals for felled forest material must be shown to comply with SEPA's Use of Trees Cleared to Facilitate Development on Afforested Land – Joint Guidance from SEPA, SNH and FCS.	Information relating to removal of woodland is included within this Chapter and associated Appendix and Annexes.
Woodland Trust (WT)	WT recommends that an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) is undertaken for the entire route to help inform the EIA Report and ensure protection of ancient and veteran trees. It is also recommended that the Applicant reviews the Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI).	An assessment has been carried out to identify potential effects on forestry and native woodland (including AWI) throughout the route. The supporting Appendix and Annexes to this Chapter also confirm compensatory measures where woodland loss is anticipated.

Methodology for the Assessment of Effects

9.3.12 There are currently no published criteria, guidance or methodologies for the assessment of effects on forestry. The assessment reported in this Chapter is based upon the methodology set out in **Volume 1, Chapter 5 – EIA Process and Methodology** and has therefore been based upon the requirements of the 2017 EIA Regulations.

9.3.13 The assessment is made based on professional judgement, with reference to:

- the sensitivity of the different types of woodland present in the study area taking account of the degree and rate of change in the woodland, both in the recent past and that anticipated in the near future, and therefore the susceptibility/vulnerability of the woodland to change; the quality of the woodland and the extent to which it is rare or distinctive, and the value attributed to the woodland through designations;

- magnitude of change and extent of woodland removal;
- duration and reversibility - timescale of effect (days/weeks/months/years) until recovery. Permanent effects are described as such, and likelihood of recovery is detailed where appropriate; and
- adverse/beneficial - if the effect will be beneficial or detrimental to the feature.

9.3.14 The effect on woodland is normally considered to be of an adverse nature (i.e tree felling); however indirect beneficial effects in some areas may arise where the introduction of the Proposed Development allows for the removal of ecologically habitat-poor conifer plantation. This may be followed by natural regeneration or planting of more diverse woodland tree mix or introduction of native woodland species, and the development of more open ground than that which existed originally. While there may be an ecological benefit from the removal of conifer plantation forest, there is a presumption against all forest removal which is supported by the Scottish Governments policy on Control of Woodland Removal[6]. As such for the purposes of this assessment tree removal is to be considered as having an adverse effect. Further arboricultural works i.e. crown reduction or limb removal to achieve the necessary safety clearance, removes the necessity for tree removal, thereby reducing the adverse effect on the woodland habitat.

Criteria for Assessing Sensitivity / Importance of Receptors

9.3.15 Four categories of sensitivity / importance of a forest or woodland are defined in **Table V2-9.2**.

Table V2-9.2: Sensitivity Criteria

Category	Description
High	• Highly valued, subject of national designation e.g. Ancient Woodland Category 1a; • Particularly rare or distinctive in a national context; or • Considered susceptible to small changes.
Medium	• Valued more locally; • Rare or distinctive in a regional context; and/or • Are tolerant of moderate levels of change.
Low	• Generally, more commonplace, not designated; • Considered potentially tolerant of noticeable change; or • Undergoing substantial development such that their character is one of change.
Negligible	• Already fundamentally changed (e.g. second rotation commercial conifer plantation); • considered tolerant of noticeable change; or • having undergone substantial development such that their character is one of change.

9.3.16 Given the dynamic nature of productive forests, which are subject to restructuring, the environmental sensitivity of the forest as a commercial asset and land use is low. There are areas of Ancient Woodland present within the vicinity of the Proposed Development, and these are considered in this assessment to be of medium sensitivity. The assessment of effects on ancient and semi-natural woodland in ecological terms are addressed in **Volume 2, Chapter 4: Ecology** of the EIA Report.

Criteria for Assessing Magnitude of Change

9.3.17 Criteria for assessing the magnitude of change to a forest or woodland is defined in **Table V2-9.3.**

[6] Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal: implementation guidance. (2019)

Table V2-9.3: Magnitude of Change Criteria

Category	Description
High	a noticeable change to the forest or woodland over a wide area or an intensive change over a limited area.
Medium	small changes to the forest and woodland over a wide area or noticeable change over a limited area.
Low	very small changes to the forest or woodland over a wide area or small changes over a limited area.
Negligible / None	no discernible change to the forest or woodland.

Significance Criteria

9.3.18 The sensitivity of the woodland (**Table V2-9.2**) and magnitude of change criteria (**Table V2-9.3**) are then used to inform a professional judgement on the likely significance of the effect. **Table V2-9.4** provides a framework for reaching a judgement as to the significance of predicted effects.

Table V2-9.4: Matrix for Determining the Significance of Effects

		Sensitivity of Receptor/Receiving Environment to Change/Effect			
		High	**Medium**	**Low**	**Negligible**
Magnitude of Change/Effect	**High**	**Major**	**Major**	**Moderate**	Negligible
	Medium	**Major**	**Moderate**	Minor	Negligible
	Low	**Moderate**	Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

9.3.19 Major and moderate effects are considered to be significant within the context of the 2017 EIA Regulations.

Desk Study

9.3.20 Searches of the Land Register of Scotland of the Proposed Development provided the property boundary information of each landholding. A desk-based appraisal of Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, aerial photography and review of web-based data provided by Scottish Forestry[7] identified the existing forest and woodland cover within a study area defined as 100 m either side of the proposed OHL alignment. This was supplemented by consultation with landowners and/or forest managers and review of existing forest data (provided by the landowners) on woodland type (species / age / class) and the existing woodland management regime, including woodland restructuring and LMP/LTFP information.

Field Survey

9.3.21 Forest walkover and mapping surveys were undertaken during the period January to March 2022, to confirm the extent of the woodland areas affected by the Proposed Development and further assess the current woodland characteristics. Photographic records were taken to provide visual samples of the woodland types and are included in **Annex 1** of **Appendix V2-9.1.** Woodland volume assessments of the commercial conifer woodlands were undertaken during the site walkovers, with the application of tree measurement techniques in-line with industry standard forest mensuration protocol.[8]

[7] open-data-scottishforestry.hub.arcgis.com

[8] Forest Mensuration: a handbook for practitioners. Forestry Commission (2006)

9.3.22 The forest walkovers included the visual assessment of tree health, vigour, ground conditions and existing woodland stability. Observations were also made of potential woodland windfirm boundaries. The forest walkover surveys included consideration of ancillary infrastructure and the Limits of Deviation (LoD) as set out in **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description.**

Limitations and Assumptions

9.3.23 Forest information has been provided by the landowners and forest / land managers of each landholding and cross checking has only been carried out where observations suggested that the immediate conditions varied from the estate forestry records.

9.4 Baseline

9.4.1 The study area comprises large areas of commercial forest plantations, as well as areas of native woodland, a number of which are recorded as Ancient Woodland. In relation to the Highland region, THC records the woodland cover across the region as 310,000 hectares (ha), with 232,500 (ha) comprising commercial woodland and 130,000 ha comprising native woodland, of which approximately 40,100 ha are classed as Ancient Woodland. The baseline characterisation work carried out identified 17 landowners with forest or woodland potentially affected by the Proposed Development. A Woodland Report has been prepared for each of the affected forest or woodland properties (20 reports in total), which are included in **Appendix V2-9.1: Annex 1 - Woodland Reports**. Each of these sites were visited and existing data, sourced from the forest owners and their agents, were reviewed and confirmed against the woodland site surveys.

9.4.2 The total areas of woodland habitats recorded within the OC during the site surveys include:

- Commercial Woodland (123.6 ha); and
- Native Broadleaved Woodland (ancient woodland and semi natural woodland) (23.2 ha).

9.4.3 Of the native broadleaved woodland areas identified, 11.2 ha of these areas are recorded on the Scottish Government's Ancient Woodland Inventory[9] (AWI), as shown within **Appendix V2-9.1: Annex 1 - Woodland Reports**.

9.4.4 NatureScot's Ancient Woodland Inventory[10] sets out three main categories of ancient woodland, all of which are of value for their biodiversity and cultural value by virtue of their antiquity:

- Ancient Woodland (1a or 2a) - Interpreted as semi-natural woodland from maps of 1750 (1a) or 1860 (2a) and continuously wooded to the present day. If planted with non-native species during the 20th century they are referred to as Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS);
- Long Established of Plantation Origin (LEPO) (1b or 2b) - Interpreted as plantation from maps of 1750 (1b) or 1860 (2b) and continuously wooded since. Many of these sites have developed semi-natural characteristics, especially the oldest ones, which may be as rich as Ancient Woodland; and
- Other woodlands on 'Roy' woodland sites (3) - Shown as unwooded on the 1st edition maps but as woodland on the Roy maps. Such sites have, at most, had only a short break in continuity of woodland cover and may still retain features of Ancient Woodland.

9.4.5 The Proposed Development does not interact with any areas of ancient woodland within Section 0. Although an area of Category 2b Long-established (of plantation origin) at Lusta, and an area of Category 2a Ancient woodland (of semi-natural origin) at Pairc Dhubh exist within 1 km of Section 0.

[9] Available via - https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/c2f57ed9-5601-4864-af5f-a6e73e977f54/ancient-woodland-inventory-scotland - accessed 15/07/2022
[10] A guide to understanding the Scottish Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) | NatureScot

9.4.6 The Proposed Development does not interact with any areas of ancient woodland (as listed in the AWI) within Section 1, or within 5 km.

9.4.7 The Proposed Development does not interact with any areas of ancient woodland (as listed in the AWI) within Section 2, although several areas of Category 2a Ancient woodland (of semi-natural origin) are present within 5 km, the closest being over 0.4 km north of Section 2 towards the eastern extent.

9.4.8 Section 3 passes through Mudalach woodland identified on the AWI. The OHL route intersects with the woodland here, with additional areas falling beneath the footprint of the access track. Most of the woodland is classified as ancient of semi-natural origin (1a) with one stand in the west of Mudalach classified as ancient of semi-natural origin (2a), one further small area in the west of Mudalach is classified as other woodlands on Roy maps (3).

9.4.9 There are nine areas of ancient woodland within Section 4 (three areas of Category 1a, five areas of Category 2a and one area of Category 2b), with numerous other areas of ancient woodland within 5 km of the Proposed Development. These are mostly small, highly fragmented areas of woodland, with some more extensive areas, including a 320 hectare (ha) site at Glac an Tobair.

9.4.10 There are approximately twelve areas of ancient woodland along the line of the Proposed Development and within the LoD for Section 5 (eleven areas of Category 2a, and one area of Category 2b), with numerous other areas of ancient woodland within 5 km of the Proposed Development. The areas of habitat within Section 5 include small, highly fragmented areas of woodland with larger areas along the northern shores of Loch Garry.

Future Baseline

9.4.11 Under the future “do nothing scenario” it has been assumed that coniferous plantation areas will continue to be managed principally in-line with commercial objectives and woodland restructuring, including their felling and replanting with similar species. It is assumed that the Ancient and semi-natural woodland areas would be managed as long-term retention areas. It is not considered likely that there will be a net reduction in the area of forest as a result of this scenario overall, although there will clearly be local changes. On this basis, the current baseline has been used for the purposes of this assessment and no further consideration will be given to future baseline scenarios.

9.5 Embedded Mitigation Measures

9.5.1 The embedded mitigation is a combination of decisions taken during the design process to avoid or minimise the potential for likely significant effects through routeing and alignment of the OHL, and the implementation of standard practice mitigation measures that are well-established and effective. These are discussed below.

Iterative Design Process

9.5.2 The routeing and alignment selection process for the Proposed Development has taken into consideration the potential for significant effects on forestry and woodland, and for such effects to be avoided or minimised where possible. This has continued through the EIA process, with survey data informing the siting of infrastructure and access routes to minimise further potential effects on forestry and woodland, where practicable. This process is detailed in **Volume 1, Chapter 4: The Routeing Process and Alternatives**.

Good Practice

9.5.3 There would be a contractual management requirement for the successful Principal Contractor to fully implement a comprehensive and Site-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This document would detail how the successful Principal Contractor would manage all works in accordance with all

commitments and mitigation detailed in the EIA Report, the Applicant's GEMPs and SPPs, statutory consents and authorisations, and industry good practice and guidance, including pollution prevention guidance.

9.5.4 Good practice measures with respect to felling requirements would be incorporated into environmental management controls, including:

- adherence to Forestry Commission (Scottish Forestry) Guidelines[11] e.g. to ensure protection and enhancement of the water environment;
- management of forestry waste (SEPA)[12] to ensure all excess waste resulting from forestry operations is correctly disposed of; and
- implementation of tree harvesting and extraction methods to ensure minimisation of soil disturbance and compaction.

9.5.5 All woodland removal operations contracted by the Applicant would adhere to the UKFS[13].

9.6 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

9.6.1 The assessment of likely significant effects associated with the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development is based on the typical activities and characteristics described in **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description and related Appendices**.

9.6.2 The introduction of OHLs into forestry and woodland can give rise to a combination of short term and long-term effects during both construction and operation. The following interrelated effects can arise from the introduction of OHLs within forest and woodland areas associated principally with the requirement for tree felling and vegetation management.

- Direct construction and operational effects: loss of areas of forest through woodland removal to create the OHL OC and access tracks, in the context of the regional forest resource for both commercial woodland, ancient woodland and semi natural woodlands;
- Indirect construction effects: increased windthrow and secondary felling agreed with landowners;
- Indirect operational effects: effects on forest management systems;
- Indirect operational effects: restrictions on forest access; and
- Cumulative effects: combined loss of woodland from direct and indirect (secondary) felling.

9.6.3 The assessment is structured around the consideration of these effects.

9.6.4 In total, approximately 43 km of the route for the Proposed Development was assessed as being within forest or woodland and associated open ground, where tree clearance would be required to form an OC.

9.6.5 A summary of the woodland receptors relevant to the geographically defined 'Sections' and whether these have been 'scoped-in' to the assessment are given in **Table V2-9.5**, together with the justification for inclusion or exclusion. **Annex 2** of **Appendix V2-9.1** provides details of the named forestry/woodland sites.

11 The UK Forestry Standard. Forestry Commission (2017)

12 SEPA Guidance WST –g-027, version 3 (2017)

13 The UK Forestry Standard. Forestry Commission (2017)

Table V2-9.5: Summary of Woodland Receptors

Section	Receptor	Justification
0	Plantation conifer forest	Tolerant to the proposed changes and having no environmental designation. Considered as part of the assessment of effects.
1	Plantation conifer forest	Tolerant to the proposed changes and having no environmental designation. Considered as part of the assessment of effects.
2	Plantation conifer forest	Tolerant to the proposed changes and having no environmental designation. Considered as part of the assessment of effects.
3	Plantation conifer forest	Tolerant to the proposed changes and having no environmental designation. Considered as part of the assessment of effects.
	Ancient woodland and semi natural woodland	Ancient woodland is an important biodiversity resource. It has no legislative protection but in terms of planning policy protection it benefits from non-statutory designation. Non-designated broadleaved semi-natural woodland is noted to have biodiversity and amenity value and has planning policy protection. Both are considered locally tolerant to medium levels of change. This assessment is based on the regional sensitivity. It is recognised there may be some localised areas considered to have increased sensitivity. Within this assessment the sensitivity is considered to be medium. Considered as part of the assessment of effects.
4	Plantation conifer forest	Tolerant to the proposed changes and having no environmental designation. Considered as part of the assessment of effects.
	Ancient woodland and semi natural woodland	Ancient woodland is a valued (non- statutory designation). Semi natural woodland is noted to have biodiversity and amenity value. Both are considered locally tolerant to medium levels of change. This assessment is based on the regional sensitivity. It is recognised there may be some localised areas considered to have increased sensitivity. Within this assessment the sensitivity is considered to be medium. Considered as part of the assessment of effects.
5	Plantation conifer forest	Tolerant to the proposed changes and having no environmental designation. Considered as part of the assessment of effects.
	Ancient woodland and semi natural woodland	Ancient woodland is a valued (non- statutory designation). Semi natural woodland is noted to have biodiversity and amenity value. Both are considered locally tolerant to medium levels of change. This assessment is based on the regional sensitivity. It is recognised there may be some localised areas considered to have increased sensitivity. Within this assessment the sensitivity is considered to be medium. Considered as part of the assessment of effects.

Section	Receptor	Justification
6	N/A	No felling proposed. Not considered further in this assessment.

Construction Effects – Woodland Removal

9.6.6 The direct and gross loss of woodland from construction of the Proposed Development is set out for each Section in **Table V2-9.6**. The named woodland that would be affected in each of the Sections is identified in **Annex 2** of **Appendix V2-9.1** and the areas affected in each of the woodlands is quantified in each of the relevant Woodland Reports in **Annex 1** of **Appendix V2-9.1**.

Table V2-9.6: Construction Phase Woodland Removal

Section	Woodland Type	Woodland Classification	Area (ha)	Felling Requirement
0	Commercial	Conifer	7.8	OC
1	Commercial	Conifer	25.2	OC
	Commercial	Conifer	4.1	New Access Track
2	Commercial	Conifer	4.5	OC
3	Commercial	Conifer	17.9	OC
	Commercial	Conifer	0.2	New Access Track
	Native	Semi-natural broadleaved	0.06	OC
	Native	Semi-natural broadleaved	0.97	New Access Track
	Native	Semi-natural broadleaved	0.13	Crown Reduction (not included within woodland removal area)
	Native	Ancient Woodland	0.24	Crown Reduction (not included within woodland removal area)
4	Commercial	Conifer	14.7	OC
	Native	Semi-natural broadleaved	7.4	OC
	Native	Ancient Woodland	2.4	OC
	Commercial	Conifer	2.7	New Access Track
	Native	Semi-natural broadleaved	0.7	New Access Track

Section	Woodland Type	Woodland Classification	Area (ha)	Felling Requirement
	Native	Ancient Woodland	0.3	New Access Track
5	Commercial	Conifer	20.5	OC
	Commercial	Ancient Woodland	1.4	OC
	Native	Semi-natural broadleaved	1.5	OC
	Native	Ancient Woodland	2.7	OC
	Commercial	Conifer	1	New Access Track
	Commercial	Ancient Woodland	0.6	New Access Track
	Native	Semi-natural broadleaved	1.2	New Access Track
	Native	Ancient Woodland	0.3	New Access Track
TOTAL			**118**	

9.6.7 The total direct and gross loss of forestry and woodland for construction of the Proposed Development equates to 118 ha; this includes 100 ha of commercial woodland removal and 18 ha of ancient and semi natural native woodland removal. The detailed breakdown is provided in **Annex 2** of **Appendix V2-9.1.**

Commercial Woodland

9.6.8 As shown in **Table V2-9.6**, the direct loss of commercial woodland as a result of the Proposed Development is primarily as a result of the requirement to form an OC, with some felling required to form access tracks. Commercial woodland loss is spread across all Sections included within the assessment (i.e. Sections 0 to 5), with the greatest losses shown in Sections 1, 3, 4 and 5. Losses of under 10 ha are predicted in Sections 0 and 2.

9.6.9 The sensitivity of commercial woodland within the study area is low. The combined and direct loss of 100 ha of commercial woodland across all Sections is assessed as a low magnitude of change, in the context of a noticeable change over a limited area, equating to a 0.04% impact of woodland removal within the regional resource forest area of 232,500 ha. This effect is assessed as **Minor Adverse** and **Not Significant.**

Semi-natural Woodland

9.6.10 As shown in **Table V2-9.6**, the direct loss of semi-natural native woodland is predicted in Sections 3, 4 and 5, with the greatest loss being seen in Section 4. Across the three Sections, this is primarily as a result of the requirement to form an OC, with some additional felling required to form access tracks. No loss of semi-natural native woodland is predicted in Sections 0, 1 or 2 of the route for the Proposed Development.

9.6.11 The combined and direct loss of semi-natural woodland (mixed native broad-leaved woodland), including recently planted woodland, due to construction of the Proposed Development across all 6 Sections (included within the assessment) would be 7 ha. A breakdown of the ancient and semi natural woodland habitat types impacted by construction and operation of the Proposed Development are shown in **Table V2-9.7**.

Table V2-9.7: Ancient Woodland Inventory Habitat Classification

Habitat Type	Area (ha)
Ancient woodland	11
Semi-natural woodland	7
Total	18

9.6.12 The sensitivity of semi-natural woodland is considered within this assessment as medium. The magnitude of change is considered medium and as such the effect is assessed as **Moderate Adverse** and **Significant**.

Ancient Woodland

9.6.13 As shown in **Table V2-9.6**, the direct loss of Ancient native woodland is predicted in Sections 3, 4 and 5, with the greatest loss being seen in Section 4. Across the three Sections, this is primarily as a result of the requirement to form an OC, with some additional felling required to form access tracks. No loss of Ancient native woodland is predicted in Sections 0, 1 or 2 of the route for the Proposed Development project.

9.6.14 The combined and direct loss of ancient woodland, due to construction of the Proposed Development across all 6 Sections (included within the assessment) would be 11 ha. A breakdown of the ancient and semi natural woodland habitat types impacted by construction and operation of the Proposed Development are shown in **Table V2-9.7**.

9.6.15 The sensitivity of ancient woodland is considered within this assessment as medium. The magnitude of change is considered medium and as such the effect is assessed as **Moderate Adverse** and **Significant.**

9.6.16 The local authority (THC) recorded area of ancient and semi natural woodland is 130,000 ha, therefore the impact area (18 ha) would represent a maximum of 0.01% of the regional resource.

9.6.17 The assessment of the impact of the clearance of ancient semi natural woodland in biodiversity terms is addressed within **Volume 2, Chapter 4: Ecology.**

Construction Effects – Windthrow

9.6.18 The tree felling required through areas of mature commercial woodland to create the OC would result in an indirect effect of increasing potentially unstable forest edges where retained trees stand immediately adjacent to the OC. These areas, known within the forest industry as ‘brown edges’, have relatively unstable trees within them which previously depended upon the now felled neighbouring trees for support. The risk of windthrow is that these brown edge trees would be damaged and blown over due to the lack of shelter.

9.6.19 This assessment identifies an additional area of 82.3 ha of commercial woodland which would be at increased risk of windthrow. The sensitivity of commercial woodland within the study area is low. The magnitude of impact would be low, and therefore this additional area is assessed as **Minor Adverse** and **Not Significant.**

9.6.20 Notwithstanding this assessment, the Applicant has produced Woodland Reports included in **Appendix V2-9.1**, which recommend proposals to landowners to remove this risk by identifying additional areas of felling out to the nearest ‘windfirm’ edge (known as a ‘green edge’), where the trees have developed next to open ground. The extent of additional (secondary) ‘management felling’ required to achieve this reduction in windthrow risk would be 82.3 ha. The sensitivity of the forest for removal of trees outwith the OC is considered low in that the forest is deemed tolerant to this level of change and that such change could be expected to occur during normal

forest management practices. The additional felling requirement introduced by the Proposed Development would only be to potentially bring felling activity forward and as such can be considered to be a temporary (albeit long term) effect, with replanting likely to be required as a condition of any statutory felling license granted. The approach to mitigation in relation to this additional felling to protect against future windthrow is discussed in greater detail in Part 9.7 of this Chapter below.

Operational Effects – Woodland Removal

9.6.21 The direct operational effects on forests and woodland associated with the Proposed Development would be limited to periodic vegetation management to maintain the OC. Within the OC, following the construction of the Proposed Development, there would be an ongoing need to manage the growth of vegetation to facilitate access for maintenance of the OHL and to maintain the required tree clearance zones for the safe and resilient operation of the OHL. Within the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC in Section 3 of the project, it is anticipated that a further 0.1 ha of crown reduction would be required within 4 years following the construction of the OHL. The OC, after woodland removal, is deemed to be of negligible sensitivity and the impact of vegetation management is considered to represent a low magnitude of change. Overall, the adverse effect during operation is assessed as **Negligible** and **Not Significant.**

9.6.22 In addition, there is the potential for a medium to long term beneficial effect through the opportunity to manage lower growing vegetation to provide biodiversity enhancement in the OC. The development of a species diverse area of lower growing shrub species would provide valuable habitat for local fauna and flora.

Operational Effects - Effects on Forest Management Systems

9.6.23 The introduction of a new OHL through areas of managed forest would require a review by each landowner of the existing management system. Most larger commercial forest areas have a long-term forest plan (LTFP) which identifies the operations intended for the ongoing management of the forest over a 20 year period. This LTFP also provides the forest owner with consents from Scottish Forestry, as the forest authority, to undertake felling and replanting of the forest over a 10-year period. The impact of the Proposed Development is therefore only in terms of individual LTFP's having to be revised to address the construction of the OHL and the associated tree clearance works on the future management of the site. In the absence of mitigation, the requirement for forest owners to revisit their LTFP to incorporate the existence of the Proposed Development could be considered to be onerous. The sensitivity of the management system to revision is considered to be low; however, the magnitude of change required in terms of restructuring the LTFP to incorporate felling for the OC and potentially additional felling to avoid wind throw could be, locally or for the individual landowner, of high magnitude and thus the effect is **Moderate Adverse** and **Significant**.

Operational Effects - Restrictions on Forest Access

9.6.24 At the time of tree harvesting the forest industry has a range of operations, some of which can be restricted by the presence of an OHL. Live electrical OHLs provide a number of risks in terms of tree felling and extraction of the timber to the roadside near the OHL. Loading and haulage of the timber off-site can also be restricted within proximity of the OHL.

9.6.25 The sensitivity of the forestry and woodlands to this impact is considered to be low and the magnitude of change is defined as none due to the working area being removed by approximately 40 m from the Proposed OHL (in commercial woodlands) due to the presence of the OC. Assuming that all proposed felling works would incorporate standard health and safety management measures (e.g. the forest industry safety accord) as set out in Part 9.5 of this Chapter, the effect is assessed as **Negligible** and **not significant.**

Cumulative Effects – Woodland Removal

9.6.26 The cumulative effect of direct commercial woodland removal associated with creating an OC and access tracks (predicted to be 100 ha), combined with the potential indirect (secondary) effect of woodland removal

outside of the OC (predicted to be 82.3 ha) (under separate felling licences obtained by landowners and not under the control of the Applicant), would potentially comprise up to 182.3 ha of commercial woodland. This is assessed as a medium magnitude of change. Given the low sensitivity of commercial woodland within the study area, this cumulative effect is assessed as **Minor Adverse** and **Not Significant**. There are no additional indirect cumulative effects associated with native woodland.

9.6.27 Other developments within the vicinity of the Proposed Development that have been considered within the cumulative assessment include:

- Broadford Substation Extension – pre-application stage (21/04374/PAN);
- Edinbane Substation Extension – pre-application stage (21/04375/PAN);
- Glen Ullinish Wind Farm/Glen Ullinish II Wind Farm - planning consent granted for 14 wind turbines (14/03964/FUL) with a variation application (20/01129/S42) for 11 larger turbines granted in December 2021;
- Quoich Tee Switching Station Upgrade – pre-application stage;
- Coire Glas Pumped Storage Grid Connection – pre-application stage; and
- Loch Lundie Substation – pre-application stage.

9.6.28 It is understood that there would be no requirement for the removal of woodland within the Edinbane Substation Extension.

9.6.29 Approximately 1.5 ha of commercial conifer woodland would be felled for construction of Broadford Substation Extension.

9.6.30 The Coire Glas Pumped Storage Grid Connection project is required to connect Coire Glas Pumped Hydro Scheme (located southwest of Laggan Locks) to the existing Fort Augustus Substation at Auchterawe. The project would involve the installation of approximately 3.5 km of 400 kV OHL using steel lattice towers from Coire Glas switching station to a proposed new substation located in the vicinity of Loch Lundie and approximately 8.5 km of 400 kV of OHL using steel lattice towers between the proposed Loch Lundie Substation to the existing Fort Augustus Substation. The planned connection date for the project is December 2027. The detailed design and proposed locations of steel lattice towers are not known at this stage, however the preferred alignment for the OHL between Coire Glas switching station and Loch Lundie Substation would initially predominately pass-through commercial conifer plantation woodland from Coire Glas switching station to a point north of Faichem. Of the approximate 8.5 km of preferred alignment for the OHL between Loch Lundie Substation and Fort Augustus Substation, approximately 6.25 km passes through commercial conifer plantation woodland or clear-fell.

9.6.31 The proposed Loch Lundie Substation development is a requirement for the construction of a new 400 kV substation in the vicinity of Loch Lundie (located by the southern end of Section 6 of the Proposed Development) in association with the Coire Glas Pumped Storage Grid Connection project described above. Early proposals indicate that approximately 9.4 ha of permanent and temporary land-take may be required for the Loch Lundie Substation (comprising a control building, two transformers and outdoor Air Insulated Switching (AIS) equipment). The land-take area for Loch Lundie Substation is sited wholly within an area of commercial conifer plantation.

9.6.32 The Quoich Tee Switching Station Upgrade project is required as the existing switching station at Quoich Tee contains obsolete equipment that has reached the end of its capabilities. The project would include construction

of a new switching station near the existing tee off, the installation of circuit breakers and replacement of the existing 132 kV switchgear, the diversion of existing OHLs to the new switching station, and permanent access to the site. The proposed construction start date is April 2024. The land-take required for the new switching station area and new permanent access is indicatively around 0.86 ha and which is mainly comprised of wet heath and much smaller areas of bracken and broadleaved woodland.

9.6.33 It is not anticipated that Glen Ullinish Wind Farm would have an impact on woodland.

9.6.34 Given the Scottish Government's policy on Woodland Removal[14], it can be assumed that there would be no residual loss of woodland associated with these projects as the developers will require to undertake compensatory planting for any areas of felling. As such, the cumulative effect is assessed as **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

Cumulative Effects - Windthrow

9.6.35 Predicted indirect effects on commercial woodland out with the OC are based on the risk of windthrow following construction phase felling. On this basis, it is assessed that there is no potential for additional or in combination cumulative windthrow effects from the Proposed Development. As such, the cumulative effect of windthrow is assessed as **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

Cumulative Effects – Forest Management

9.6.36 There is no direct overlap of woodland removal for the Proposed Development in combination with other proposed programmes of woodland removal for cumulative developments. On this basis, the cumulative effect is assessed as **Negligible** and **Not Significant**.

9.7 Mitigation

Mitigation During Construction

9.7.1 The Applicant proposes to implement a suite of standard good practice working methods to ensure that all construction activity (including woodland removal) avoids significant effects on ecological and hydrological receptors, as detailed under Part 9.5.

9.7.2 The areas of ancient and semi natural woodland impacted by the Proposed Development (18 ha) could potentially be further reduced through micrositing within the LoD where a combination of factors (e.g. topography, tower height, tree species and height) may reduce the area of ancient semi-natural woodland defined as being within the OC. For example, the extent of tree clearance may be reduced where it can be demonstrated through further detailed survey that the trees can be safely overflown by the OHL conductors or that the trees can be accommodated within closer proximity to the Proposed Development with either no work being required, or a degree of crown reduction only. There may also be opportunities to further retain scrub/understorey layers in areas where existing tree cover does not breach safety clearances and allows for safe construction activity.

9.7.3 In order to address the likely significant effect predicted for forest land-use management in the absence of mitigation (as discussed in paragraph 9.6.20 above), the Applicant has committed to the development of Woodland Reports for each of the forestry and woodland interests (20 in total identified). The Woodland Reports, included within **Appendix V2-9.1**, identify all areas of felling required to form the OC and access tracks. In addition, the Woodland Reports has sought to reduce the risk of future wind throw by identifying felling to stable forest edges (outside of the OC).

[14] The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal (2009).

9.7.4 The Woodland Reports would also include, but are not limited to, seeking to agree a forest landscape design following good practice as defined by Forestry Commission (Scottish Forestry) Guidance (2014)[15]. The delivery of the felling identified in the Woodland Reports has been developed in conjunction with the landowners / forest managers to deliver felling and restocking out with the OC. The Applicant has agreed the use of the 'Woodland Report' to confirm the extent of woodland removal required. This proposed felling will be further reviewed with the landowners to link this with their existing LTFP/LMP, which will, once amended, be required to adhere to the UKFS as part of the approval process with Scottish Forestry. This approval is required prior to any felling being undertaken out with the Proposed Development OC or proposed access tracks. This method of addressing felling has been successfully used on a number of recent large OHL projects and has delivered forest design to the satisfaction of Scottish Forestry as the statutory authority.

Mitigation During Operation

9.7.5 To mitigate the predicted likely significant effect on forest management systems for individual landowners, the Applicant has developed the Woodland Reports in conjunction with the relevant landowners and forest managers.

Compensatory Planting

9.7.6 Given that the Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of woodland, the Applicant is committed to making arrangements to plant off-site the equivalent area of woodland as Compensatory Planting, meeting the Scottish Government's CoWRP[16] objective of no net loss of woodland.

9.7.7 Following the removal of the existing 132 kV OHL, there is potential for woodland expansion within the historical OC. This presents an opportunity to replant part of the compensatory planting requirement within close vicinity to the Proposed Development, although this requires to be discussed and agreed with the respective landowners.

9.8 Residual Effects

9.8.1 A summary of how the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined above influence the assessment of the significance of predicted residual effects likely to result from the Proposed Development on forestry are described below.

Construction Effects

9.8.2 Whilst opportunities to reduce the predicted removal of 18 ha of ancient and semi-natural woodland have been identified, comprising 11 ha of ancient woodland and 7 ha of semi-natural woodland (Table V2-9.7), these remain uncertain until further micrositing and review of wiring operations by a Principal Contractor in combination with an arboriculturist has been undertaken. The residual effect on woodland removal for semi natural woodland remains **Moderate Adverse** and **Significant**. Similarly, the residual effect on woodland removal for ancient woodland remains **Moderate Adverse** and **Significant**.

9.8.3 The Applicant is committed to making arrangements to plant off-site the equivalent area of woodland as Compensatory Planting, meeting the Scottish Government's CoWRP[17] objective of no net loss of woodland.

9.8.4 The potential to further reduce construction effects through good practice measures have been identified in the Woodland Reports (in relation to windthrow); however, at this stage the Applicant is limited to committing to working with landowners to seek to agree felling through the Woodland Reports, which would in-turn lead to changes to the LTFP on land outside of the Applicant's control at this stage.

[15] 'Forest design planning: a guide to good practice', Forestry Commission (2014).
[16] The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal, Forestry Commission (2009)
[17] The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal, Forestry Commission (2009)

Operational Effects

9.8.5 Current and future forest land-use management is likely to be affected by the introduction of the OHL and associated felling requirements. This is likely to require forest managers to amend current objectives, plans and techniques for the relevant forest, in particular, the incorporation of felling requirements into their long-term felling and landscape design plans. Taking account of the proposed mitigation in the Woodland Reports, the residual effect on forest management is assessed as **Minor Adverse** and **Not Significant**.

9.8.6 There would be no significant operational effects pre-mitigation on woodland removal or forestry operations access and consequently, no significant residual operational effects are predicted to occur.

Cumulative Effects

9.8.7 In reviewing the potential for effect interactions, additional and in combination cumulative effects, no significant residual cumulative effects have been identified.

Summary of Residual Effects

9.8.8 **Table V2-9.8** provides a summary of the residual effects.

Table V2-9.8 Summary of Residual Effects

Forest Receptor	Effect (Pre-Mitigation)	Mitigation Proposed	Residual Effect
Woodland removal (commercial conifer forest) during construction	Direct effect on commercial conifer forest. Minor Adverse and Not significant based on the area of woodland removal.	The Applicant would implement a suite of standard good practice working methods to ensure that all construction activity (including woodland removal) avoids significant effects on ecological and hydrological receptors. Equivalent area of woodland removed to be planted off site as per Scottish Government's CoWRP	Minor Adverse and not significant.
Woodland removal (Ancient Woodland Woodland) during construction	Direct effect on Ancient Woodland. Moderate Adverse effect (significant).	The Applicant would reduce the OC felling where possible and seek to retain scrub/understorey layers in areas where existing tree cover does not breach safety clearances and construction activities. Equivalent area of woodland removed to be planted off site as per	Moderate Adverse and significant.

		Scottish Government's CoWRP	
Woodland removal (Semi-natural Woodland) during construction	Direct effect on Semi-natural Woodland. Moderate Adverse effect (significant).	The Applicant would reduce the OC felling where possible and seek to retain scrub/understorey layers in areas where existing tree cover does not breach safety clearances and construction activities. Equivalent area of woodland removed to be planted off site as per Scottish Government's CoWRP	Moderate Adverse and significant.
Predicted loss of forest due to windthrow during construction	Predicted indirect effect on commercial conifer forest based on risk of windthrow following construction phase felling. Minor Adverse and Not significant based on the area of woodland removal.	No mitigation possible within the scope of the Proposed Development. However, mitigation is possible with the co-operation of the landowners. The Applicant has produced Woodland Reports for each forest affected, which will recommend actions to reduce the risk of future wind throw by felling to stable forest edges (outside of the OC).	Minor Adverse and therefore not significant.
Woodland removal (operation)	Limited to periodic vegetation management to maintain the OC Negligible and not significant	No mitigation is required.	Negligible and therefore, not significant

Forest management	Indirect effect on woodland management through requirement to incorporate the proposed OHL into LTFP. Moderate Adverse and significant.	The Applicant has produced Woodland Reports for each forest ownership to inform proposed revisals to the relevant LTFP and facilitate agreement with the landowners.	Minor Adverse and therefore not significant.
Forest Access	Direct effect on access for felling during the operational phase. Negligible and not significant based on the set back and use of standard safety measures.	No mitigation is required.	Negligible and therefore, not significant.
Cumulative	No significant cumulative effects predicted.	No mitigation is required.	Negligible and therefore, not significant.

9.9 Summary and Conclusions

9.9.1 This Chapter reports upon the significance of the predicted residual effects from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development on forest and woodland areas. The assessment is supported by **Appendix V2-9.1** (in Volume 5 of this EIA Report). The Appendix contains a series of location specific Woodland Reports in relation to forestry and woodland that would be intersected by the Proposed Development. These Woodland Reports that are individual Annexes to **Appendix V2-9.1**, details the current baseline in terms of describing the woodland type including (species, condition, current management), and future management under reference to the LMPs where available. The Woodland Reports contain the detailed assessment of impacts likely to result from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

9.9.2 The Proposed Development is predicted to result in the direct loss of 100 ha of commercial woodland, 11ha of ancient woodland and 7 ha of semi-natural woodland, due to the requirement to create an OC for the construction and safe operation of the OHL, including the creation of access tracks.

9.9.3 The assessment concluded that the removal of 11 ha of ancient woodland and 7 ha of semi-natural woodland, of which 0.15 ha is ancient woodland within the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills Special Area of Conservation (SAC), would result in a significant adverse effect on both woodland types across the project, despite potential opportunities to reduce the amount of felling, subject to further detailed design. No significant effects were predicted for the removal of commercial woodland.

9.9.4 The Applicant is committed to making arrangements to plant off-site the equivalent area of woodland as Compensatory Planting, meeting the Scottish Government's CoWRP[18] objective of no net loss of woodland.

9.9.5 Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the creation of the OC would result in wider potential indirect effects on the surrounding woodland areas. These areas would be subject to potential increased risk of damage (windthrow). As a result, the Applicant has produced a series of Woodland Reports (see **Appendix V2-9.1**) to incorporate the Proposed Development within ongoing forest management activities. The Woodland Reports identify further areas of felling to leave a windfirm edge (categorised as an indirect secondary impact). Any felling undertaken outwith the OC would be solely under the control of the relevant landowner (and not the Applicant).

9.9.6 The assessment identified the potential for significant effects (pre-mitigation) on forest management, due to the requirement for forest managers to amend current objectives, plans and techniques for their forest, in particular, to incorporate the felling requirements for the OC into their long-term felling and landscape design plans. The Applicant has proposed mitigation in the form of a commitment to develop 'Woodland Reports' for each of the forests and woodlands affected by the Proposed Development (20 in total). This mitigation is deemed sufficient to reduce the residual effect on forest management to not significant.

9.9.7 No significant effects on forest operations access were identified.

9.9.8 Additional good practice measures are identified for implementation on land outwith the OC, for example additional felling to deliver a more natural landscaped and wind firm edge. These measures can only be undertaken with the agreement of the affected landowner. It is the intention of the Applicant to encourage the landowners to follow this good practice in terms of redesign of their current Long-Term Forest Plans which in-turn would aim to follow UKFS for the implementation of the works required.

[18] The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal, Forestry Commission (2009)