

VOLUME 1: CHAPTER 6 – SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

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Figures (Volume 3 of this EIA Report)

There are no figures associated with this Chapter

6. SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 In general, the EIA Regulations require that an EIA should describe the likely significant effects of a proposed development on the environment. Scoping of potential likely significant effects having regard to the physical impacts of a proposed development provides a basis for ensuring that the assessment of environmental effects is appropriately limited to issues of genuine potential significance. This ensures a proportionate approach to EIA that is focused on likely significant effects to be considered and assessed. Consultation and engagement with stakeholders early in the process, with advice and input from key consultees being sought at the early stages of a project, helps greatly to inform decisions about the design and EIA work for a proposed development.

6.1.2 This Chapter describes the pre-application consultation, the Scoping process and further consultation that was undertaken to determine the scope of the EIA Report, and the consultations that were undertaken to inform the local community of the Proposed Development. This Chapter also includes a brief description of the environmental receptors of potential significance associated with the Proposed Development which are addressed in detail in the EIA Report, and those that are scoped out.

6.2 Consultation with the Local Community

6.2.1 SSEN Transmission has sought to maintain an open dialogue with local communities spread across the route of the Proposed Development throughout the evolution of the project. This has included carrying out consultation events during the route option and alignment selection stages, engaging with local elected members such as Ward Councillors and Community Councils and engaging with landowners, residents and businesses that may be affected by the Proposed Development.

6.2.2 **Appendix V1-6.1: Public Consultation Report** of this EIA Report provides detail of the consultation events and engagement that has been undertaken. This is summarised below.

6.2.3 Following publication of the Consultation Document¹ in March 2020 at route options stage, it had been intended to hold face to face consultation events at several locations along the route. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with Scottish Government's Guidance on pre-application consultation for major planning applications² during the COVID-19 emergency period³, these face to face events had to be cancelled. To continue engagement on the project at this stage, SSEN Transmission developed an online consultation tool and hosted⁴ virtual consultation events during June 2020, to enable the local community and stakeholders to experience the full exhibition from home on a computer, tablet or mobile device. Consultation during the COVID-19 pandemic has been guided for both Town and Country Planning and Electricity Act applications by the Town and Country Planning (Miscellaneous Temporary Modifications) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 which have been in effect since April 2020 and are due to expire on 30 September 2022. The regulations direct that no face to face events should occur in this period. At the time of consultation on this project specific lockdown restrictions prohibited groups meeting and as such in person events were impossible.

¹ Skye Reinforcement Project: Consultation Document: Route Options (March 2020), produced by SSEN Transmission

² Public events and pre-application consultation is not a statutory requirement for Electricity Act applications, but the Scottish Government consider such engagement to be important for large scale projects and direct Applicants of such projects to the relevant advice on pre-application engagement for major planning applications.

³ Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-planning-guidance-on-pre-application-consultations-for-public-events/> (last accessed 25/03/22)

⁴ Via the project website <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/skye-reinforcement/>

- 6.2.4 During the alignment selection stage, face to face public consultation events were held in September and October 2021, following publication of a Consultation Document⁵ in September 2021 at the alignment selection stage, at venues used along the route from Dunvegan to Fort Augustus.
- 6.2.5 Comments received from stakeholders in response to the Consultation Documents (March 2020 and September 2021), or following in person or virtual consultation events, were documented in a Report on Consultation, published in November 2020⁶ (route option stage) and March 2022⁷ (alignment selection stage).
- 6.2.6 SSEN Transmission also maintained dialogue with all community and ward councils along the route and has sought to keep members up to date on project progress, and any upcoming consultation events. In addition to regular update meetings with MPs and MSPs, SSEN Transmission has also hosted a number of meetings with local elected members and community forums, including:
- 07 December 2020: Ward 10 (Eilean a' Cheò) Council meeting;
 - 08 February 2021: Ward 11 (Caol and Mallaig) Council and Ward 21 (Fort William and Ardnamurchan) Council meeting;
 - 15 February 2021: Ward 10 Council meeting;
 - 22 March 2021: Ward 10 Council meeting;
 - 21 July 2021: Fort Augustus Community Liaison Group, including Fort Augustus Community Council;
 - 16 August 2021: Ward 10 Council meeting;
 - 23 September 2021: Kylerhea Community Forum Virtual Meeting;
 - 12 December 2021: Ward 11 Council, Ward 21 Council and Ward 12 (Aird and Loch Ness) Council meeting;
 - 19 January 2022: Fort Augustus Community Liaison Group, including Fort Augustus Community Council;
 - 09 March 2022: Fort Augustus Community Liaison Group, including Fort Augustus Community Council;
 - 11 April 2022: Ward 10 Council meeting; and
 - 15 August 2022: Ward 10 Council meeting.
- 6.2.7 Following the decision by the Applicant to seek consent for a Proposed Alignment and an Alternative Alignment within Section 3 of the project between Broadford and Kyle Rhea due to the sensitivities of the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), further engagement was held with local councillors and the local community. This included SSEN Transmission organising a meeting with local residents at Kylerhea Community Hall on 18 August 2022 to advise the local community of the decision, and the reasons behind this.

6.3 Scoping

- 6.3.1 An EIA Scoping Report was issued to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) of the Scottish Government in December 2021 (see **Appendix V1-6.2: Scoping Report**). A Scoping Opinion was provided by ECU on 26 April 2022 and is included in **Appendix V1-6.3: Scoping Opinion**.
- 6.3.2 The responses, contained within the Scoping Opinion, were considered in detail during the EIA process. **Appendix V1-6.4: Scoping Matrix** of this EIA Report includes a matrix detailing the key issues that were raised in the Scoping Opinion and how and where they are addressed in the EIA Report.

⁵ Skye Reinforcement Project: Consultation Document: Alignment Selection (September 2021), produced by SSEN Transmission

⁶ Skye Reinforcement Project: Report on Consultation (November 2020), produced by SSEN Transmission

⁷ Skye Reinforcement Project: Report on Consultation (March 2022), produced by SSEN Transmission

6.4 Key Scoping Issues

- 6.4.1 The Scoping Opinion makes reference to site specific issues of interest to the Scottish Ministers, to be considered and addressed in addition to those laid out in responses from consultees. The issues raised were as follows.

Drinking Water Protected Areas

“Scottish Water provided information on whether there are any drinking water protected areas or Scottish Water assets on which the development could have any significant effect. Scottish Ministers request that the company contacts Scottish Water...and makes further enquiries to confirm whether there are any Scottish Water assets which may be affected by the development, and includes details in the EIA report of any relevant mitigation measures to be provided.

“Scottish Ministers request that the Company investigates the presence of any private water supplies which may be impacted by the development. The EIA report should include details of any supplies identified by this investigation, and if any supplies are identified, the Company should provide an assessment of the potential impacts, risks, and any mitigation which would be provided.”

- 6.4.2 The presence of Drinking Water Protected Areas (DWPA), Scottish Water assets and private water supplies have been investigated as part of the assessment of impacts on the water environment (see **Volume 2: Chapter 6 - Water Environment** and **Volume 6: Chapter 6 - Water Environment** for the Alternative Alignment). Scottish Water were contacted to request data on any assets, DWPAs and / or private water supplies within the vicinity of the Proposed Development, which are discussed in the noted chapter.

Fish Species

“[Marine Science Scotland (MSS)] provide generic scoping guidelines for overhead line development...which outline how fish populations can be impacted during the construction, operation and decommissioning of a wind farm development or overhead line development and informs developers as to what should be considered, in relation to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, during the EIA process.

“In addition to identifying the main watercourses and waterbodies within and downstream of the proposed development area, developers should identify and consider, at this early stage, any areas of Special Areas of Conservation where fish are a qualifying feature and proposed felling operations particularly in acid sensitive areas.

“MSS also provide standing advice for overhead line development...which outlines what information, relating to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, is expected in the EIA report. Use of the checklist provided, should ensure that the EIA report contains the required information; the absence of such information may necessitate requesting additional information which may delay the process. Developers are required to submit the completed checklist in advance of their application submission.”

- 6.4.3 Potential impacts on fish populations are discussed and assessed within **Volume 2: Chapter 4 - Ecology** and **Volume 6: Chapter 4 - Ecology** for the Alternative Alignment. The likely impacts of the Proposed Development on watercourses and waterbodies are assessed in **Volume 2: Chapter 6 - Water Environment** and **Volume 6: Chapter 6 - Water Environment** for the Alternative Alignment, and potential impacts on Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) are considered across both noted chapters. Likely felling requirements are set out within **Volume 2: Chapter 9 - Forestry** and **Volume 6: Chapter 9 - Forestry** for the Alternative Alignment, and these requirements have informed the ecology and water environment impact assessments. The requested checklist, containing all required information, has been provided to MSS ahead of submission of the application.

Peat Landslide Risk

“Scottish Ministers consider that where there is a demonstrable requirement for peat landslide hazard and risk assessment (PLHRA), the assessment should be undertaken as part of the EIA process to provide Ministers with a clear understanding of whether the risks are acceptable and capable of being controlled by mitigation measures. The Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessments: Best Practice Guide for Proposed Electricity Generation Developments (Second Edition)...should be followed in preparation of the EIA report, which should contain such an assessment and details of mitigation measures.

“The Scoping Report was referred to Ironside Farrar commissioned by the ECU to provide advice regarding PLHRA and relative to the potential for risks posed by peat slides. Scottish Ministers agree with Ironside Farrar that a PLHRA will be required. Please note Ironside Farrar’s comments in regards to PLHRA...”

- 6.4.4 A PLHRA has been prepared in accordance with the noted best practice guidance and comments from Ironside Farrar. The PLHRA is included as **Appendix V2-7.2** within this EIA Report.

Landscape and Visual Impact

“The scoping report identified viewpoints at Table 6.9 that will be prepared to inform and support the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (‘LVIA’). Please note the Highland Council’s detailed comments and requests in regards to the assessment of Landscape and Visual impacts including additional viewpoint locations and also NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) responses requesting additional viewpoint locations.”

- 6.4.5 A series of photomontage visualisations have been prepared to support the LVIA, included with the EIA Report in **Volume 4a and Volume 4b**. The viewpoint locations are described in **Volume 2: Chapter 3 - Landscape and Visual** and **Volume 6: Chapter 3 - Landscape and Visual** for the Alternative Alignment. Viewpoint locations were determined as part of pre-application consultation with THC and NatureScot. Supporting visualisations have also been prepared for the cultural heritage assessment, included with the EIA Report (see **Volume 2: Chapter 8 - Cultural Heritage**).

Pre-application Consultation

“Ministers expect Company’s [sic] to carry out adequate pre-application consultation and to demonstrate what alternatives to the proposal were considered before arriving at the design they apply for. Ministers agree with the Planning Authority that the EIA should include a description of the main development alternatives, which are relevant to the proposal and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.”

- 6.4.6 As noted earlier in this Chapter, pre-application consultation was undertaken at various stages throughout the project, including a formal Scoping exercise, public consultation via virtual and in-person exhibitions at routeing and alignment stages, and consultation with community councils. Alternatives to the Proposed Development are discussed in **Volume 1: Chapter 4 - The Routeing Process and Alternatives**. The alternatives are described on a section-by-section basis, identifying the key environmental, technical and cost considerations that have informed design choices. As outlined in **Volume 1: Chapter 1 (Part 1.2)**, the Applicant is also presenting an Alternative Alignment as part of the consent application in Section 3 of the project between Broadford and Kyle Rhea, via Glen Arroch. The Alternative Alignment is discussed and assessed within **Volume 6** of this EIA Report.

Further Consultation

“Ministers are aware that further engagement is required between parties regarding the refinement of the design of the proposed development regarding, among other things, surveys, management plans, peat, finalisation of viewpoints, cultural heritage, cumulative assessments and request that they are kept informed of relevant discussions.”

6.4.7 Further consultation has been undertaken with relevant consultees on the noted topics, where required. Scottish Ministers have been copied into, or made aware of, all relevant correspondence. This is summarised in **Table V1-6.1** below.

Mitigation Measures

“The Scottish Ministers are required to make a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment as identified in the environmental impact assessment. The mitigation measures suggested for any significant environmental impacts identified should be presented as a conclusion to each chapter. Applicants are also asked to provide a consolidated schedule of all mitigation measures proposed in the environmental assessment, provided in tabular form, where that mitigation is relied upon in relation to reported conclusions of likelihood or significance of impacts.”

6.4.8 Proposed mitigation measures are described towards the end of each technical chapter (**Volume 2**, and **Volume 6** for the Alternative Alignment), following assessment of likely significant effects. **Volume 1: Chapter 3 - Project Description** also includes some general mitigation measures which apply across the Proposed Development. All proposed mitigation measures set out throughout the EIA Report are collated within a tabulated Schedule of Mitigation, included as **Appendix V1-3.6**.

6.5 Further Consultee Engagement

6.5.1 Stakeholder consultation has been ongoing since the early stages of the project and has continued throughout the scoping and EIA process. During the route and alignment stages of the project, stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the route, alignment and design solution options identified, and all responses received were summarised in the relevant Report on Consultation documents⁶⁷. **Table V1-6-1** provides a summary of some of the key meetings and engagement that has been undertaken by the Applicant with consultees during the routeing and EIA stages of the project..

Table V1-6-1: Summary of Further Consultee Engagement

Consultee	Date	Summary of Engagement
Statutory Consultee Meeting	November 2019	Attended by SSEN, ECU, THC, NatureScot, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), HES and Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), the meeting provided an overview of the project need and strategy, and the approach to developing a long-term solution. This approach was supported by statutory consultees.
Statutory Consultee Workshop	March 2021	Attended by SSEN, THC, NatureScot, SEPA, HES and FLS. Workshop to seek preliminary feedback on alignment options and design solutions within Sections 0, 1 and 2 of the project.
Statutory Consultee Workshop	April 2021	Attended by SSEN, THC, NatureScot, SEPA, HES and FLS. Workshop to seek preliminary feedback on alignment options and design solutions within Sections 4, 5 and 6 of the project.
THC, NatureScot and SEPA	April 2021	Workshop to specifically discuss route, alignment and design solution options within Section 2 of the project.
THC, NatureScot and SEPA	September 2021	Workshop to specifically discuss route, alignment and design solution options within Section 3 of the project.
THC (Roads Department)	February 2022 to July 2022	Discussions and site visits with The Highland Council Roads Department to review public road improvement and delivery requirements for the project.
THC (Transport Planning)	March 2022 to April 2022	Discussions with The Highland Council Transport Planning to agree the scope of the transport assessment for the EIA Report.

NatureScot	February 2022	Liaison with NatureScot with respect to the scope of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), particularly in relation to National Scenic Areas and Wild Land Areas.
THC and NatureScot	April 2022	Consultation with NatureScot and The Highland Council with respect to further clarifications on the scope of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, including confirmation on viewpoint locations.
FLS	Throughout routeing and EIA stages	On-going engagement with FLS throughout the routeing and EIA stages. In particular, matters related to the alignment and design solution through Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC / Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Section 3) and Inchnacardoch Forest (Section 6) were at the forefront of discussions.
John Muir Trust	March 2022	A Teams meeting was held with John Muir Trust to discuss the project generally, and in particular matters relating to wild land and Biodiversity Net Gain.
Ministry of Defence (MoD)	May to June 2022	Engagement with MoD following initial scoping consultation response in relation to a lighting requirement along part of the Proposed Development. An updated scoping response was provided by MoD in June 2022 removing the request to light structures.
British Telecom (BT)	February to July 2022	Consultation with BT to determine potential interference with existing radio links as a result of the Proposed Development.
NatureScot	June 2022	Provision of Zone of Theoretical Visibility and confirmation on viewpoint locations for the LVIA.
ECU	July 2022	Pre-Application Gate Check Meeting to discuss application timescales and requirements.
SEPA	August 2022	Further engagement with SEPA was undertaken in August 2022, prior to submission of the application. This included the provision of information relating to peat depth, habitat data and local hydrology.
NatureScot	August 2022	Pre-application discussions with NatureScot specifically in relation to the likely effect of the Proposed Development on the qualifying features of the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC within Section 3 of the project.

6.6 Gate Check

6.6.1 In accordance with the guidance for gate checking procedures *Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989*⁸, a Gate Check Report was issued to the ECU and key stakeholders in early May 2022. The purpose of the Gate Check Report is to outline consultations with statutory and non-statutory consultees, engagement with the local community and how matters raised during the scoping process have been dealt with in the EIA Report. Key stakeholders are invited to comment on the Gate Check Report to ensure they are satisfied with the approach taken within the EIA Report prior to submission of the section 37 application. A copy of the Gate Check Report is provided in **Appendix V1-6.5**. Consultee responses to the Gate Check report are summarised in **Table V1-6.2** along with the actions taken to address the comments.

⁸ Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (Energy Consents Unit, February 2022). [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2022/02/good-practice-guidance-applications-under-sections-36-37-electricity-act-1989/documents/energy-consents-unit-good-practice-guidance-applications-under-section-36-37-electricity-act-1989-february-2022/energy-consents-unit-good-practice-guidance-applications-under-section-36-37-electricity-act-1989-february-2022/govscot%3Adocument/energy-consents-unit-good-practice-guidance-applications-under-section-36-37-electricity-act-1989-february-2022.pdf> [Last accessed 24 June 2022].

Table V1-6.2: Summary of Gate Check Responses and Actions Taken

Consultee	Summary of Response	Action Taken
SEPA 18 May 2022	<p>SEPA encourage developers to engage in early pre-application consultation. SEPA had good early engagement with SSE regarding the project but haven't been informally consulted on detailed layout proposals in relation to peat, habitat surveys or watercourse buffers and it would be helpful for this to happen prior to submission of the application.</p> <p>SEPA would therefore welcome further consultation ahead of the application, including clear layout plans showing all permanent and temporary works in relation to peat depths, NVC habitat information and watercourse buffers.</p> <p>SEPA would also be happy to provide advice on ground water dependent terrestrial ecosystem (GWDTE) assessment or other work, such as the Peat Management Plan.</p>	<p>Further engagement with SEPA was undertaken in August 2022, prior to submission of the application. This included the provision of information relating to peat depth, habitat data and local hydrology.</p>
THC 30 May 2022	<p>THC noted that it appears their EIA Scoping requirements, as well as those outlined through separate correspondence to date, will be addressed within the application submission. THC also noted that they may still request the provision of further environmental information should this be necessary to inform their response to the application.</p>	<p>The comments received from THC are noted.</p>
HES 30 May 2022	<p>HES are broadly content that the content in the EIA Scoping Matrix provided with the Gate Check Report reflects the advice provided as part of their EIA Scoping letter. HES welcome that the EIA Report will include assessment of impacts on heritage assets and their settings.</p>	<p>The comments received from HES are noted.</p>
NatureScot 01 June 2022	<p>NatureScot are generally content that SSEN Transmission has considered the advice issued previously as part of EIA Scoping consultation. Although not all detailed comments provided were specifically referenced, NatureScot expect these to be taken into account in preparation of the EIA Report.</p> <p>NatureScot would welcome further discussion on Section 3 of the Proposed Development prior to submission. They have not had an opportunity to review the detail of the shadow HRA and</p>	<p>The comments received from NatureScot are noted. Points raised by NatureScot during consultation are addressed within the relevant chapters of this EIA Report, notably: Volume 2: Chapter 3 - Landscape and Visual; Chapter 4 - Ecology; and Chapter 5 - Ornithology (refer also to the noted chapters within Volume 6 in relation to the Alternative Alignment).</p> <p>Further discussion with NatureScot on Section 3 of the project was undertaken during August 2022</p>

	would welcome the opportunity to do so prior to submission.	prior to submission of the application.
	NatureScot noted in their Scoping response they would be pleased to advise further on proposed viewpoint locations once a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) had been provided and would be grateful if SSEN Transmission could provide this to inform NatureScot's advice at this point.	NatureScot were provided with a ZTV and confirmation of viewpoint locations during June 2022. NatureScot confirmed they were content with the viewpoint locations during August 2022.
	NatureScot maintain the advice that the sensitivity of Section 3 of the Proposed Development makes it unlikely to meet the conservation objectives for the SAC. If the Appropriate Assessment cannot demonstrate 'no adverse effect on site integrity' then NatureScot would object to the proposal. For the project to succeed, the Habitats Regulations require that there are not alternative solutions; that there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest; and that compensatory measures are in place. NatureScot would be happy to advise further if required.	A shadow HRA is provided with the EIA Report as Appendix V2-4.7 for both the Proposed Alignment and the Alternative Alignment within Section 3 of the project. The Shadow HRA concludes that for both options an adverse effect on site integrity is predicted in relation to four qualifying features of the SAC. Compensatory measures are outlined, subject to further discussion with NS, and FLS as landowner.
	The Gate Check Report notes that a summary of the alternatives considered will be provided in the EIA Report. NatureScot continue to advise that, in relation to the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC, all alternative route options and design solutions are kept open until further detailed assessment and a shadow HRA have been undertaken and that the alternatives are given full consideration in the EIA Report.	The alternative options considered are discussed in Volume 1: Chapter 4 - The Routeing Process and Alternatives . As outlined in Volume 1: Chapter 1 (Part 1.2) , the Applicant is also presenting an Alternative Alignment as part of the consent application in Section 3 of the project between Broadford and Kyle Rhea, via Glen Arroch. The Alternative Alignment is discussed and assessed within Volume 6 of this EIA Report, Both options are included within the shadow HRA (see Appendix V2-4.7).
	For clarification, NatureScot advise the HRA also consider the potential for impacts associated with the dismantling and removal of the existing OHL and associated works.	The shadow HRA, included as Appendix V2-4.7 , includes consideration of the potential impacts of the dismantling of the existing OHL.
	The proposed Coire Glas grid connection project would also be located close to Loch Lundie, part of the West Inverness-shire Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA), and potential for cumulative impacts with the Proposed Development should be given full consideration in the EIA Report and the HRA.	The likely cumulative effects of the Proposed Development on ornithology are considered in Volume 2: Chapter 5 - Ornithology and Volume 6: Chapter 5 - Ornithology in relation to the Alternative Alignment.

	<p>The Gate Check Report lists associated works required to facilitate the Proposed Development and, as these do not form part of the consent application, no detailed assessment is proposed for the EIA Report. NatureScot advise the design and location of these associated works seek to avoid impacts on sensitive and protected areas and, where impacts cannot be avoided, they are considered as part of relevant assessments, including the HRA where these could affect a European site. If assessments show likely significant effects, Permitted Development Rights would no longer apply. Permitted Development Rights may also be affected within National Scenic Areas and SSEN Transmission are advised to seek advice from THC on these points.</p>	<p>A preliminary appraisal of borrow pits, quarries and site compound areas is provided in Appendix V1-3.3, whilst a preliminary appraisal of public road improvement (PRI) works is provided in Appendix V1-3.4. In relation to the Alternative Alignment in Section 3 of the project through Glen Arroch, the PRI works required here are partly contained within the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC. As such, these works are considered in the Shadow HRA (see Appendix V2-4.7).</p>
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6.7 Issues Scoped out of Assessment

6.7.1 It is considered that the following topics do not require to be the subject of detailed EIA work as it is considered that they are not likely to give rise to significant effects. They were referred to in the Scoping Report (see **Appendix V1-6.2**) as topics to be scoped out from further consideration within the EIA Report. There was general agreement amongst consultees, as detailed within the Scoping Opinion (see **Appendix V1-6.3**), as to the proposed scope of the EIA Report.

Land Use and Agriculture

6.7.2 A number of poles and towers along the route are on land which is used for agricultural activity. No land capable of supporting Arable Agriculture (Class 1, 2 or 3) has been identified. Therefore, the agricultural land within the vicinity of the Proposed Development is generally deemed to be of low sensitivity. Other common land uses within the vicinity of the Proposed Development include the use of moorland and scrub for grazing.

6.7.3 Land use impacts associated with the Proposed Development are anticipated to be minimal. The construction work may result in some temporary loss of land or access restriction; however, it is considered that this can be adequately managed through wayleave agreements with the relevant landowners. The permanent loss of land to pole / tower locations and Cable Sealing End Compounds would be small in size and it would remain possible for grazing to continue around and under poles / towers during the operational lifetime of these support structures. The permanent loss of land associated with the underground cable would only relate to the cable link boxes, where required.

6.7.4 Dialogue would be maintained by the Applicant and the Principal Contractor with landowners, local tenants and property owners throughout the construction period to ensure any potential disruption as a result of the proposed works is kept to a minimum.

Air Quality and Climate Change

6.7.5 Local air quality is a combination of background air quality, representative of general levels of pollution away from busy roads and industrial activity and added emissions from local emission sources such as road traffic. Due to the generally rural nature of the Proposed Development, and sparse distribution of sensitive receptors, impacts of pollution from road traffic and other industrial sources are minimal.

- 6.7.6 In the context of the EIA process climate change is considered both in relation to the contribution of the Proposed Development to increasing or decreasing gaseous emissions with global warming potential (GWP), and in relation to climate change adaptation.
- 6.7.7 Emissions associated with the Proposed Development would be limited to temporary and short-term emissions of exhaust gases from vehicles and construction plant, and the potential for the release of carbon dioxide as a result of dewatering and exposing peat and peat soils during construction. Neither source is considered likely to be significant in terms of GWP.
- 6.7.8 With regard to climate adaptation, consideration will be given to the potential implications of climate change on the OHL design and the design of pole and tower support structures (e.g. design for increased flood risk and adverse weather); however, no potential for significant impacts have been identified.
- 6.7.9 The Proposed Development has limited potential to impact upon air quality. There is a potential to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust and construction traffic exhaust emissions. However, the nature of construction activities means these would be localised, short term and intermittent. Potential effects would further be minimised through the implementation of mitigation measures, in particular the project CEMP (see **Appendix V1-3.9** for an Outline CEMP) and relevant GEMPs. Measures for the management of dust during construction are set on in a Dust Management GEMP (see **Appendix V1-3.5**).
- 6.7.10 The Proposed Development would contribute to connecting renewable electricity generation capacity to the transmission network, in turn displacing emissions associated with fossil fuel-based electricity generation elsewhere and positively contributing to Scotland's climate change targets⁹.
- 6.7.11 Based on the above, and on professional judgement and experience in the assessment of effects associated with OHL projects, this issue is scoped out of the EIA and no specific assessment of air quality and climate change is included as part of the EIA Report. Where relevant, consideration of the implications of climate change is however considered in technical chapters of this EIA Report.

Accidents and Disasters

- 6.7.12 Potentially significant effects which can arise in relation to accidents and disasters from developments of this type include severe weather events and structural damage to wood poles and / or towers, as well as the potential for risks during the construction phase.
- 6.7.13 Given the nature of the Proposed Development, the potential for effects related to the vulnerability to accidents and disasters are likely to be limited to those associated with unplanned power outages, due to extreme weather or structural damage. Crisis management and continuity plans are in place across the SSE Group. These are tested regularly and are designed for the management of, and recovery from, significant energy infrastructure failure events. Where there are material changes in infrastructure (or the management of it) additional plans are developed.
- 6.7.14 The Proposed Development would be constructed and operated in accordance with relevant health and safety legislation including the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974¹⁰. Furthermore, the Principal Contractor would need to fully assess risks and mitigate as appropriate during the construction stage as part of the requirements of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2015)¹¹.

⁹ Scottish Government (2022). *Policy: Climate Change*. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/> [Last accessed 30 June 2022].

¹⁰ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/contents> - accessed 08/07/2022

¹¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/51/contents/made> - accessed 08/07/2022

- 6.7.15 The Proposed Development is not located in an area with a history of natural disasters or extreme weather events.
- 6.7.16 As part of the development design process, flood risk areas have been avoided where possible and the majority of the Proposed Development is located outwith known flood risk areas. A flood risk screening exercise was carried out in lieu of a full flood risk assessment given the minimal potential for flooding, as discussed in **Volume 2: Chapter 6 - Water Environment**, and **Volume 6: Chapter 6 - Water Environment** for the Alternative Alignment. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are proposed to mimic pre-development run-off conditions and ensure minimal effect on flood risk.
- 6.7.17 Areas of deep peat were also identified and avoided where possible as part of the development design process. A PLHRA has been carried out in order to assess potential peat slide risk resulting from construction of the Proposed Development. The PLHRA, presented in **Appendix V2-7.2**, concludes that there is negligible to low risk of peat instability across the Proposed Development, with some limited areas of medium and high risk identified which would be controlled through assessment prior to construction by a qualified geotechnical engineer.
- 6.7.18 Where there are major road, rail or built up area crossings under the Proposed Development, it is likely that a form of mechanical protection, such as scaffolding or other approved method, would need to be supplied and erected to provide protection to members of the public and property in case of equipment failure.
- 6.7.19 Potential significant effects relating to the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to accidents and disasters is therefore scoped out of the EIA Report.

Construction Noise and Vibration

- 6.7.20 Construction noise and vibration would be short term and intermittent and can be controlled through the implementation of a Noise Management Plan, which would be developed as part of the CEMP prepared by the Principal Contractor. The Noise Management Plan would be agreed with THC as Local Authority, and all construction activities would be undertaken in accordance with good practice guidelines set out in BS 5228-1¹² and BS 5228-2¹³.
- 6.7.21 As such, and given the remoteness of construction activity for much of the project, no detailed assessment of construction noise and vibration associated with plant noise or traffic is included as part of the EIA Report.

Operational Noise

- 6.7.22 Consideration of the potential effects of operational noise from the Proposed Development has been undertaken by Wood Group plc, hereafter referred to as 'Wood', to determine whether a detailed assessment would be required to form part of the EIA Report.
- 6.7.23 An energised OHL can be the source of an audible phenomenon known as 'corona discharge'. This is a limited electrical breakdown of the air in the vicinity of the OHL conductors. While OHL conductors are designed and constructed to minimise corona discharge, surface irregularities such as damage, attached raindrops, insects and other types of contamination can increase local electric field strength beyond the inception level for local corona discharge at these sites. Such corona discharge can be the source of audible noise, a crackling sound accompanied sometimes by a low frequency hum.
- 6.7.24 The highest noise levels generated by an OHL usually occurs during light rain when water droplets, collecting on the surface of the conductor, can initiate corona discharge. The number of droplets that collect, and hence

¹² British Standards Institution (2014) Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction Sites – Part 1 Noise (BS 5228-1)

¹³ British Standards Institution (2014) Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction Sites – Part 2 Vibration (BS 5228-2)

the amount of noise, depends on the rate of rainfall. Mist or fog can also cause corona discharge from droplets condensing on and attaching to the conductor surface. Sometimes, after a prolonged spell of dry weather, conductors can become contaminated with accumulated dust particles and other materials on which corona discharge can occur and audible noise can be generated. Later rain showers have the effect of washing the conductors clean of such debris.

6.7.25 Wood was provided with noise data by the Applicant for the Proposed Development, which indicated that the new 132 kV OHL has a L_{50} rain value of 11.2 dB(A) derived from calculation. This value is extremely low and would indicate that operational noise from the OHL would be negligible and can be scoped out of the EIA Report (see paragraphs 6.7.26 - 6.7.28). Attended measurements have been conducted at a similar operational OHL to verify the calculated values (see paragraphs 6.7.29-6.7.32).

Calculated OHL Audible Noise Levels

6.7.26 The type of conductor indicated for the Proposed Development is a 132 kV L7 Araucaria. The relevant audible noise (AN) value has been calculated for the Proposed Development based on this conductor.

6.7.27 The calculations show that the type of conductor proposed would not cause any fair-weather AN that would be at a level audible in any environment. The calculation predicts a wet weather AN value of 11.2 dB(A). This level is extremely low, being completely inaudible in most environments. An isolated rural environment may reach an L_{90} background noise level as low as 20 dB(A) when there are no significant noise sources. This low value would be increased by factors such as rain, where an increase in background noise levels is expected due to interaction with surrounding foliage and surfaces. Therefore, a contribution of 11.2 dB(A) is negligible for all scenarios where wet OHL noise would be induced.

6.7.28 Based on these calculated values, an operational noise assessment is scoped out from the Proposed Development.

Attended OHL Noise Measurements

6.7.29 To support the calculations noted in paragraph 6.7.27, Wood conducted a series of attended measurements during wet conditions at the Beauly – Orrin – Luichart – Corriemoillie OHL indicated to have similar conductors on the route as the Proposed Development. The purpose of these measurements is to verify the calculated AN levels from the OHL with a comparable source.

6.7.30 Measurements were conducted in conditions likely to cause wet weather induced AN from the OHL. The weather was observed to be wet with periods of light rainfall and low windspeed by the surveyor on site. Measurements were conducted with a Class 1 Rion NL-52 sound level meter. Measurements were conducted directly under the OHL on public ground.

6.7.31 No AN was subjectively emanating from the OHL during measurement, although the conditions were conducive of producing wet AN. The measurements were dominated by background noise of the surrounding area itself. Therefore, it is impossible to infer an AN level from the measurements, though an upper bound could be imposed.

6.7.32 Although an OHL AN level cannot be concluded, this supports the calculated value of 11.2 dB(A). Such a low value is immeasurable with the noise floor of class 1 sound level meters being between 15 – 17 dB. A level of 11.2 dB(A) is inaudible in an outdoor noise environment, and this matched the subjective description of the noise environment by the surveyor.

Operational Noise Conclusions

6.7.33 The measurements and observations support the calculated AN level, to an extent that induced wet noise levels are inaudible in an outdoor noise environment.

6.7.34 Therefore, it is concluded that the Proposed Development would not create significant operational noise impacts to surrounding noise sensitive receptors and therefore a detailed assessment has been scoped out of the EIA Report.

Noise from Operational Maintenance

6.7.35 Any operational maintenance works required along the line will be short term and intermittent and are not anticipated to give rise to significant effects relating to noise and vibration. As such, this topic is scoped out of the EIA Report.

Noise from Dismantling of Existing OHL

6.7.36 Noise from dismantling activities of the existing OHL would be short term and intermittent. Any operational maintenance works required along the OHL would be short term and intermittent and can be controlled through the implementation of a noise management plan, which would be developed as part of the CEMP (see Appendix V1-3.9 for an Outline CEMP) prepared by the Principal Contractor and agreed with THC as Local Authority. As such, this topic is scoped out of the EIA Report.

Noise from Underground Cable

6.7.37 There are no predicted noise effects from the operation of an underground cable. As such, this topic is scoped out of the EIA.

Digital Radio and Television Interference

6.7.38 Corona discharge is unlikely to cause significant interference to reception (i.e. FM radio or digital radio and television which operate in the ultrahigh frequency range). Micro-gap discharge can affect digital television and radio reception but is not considered to be a source of long term annoyance as equipment is built and maintained to high standards and any such discharge would be the subject of remedial action. Impacts to digital television, digital radio and FM radio reception are therefore scoped out of the EIA Report.

EMFs

6.7.39 EMFs arise from electric charges. Transmission lines comply with the government policy of adopting the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) on exposure to EMFs. SSEN Transmission believe that compliance with government policy on levels of exposure to EMFs, which in turn is based on the advice of the government's independent scientific advisers, the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) (now part of the Health Protection Agency), ensures the appropriate level of protection for the public from these fields. The NRPB keeps the results of EMF health studies under constant review to ensure that the guidelines for limiting exposure are based on the best available scientific information. It is therefore concluded that no likely significant effect on human health associated with EMFs is predicted, and therefore a detailed assessment is scoped out of the EIA Report.

6.7.40 Notwithstanding this, EMF has however been considered by the Applicant's appointed OHL Contractor during the alignment and early design stage. This has been undertaken on a span-by-span basis on the proposed steel lattice tower elements of the Proposed Development. Calculations were performed at the pre-fault continuous rating of 1694A and nominal voltage (132 kV) at 1 m above ground with transposed phasing RYB - BYR. The highest calculated EMF produced by the OHL was well within exposure guidelines. Therefore, the effects of EMF are not considered to be significant.

TV and Radio Reception

6.7.41 Potential effects from OHLs on TV signals are due to physical obstruction of the signal. The Proposed Development would not represent a significant obstruction and it is not anticipated that any adverse effects on TV reception would be experienced. The operation of high voltage OHLs can generate electromagnetic fields

over a wide range of frequencies. It is anticipated that the Proposed Development would emit low-level radio frequency interference (RFI) but that in practice little radio and television interference would arise, except when directly beneath the OHL. Therefore, this topic is not addressed in the EIA Report.

6.7.42 Consultation has been undertaken with BT during the EIA stage of the project to establish potential interference with existing radio masts and paths. BT have confirmed that no interference is anticipated for the majority of the Proposed Development. BT did however raise concerns in relation to the Beinn na Mointeach radio station in Section 0 of the project. The Applicant has increased the LoD within the vicinity of the Proposed Development at this location (see **Volume 1: Chapter 3**, Part 3.5) to ensure effects on this radio station are avoided, and is committed to working with BT to ensure an appropriate solution at this location is achieved.

6.8 Other Issues

6.8.1 The 2017 EIA Regulations introduced a number of factors to be considered within an EIA Report; specifically, those factors listed under Regulations 4(3) and 4(4), and Schedule 4. **Table V1-6.4** describes how this EIA Report has addressed these factors.

Table V1-6.4: Assessment of Factors Identified in Regulations 4(3), 4(4) and Schedule 4

Topic	Potential for Significant Effects
Population and Human Health	Potential effects relating to population and human health have potential to arise from EMF, EMI, air quality, noise and / or vibration effects. Such effects are deemed to be not significant and are scoped out of detailed assessment, as discussed within this Chapter. Potential effects on water supplies are considered in Volume 2: Chapter 6 - Water Environment (refer also to the noted chapter within Volume 6 in relation to the Alternative Alignment).
Biodiversity (in particular species and habitats protected under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora)	The requirement to consider effects on biodiversity is addressed in Volume 2: Chapter 4 - Ecology , and Chapter 5 - Ornithology (refer also to the noted chapters within Volume 6 in relation to the Alternative Alignment).
Land and Soil (and natural resources availability)	The potential effects on geological receptors, peat and groundwater resources are considered in Volume 2: Chapter 7 - Geology and Soils Environment (refer also to the noted chapters within Volume 6 in relation to the Alternative Alignment).
Water (and natural resource availability)	The potential effects on the water environment are considered in Volume 2: Chapter 6 - Water Environment (refer also to the noted chapter within Volume 6 in relation to the Alternative Alignment).
Air and Climate	This Chapter (Volume 1: Chapter 6 - Scope and Consultation) considers potential effects on air and climate under Part 6.7: Scoped-out Issues.
Material Assets, Cultural Heritage	Volume 2: Chapter 8 - Cultural Heritage , includes an assessment of the potential for significant effects on material assets and cultural heritage including archaeological assets and historic landscapes (refer also to the noted chapter within Volume 6 in relation to the Alternative Alignment).
Landscape	Volume 2: Chapter 3 - Landscape and Visual considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape (refer also to the noted chapter within Volume 6 in relation to the Alternative Alignment).

Major Accidents and Disasters	This Chapter (Volume 1: Chapter 6 - Scope and Consultation) considers potential effects relating to major accidents and disasters under Part 6.7: Scoped-out Issues.
Interaction Between Factors (cumulative effects)	The approach to cumulative effects is outlined within Volume 1: Chapter 5 - EIA Process and Methodology , and is considered within each of the technical chapters (Volume 2 and 6), where appropriate.