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

9. FORESTRY

9.1 Summary

- 9.1.1 **Volume 2, Chapter 9** considered the likely significant effects from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, comprising the Proposed Alignment, on forest and woodland areas. The assessment predicted that the Proposed Development would 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.
- 9.1.2 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.
- 9.1.3 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.
- 9.1.4 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 CoWRP¹ objective of no net loss of woodland.
- 9.1.5 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). 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.
- 9.1.6 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. 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.
- 9.1.7 No significant effects on forest operations access were identified.

9.2 The Alternative Alignment

- 9.2.1 The Alternative Alignment would result in the requirement to create an operational corridor through Kyle Farm and Mudalach Woodland, owned by Scottish Ministers and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. A woodland report has been prepared (see **Appendix V6-9.1: Kyle Farm and Mudalach Woodland Report –**

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

Alternative Alignment) providing further information on the existing woodland and forest and consideration on how the Alternative Alignment could be incorporated into existing forest management activities.

- 9.2.2 Part of this woodland is commercial conifer plantation, with Lodgepole pine as its principal conifer species. Other parts of this woodland are included within the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC / SSSI noted for the Western Acidic Oak Woodland.
- 9.2.3 In comparison with the Proposed Alignment within Section 3, the Alternative Alignment would result in an increase to the amount of commercial woodland felling requirements. 19.89 ha of commercial woodland would be required to be felled to form the OC for the Alternative Alignment, whereas 9.4 ha of commercial woodland would be required to be felled to form the OC for the Proposed Alignment within Section 3. This would result in the total commercial woodland felling requirements across the project increasing from 100 ha to approximately 110 ha.
- 9.2.4 For semi-natural woodland, the Alternative Alignment would result in a loss of 0.7 ha, of which 0.1 ha is ancient woodland within the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC within Section 3. This compares with a loss of 1 ha of semi-natural woodland (of which 0.15 ha is within the SAC) for the Proposed Alignment.
- 9.2.5 The Alternative Alignment within Section 3 would not alter the assessment findings for the Proposed Development, summarised in Part 9.1 of this Chapter above (refer also to **Volume 2: Chapter 9 – Forestry**). The same good practice measures and compensatory planting requirements would apply, as noted in **Appendix V6-9.1: Kyle Farm and Mudalach Woodland Report – Alternative Alignment**.