

# Slickly Wind Farm 132 kV Overhead Line Connection (LT00355)

## **Consultation Document**

January 2023





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### GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
132 kV	132 kilo-volt capacity of an electricity power line.
Alignment	The centre line of an overhead line route, along with the location of key angle structures.
Consultation	The dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based on a genuine exchange of views and, normally, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ERSR	Environmental Route Selection Report
Kilovolt (kV)	One thousand volts
MCA	Multi-Criteria Analysis: an evaluation of the technical and environmental constraints was undertaken in the form of constraints analysis which included a combination of desk- based analysis, field work, consultation and liaison with the wider project team. These are then transferred to Geographic Information System (GIS) for analysis.
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation or alleviation of adverse impacts.
NETS SQSS	National Electricity Transmission System Security and Quality of Supply
Overhead Line (OHL)	An electric line installed above ground, usually supported by lattice steel towers or poles.
Preferred Alignment	An alignment for the overhead line taken forward to stakeholder consultation following a comparative appraisal of Route Options.
Proposed Alignment	An alignment taken forward to consent application. It comprises a defined centre line for the overhead line and includes an indicative support structure (tower or pole) schedule, also specifying access arrangements and any associated construction facilities
Proposed Development	The proposed overhead line supported by Trident wood poles which would be constructed following completion of routeing process.
Preferred Route	The Route Option which is considered to represent the optimum balance between the various environmental, engineering and cost considerations
Proposed Route	The final route taken forward following stakeholder consultation within which alternative OHL route alignments will be defined and appraised.
RAG	Red / Amber / Green ratings
Route	A linear area of approximately 300 m width (although this may be narrower/wider in specific locations in response to identified pinch points / constraints), which provides a continuous connection between defined connection points
Routeing Study	The study undertaken to assess the potential environmental impacts of the Route Options and to identify a preferred route based upon the potential environmental impacts identified.
SAC	Special Area of Conservation - designated under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (known as - The Habitats Directive)
SHE Transmission	Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission
SM	Scheduled Monument - monuments of national importance which have been afforded legal protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency



Term	Definition
SPA	Special Protection Area – designated under Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive)
SSEN Transmission	Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest – designated by SNH under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
Stakeholders	Organisations and individuals who can affect or are affected by SSEN Transmission works.
Study Area	Each environmental discipline has defined its study area for the identification of environmental constraints. These are set out within the report.
UGC	Underground Cable



### PREFACE

This Consultation Document has been prepared by Ramboll on behalf of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) Transmission to seek comments from all interested parties on the Preferred Route identified for the proposed Slickly Wind Farm 132 kV overhead line (OHL) project.

The Consultation Document is available online at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/slickly-wind-farm-connection/

The Consultation Event will take place on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 from 10:00-13:00 at Mey Village Hall and from15:00 -19:00 at John O'Groats Hall where further information regarding our proposals will be available alongside opportunities to join the project team.

Comments on this document should be sent to:

Community Liaison Manager Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Lisa Marchi Email: lisa.marchi@sse.com Telephone: 07825 015507 Address: 10 Henderson Road, Inverness, IV1 1SN

All comments are requested by 24th February 2023.



### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This Consultation Document invites members of the public, statutory consultees and other key stakeholders to provide comment in the Preferred Route identified for a 132 kV overhead line (OHL) connection between Slickly Wind Farm Substation and the consented Gills Bay Switching Station, Highlands, Scotland.

In order to meet the licence obligations and ensure security of supply SSEN Transmission needs to provide a new 132 kV OHL transmission connection from Slickly Wind Farm to the national grid. SSEN Transmission has identified alternative Route Options to meet this need as follows:

**Route Option 1:** is approximately 8 km in length and runs west then north east from the proposed Slickly Wind Farm Substation through an area of forestry, before turning north east to reach Gills Bay Switching Station. It was selected as it generally follows the perimeter of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development and avoids ecological and ornithological designations.

**Route Option 2:** is approximately 6.5 km in length and also runs through forestry to the north west of Slickly Substation. This route is within the western boundary of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development. This option takes a more direct line than Route Option 1 while also avoiding ecological and ornithological designations.

**Route Option 3:** is approximately 8.5 km in length and runs parallel to the minor road north east of Slickly Substation before heading north west towards Gills Bay Switching Station, skirting the southern flank of Hill of Rigifa. This Route Option was selected as it also follows the perimeter of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development and the largest areas of forestry.

**Route Option 4a:** is approximately 6 km in length and runs through the centre of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development site taking a more direct line towards Gills Bay Switching Station. This option was selected as it is the most direct and therefore shortest of the Route Options.

**Route Option 4b:** is approximately 6 km in length, it runs initially north east parallel to the minor road, then turns north towards Gills Bay Switching Station, then joins Route Option 4a to run through the centre of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development. Similarly to Route Option 4a this option represented the most direct route but avoided more of the proposed Hollanmey turbines.

This report presents a comparative analysis of environmental, engineering and cost criteria of the five Route Options. From an environmental perspective alone, the preferred route is Route Option 2 followed by Route Option 1, with Route Option 3 least preferred due to its greater interaction with ecological and ornithological designations, proximity to dwellings, and potential for visual impacts. From a cost perspective Route Option 4a represents the overall preferred route, followed by Route Option 4b. However, Route Option 3 is selected as the Preferred Route as a result of technical engineering constraints related to the proposed Hollandmey turbines. Any proposed OHL needs to be located outside the wake effect exclusion zone of the proposed Hollandmey wind turbines, as SSEN governance will not accept any relaxation on this condition. Therefore, all Route Options with the exception of Route Option 3 are unviable from an engineering perspective.

SSEN are seeking feedback on the proposed development specifically:

- 1. Have we explained the need for this Project adequately?
- 2. Have we explained the approach taken to select the Preferred Route adequately?
- 3. Are there any factors, or environmental features, that you consider may have been overlooked during the Preferred Route selection process?
- 4. Do you feel, on balance, that the Preferred Route selected is the most appropriate for further consideration at the Alignment selection stage?



A Report on Consultation will be published in February 2023 which will document the consultation responses received, and the decisions made in light of these responses, to select a Proposed Route for further design development by assessment of OHL Alignment Options.



### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Purpose of Document

- 1.1.1 SSEN Transmission is proposing to construct and operate a new 132 kV overhead line (OHL) on a Trident Wood Pole between the Slickly Wind Farm Substation and consented Gills Bay Switching Station, Highlands, Scotland. This Consultation Document invites comments from all interested parties on the Route Options under consideration (Figure 1, Annex A).
- 1.1.2 Transmission licensees, such as SSEN Transmission, are required to comply with the National Electricity Transmission System Security and Quality of Supply Standards<sup>1</sup> (NETS SQSS), which sets out criteria and methodologies for planning and operating the GB Transmission System. In order to meet the license obligations to offer connection to the transmission system, both for new generation and for new sources of electricity demand, there is need to provide a new 132 kV transmission connection between the Slickly Wind Farm Substation and the consented Gills Bay Switching Station.
- 1.1.3 This Consultation Document describes the different connection OHL Route Options evaluated in more detail and invites interested parties to provide their views.
- 1.1.4 All comments received will inform SSEN Transmission's selection of a Preferred Route to take forward.

#### 1.2 Structure of this Report

- 1.2.1 The report is structured as follows:
  - Chapter 1 introduces the need for the project and report structure;
  - Chapter 2 describes the project need, the project overview, and consultation history;
  - Chapter 3 describes the identification of the Route Options and provides a summary of each Route Option;
  - Chapter 4 summarises the environmental, engineering and cost topics, followed by a comparative analysis summery and a description of the Preferred Route; and
  - Chapter 5 invites comments on the Preferred Route Option process, the identification of Preferred Route and next steps.
- 1.2.2 The main body of this document is supported by a series of figures which can be found in Annex A: Figures.

#### 1.3 Next Steps

- 1.3.1 As part of the consultation exercise, comments are sought from members of the public, statutory consultees and other stakeholders on the Preferred Route put forward in this report.
- 1.3.2 A Report on Consultation will be published in February 2023 which will document the consultation responses received, and the decisions made in light of these responses, to select a Proposed Route for further design development by assessment of OHL Alignment Options.
- 1.3.3 Following the identification of a Proposed Route, engineering surveys will be undertaken to identify a Preferred Alignment within the Proposed Route. Consultation on a Preferred Alignment will be undertaken in a similar manner to the identification of a Preferred Route in summer 2023.

 $<sup>^{1}\ {\</sup>rm https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/licences-industry-codes-and-standards/standards/security-and-quality-supply-standard-sqss}$ 



### 2. THE PROPOSALS

#### 2.1 Project Need

2.1.1 The primary driver for this project is to address the need to connect the Slickly Wind Farm into the electricity transmission network.

#### 2.2 Proposals Overview

2.2.1 The Proposed Development would comprise the construction of a new 132 kV OHL supported by trident wood poles (Plate 2.1 below), between the Slickly Wind Farm Substation and Gills Bay Switching Station, a route of between 8.5 km and 6 km (Figure 1, Annex A).



#### Plate 2.1: Trident wood pole design

- 2.2.2 The spacing between wood poles would vary depending on topography, altitude, and land use but would likely be between 60 m and 160 m, with an average span length of 90 m. To install the majority of the wood poles, existing tracks would be used where possible. However, the use of bog mats may be necessary in some areas depending on existing access conditions, terrain and altitude. At this stage, it has been assumed that wood poles would be a maximum of 17 m above ground level, with a typical average pole height of 13 m above ground level.
- 2.2.3 Construction of the Proposed Development would require the removal of sections of commercial forest, which would be undertaken in consultation with Scottish Forestry and affected landowners.
- 2.2.4 After felling, any timber removed that is commercially viable would be sold and the remaining forest material would be dealt with in a way that delivers the best practicable environmental outcome and is compliant with waste regulations.



2.2.5 An Operational Corridor would be required to enable the safe operation and maintenance of the OHL. This will vary depending on the type of woodland (based on species present) in proximity to the OHL. In areas of native woodland it is usually possible to provide a narrower corridor due to a reduced risk of trees falling on the OHL.



### 3. DESCRIPTION OF ROUTES

#### 3.1 Identification of Route Options

- 3.1.1 Route Options were developed between Slickly Substation and Gills Bay Switching Station, which define the southern starting point and northern termination point for Route Options, and which provided alternatives for avoiding environmental constraints whilst also being as direct as possible. Five potential Route Options to connect the Slickly Substation to the Gills Bay Switching Station were developed in accordance with SSEN Transmission guidance and taking into account the physical, environmental and amenity constraints.
- 3.1.2 The Route Selection process was carried out over October / November 2022. From this process, a Preferred Route has been brought forward for further route analysis and for the identification of potential alignment options. A 'Proposed Route' according to the SSEN Transmission OHL Routeing Guidance is defined as "a route taken forward following stakeholder consultation to the alignment selection stage of the overhead line routeing process". The results of the route selection stage environmental assessment are described in the 'Slickly Wind Farm 132 kV Overhead Line Connection (LT00355) Route Selection Study Report (SSEN Transmission, December 2022)'.
- 3.1.3 The Route Options identified are shown in Figure 1, Annex A and are briefly described as follows:

#### **Route Option 1**

3.1.4 Route Option 1 is approximately 8 km in length and runs west then north east from the proposed Slickly Wind Farm Substation through an area of forestry, before turning north east to reach Gills Bay Switching Station.

#### **Route Option 2**

3.1.5 Route Option 2 is approximately 6.5 km in length and also runs through forestry to the north west of Slickly Substation. This route is within the western boundary of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development.

#### **Route Option 3**

3.1.6 Route Option 3 is approximately 8.5 km in length and runs parallel to the minor road north east of Slickly Substation before heading north west towards Gills Bay Switching Station, skirting the southern flank of Hill of Rigifa.

#### **Route Option 4**

#### Route 4a

3.1.7 Route Option 4a is approximately 6 km in length and runs through the centre of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development site taking a more direct line towards Gills Bay Switching Station.

#### Route 4b

3.1.8 Route Option 4b is approximately 6 km in length, it runs initially north east parallel to the minor road, then turns north towards Gills Bay Switching Station, then joins Route Option 4a to run through the centre of the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development.



### 4. COMPARATIVE APPRAISAL

#### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The comparative appraisal for each Route Option has been completed in accordance with the methodology set out in SSEN Transmission guidance. The guidance states that each Route Option should be evaluated with reference to agreed environmental, engineering and cost criteria and should be considered in terms of the potential for the Proposed Development to be constrained. A Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rating has been applied to each criterion to indicate the potential for each Route Option to be constrained, with RED indicating a high potential for constraint, AMBER indicating intermediate potential for constrain and GREEN indicating low potential for constraint. It should be noted that a RED or AMBER rating does not necessarily indicate that the Route Option would be unacceptable in planning terms, but rather indicates the need for further consideration of the potential to mitigate potentially adverse effects.
- 4.1.2 Figures 2 to 7, Annex A outline the constrains discussed within the environmental, engineering and cost assessments.

#### 4.2 Environmental Topics

4.2.1 The environmental constraints discussed below are shown on Figures 2 – 7, Annex A.

#### **Route Option 1**

4.2.2 This Route Option potentially contains protected species and there are areas of blanket and wet modified bog within Route Option 1. A number of watercourses would be crossed, and approximately 70% of the route is underlain by Class 1 peatland (of national importance). A high percentage of Route Option 1 passes through forestry which would require felling. There would be potential visual impacts to residential properties. Route Option 1 is also within the wake effect buffer zone of four of the proposed Hollandmey wind turbines, and seven of the existing Lochend turbines and is likely to be less favourable from a technical perspective.

#### **Route Option 2**

4.2.3 Similarly to Route Option 1 there is the potential for protected species to be present; Route Option 2 contains areas of blanket and wet modified bog; approximately 70% if the route is underlain by Class 1 peatland (of national importance); and a high percentage of Route Option 2 passes through forestry which would need to be felled. Relative to other Route Options this route contains a greater number of watercourse crossings. Route Option 2 is within the wake effect buffer zone of five of the proposed Hollandmey wind turbines but is outwith the Lochend turbine exclusion zones.

#### **Route Option 3**

4.2.4 This is the least favoured Route Option from an environmental perspective. There are greater ecological and ornithological constraints associated with this Route Option, notably the closer proximity to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC, Philips Mains Mire SSSI, and breeding waders use the peatland within Route Option 3. One residential property lies within Route Option 3, and it is in close proximity (less than 100 m) to a number of other residential properties. There is considered to be a high potential for visual impacts both to properties and recreational routes. However, relative to all other routes this Route Option interacts the least with the Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development and is not within the wake effect exclusion zone of any of the turbines.

#### **Route Option 4a**

4.2.5 There is the potential for protected species to be present within this Route Option, it contains areas of blanket and wet-modified bog, and the blanket bog is used by breeding waders on the southern end of the Route Option. A number of watercourses would be crossed and a small reservoir / pond is present within the Route Option. Approximately 50% of Route Option 4a is underlain by Class 1 peatland, marginally less than Route Option 4b,



and less than Route Options 1 and 2. Approximately 2 km of the Route Option would require forestry felling. This Route Option is within the wake effect buffer zone of five of the proposed Hollandmey wind turbines.

#### **Route Option 4b**

- 4.2.6 Similarly to Route Option 4a, there is the potential for protected species to be present and the Route Option contains blanket bog which is used by breeding waders. A greater number of watercourses would be crossed compared to Route Option 4a and a small reservoir / pond is present within the Route Option. Approximately 60% of the Route Option is underlain by Class 1 peatland and approximately 2 km of the Route Option would require forestry felling. This Route Option passes within the wake effect buffer zone of four of the proposed Hollandmey turbines.
- 4.2.7 Table 4.1 below summarises the environmental appraisal RAG ratings for all Route Options.

Rou te		RAG Impact Rating - Environmental																
	Natural Heritage					Cultural Heritage		People	Landscape and Visual			Land Use			Plannin g			
	Designations	Protected Species	Habitats	Ornithology	Hydrology	Geology	Designations	Non-designated Assets	Proximity to Dwellings	Designations	Character	Visual	Agriculture	Infrastructure	Forestry	Recreation	Policy	Proposals
1																		
2																		
3																		
4a																		
4b																		

#### Table 4.1: Environmental Comparison Table – All Route Options

#### 4.3 Engineering Topics

#### **Route Option 1**

4.3.1 Key constraints associated with this Route Option is that it crosses a 33 kV underground cable (UGC) and 11 kV OHL, as well as a minor C class road, and it is largely routed through the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development and is therefore located within several of the wind turbine wake effect exclusion zones. SSEN governance will not accept any relaxation on this condition and consequently this route would not be not feasible from an engineering perspective.

#### **Route Option 2**

4.3.2 Route Option 2 also passes through the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development and the wind turbine wake effect exclusion zones, and consequently is not viable. Other constraints associated with this route are that it crosses a 33 kV UGC and 11 kV OHL, as well as a minor C class road.



#### **Route Option 3**

4.3.3 From an engineering perspective Route Option 3 is the only technically viable option as it does not pass through the wind turbine wake exclusion zones of the proposed Hollandmey turbines. However, it is the longest route and passes through the boggiest areas which have a higher risk of groundwater flooding. It is also located nearest to the public road, properties and existing SSEN infrastructure which have associated potential impacts.

#### Route Option 4a and 4b

- 4.3.4 Both Route Options pass through the wake effect exclusion zone of the proposed Hollandmey wind turbines which renders them un-feasible. In addition, both routes also cross a 33 kV UGC and 11 kV OHL, as well as a minor C class road.
- 4.3.5 Table 4.2 below summarises the engineering appraisal RAG ratings.

Route	RAG Impact Rating – Engineering													
	Infrastructure Crossings		Environmental Design			Ground Condition		Proximity			Additional Consideration			
	Major Crossings	Minor Roads	Elevation	Contaminated Land	Flooding	Terrain	Carbon & Peatland	Clearance	Windfarms	Communication Masts	Route Length	Unexploded Rounds		
1														
2														
3														
4a														
4b														

#### Table 4.2: Engineering Comparison Table – All Route Options

#### 4.4 Cost

4.4.1 The relative economic impact of each route was assessed against a set of economic criteria as set out below.

#### Construction

4.4.2 Route Options 4a and 4b are the shortest routes and have a limited interface with the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development. Route Options 1 and 2 are slightly longer routes and have significant interaction with the proposed Hollandmey wind farm. Route Option 3 is the longest route and also has the greatest interface with local properties.

#### **Diversions**

4.4.3 No existing infrastructure or equipment assets will be crossed/impacted by any of the Route Options.

#### **Public Road Improvements**

4.4.4 Public road improvements are not anticipated as a result of any of the Route Options.



#### **Tree Felling**

4.4.5 Route Option 1 and 2 would require the most felling of trees for the delivery and construction of equipment and to allow topple distance to be achieved. Route Option 3 requires the least amount of tree felling. Route Options 4a and 4b would require the felling of smaller areas of woodland than Route Options 1 and 2.

#### Land Assembly

4.4.6 All Route Options are situated on third party land and will require wayleaves. Route Options 1 and 2 require the least amount of land to be constructed on. Route Options 4a and 4b cover more land ownership than Route Options 1 and 2, while Route Option 3 requires the most land and covers the most land ownership for construction.

#### **Consent Mitigations**

4.4.7 Route Options 1 and 2 are situated upon less peatland than Route Options 3, 4a and 4b. Route Options 4a and 4b are situated in areas of rich blanket bog that would need to be avoided as this is an irreplaceable habitat and it is expected to cost the most in terms of mitigation implementation. Route Option 3 is rated as red as there are also areas of blanket bog along the route which will need to be avoided, it would develop the largest new footprint and as a result have the potential to cause greater environmental effects which may require mitigation stipulated by conditions.

#### **Inspections and Maintenance**

- 4.4.8 A significant portion of both Route Options 1 and 2 are located within the proposed Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development and are therefore likely to benefit from the associated access tracks to the turbine locations. A smaller length of Route Options 4a and 4b are located within the wind farm, albeit they will have additional access from the public road. Route Option 3 does have some access off the public road, however, a significant length of the northern section of the route currently has poor access for inspection and maintenance.
- 4.4.9 Table 4.3 below summarises the cost appraisal RAG ratings for all Route Options.

#### Table 4.3: Cost Comparison Table – All Route Options

Route	RAG Impact Rating - Cost												
	Capital			Operational									
	Construction Diversions		Public Road Improvement	Tree Felling	Land Assembly	Consent Mitigations	Inspections	Maintenance					
1													
2													
3													
4a													
4b													

#### 4.5 Comparative Analysis Summary

4.5.1 It can be seen from the tables above that, from an environmental perspective, without consideration of technical or cost factors, the preferred Route Option would be Route Option 2, followed by Route Option 1. From a cost perspective Route Option 4a would represent the overall preferred route as it is the least costly, followed by Route



Option 4b. Route Option 3 is the least preferred from an environmental and cost perspective. However, it is the only Route Option which is technically viable and therefore the preferred engineering route due to the wake exclusion zones of the proposed Hollandmey turbines.

#### 4.6 Preferred Route

4.6.1 The wake exclusion zones around the proposed Hollandmey turbines are the primary driving influence on the choice of Preferred Route Option. This is because it is contrary to SSEN policy / specifications to locate the OHL within these areas. Therefore, despite Route Option 3 being the least preferred option taking into consideration environmental and cost considerations, as it is the only viable engineering route it is the overall Preferred Route (Figure 8, Annex A).



### 5. CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSALS

5.1.1 SSEN Transmission places great importance on, and is committed to, consultation and engagement with all parties, or stakeholders, likely to have an interest in proposals for new projects such as this. Stakeholder consultation and engagement is an essential part of an effective development process.

#### 5.2 Questions for Consideration by Consultees

- 5.2.1 When providing your comments and feedback, SSEN Transmission would be grateful for your consideration of the questions below:
  - 5. Have we explained the need for this Project adequately?
  - 6. Have we explained the approach taken to select the Preferred Route adequately?
  - 7. Are there any factors, or environmental features, that you consider may have been overlooked during the Preferred Route selection process?
  - 8. Do you feel, on balance, that the Preferred Route selected is the most appropriate for further consideration at the Alignment selection stage?

#### 5.3 Next Steps

- 5.3.1 A consultation events will be held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 from 09:30-13:30 at Mey Village Hall and from 14:40-19:30 at John O'Groats Hall as detailed in the preface of this document. The responses received from the consultation event, and those sought from statutory consultees and other stakeholders, will inform further consideration of the Route Options put forward, and the identification of a Proposed Route Option to take forward to the next stage in the OHL Routeing process (Alignment Selection).
- 5.3.2 All comments are requested by 24th February 2023. A Report on Consultation will be produced which will document the consultations received, and the decisions made in light of these responses.
- 5.3.3 Following the identification and confirmation of a Proposed Route, engineering surveys would be undertaken to identify a Preferred Alignment. Consultation on a Preferred Alignment will be undertaken in a similar manner to the identification of a Preferred Route next year.



#### **ANNEX A: FIGURES**















