

Report on Consultation

Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beauly

5 December 2023



Welcome and Introductions

Thank you for joining our Report on Consultation briefing session this afternoon.

SSEN Transmission representatives from the project team will provide an overview of the Report on Consultation document and detail next steps in the development of the project.

There will be an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the presentation.

SSEN Transmission attendees

Martin Godwin, Community Liaison Manager

Euan Smith, Senior Development Project Manager

Tara Cowley, Senior Consents & Environment Manager

Lida Johnston, Project Manager

Ahsan Mahmood, Senior Engineer

Rebecca Gay, Project Manager

Kelly Scott, Lead Community Liaison Manager

Posy Macrae, Stakeholder Engagement Manager

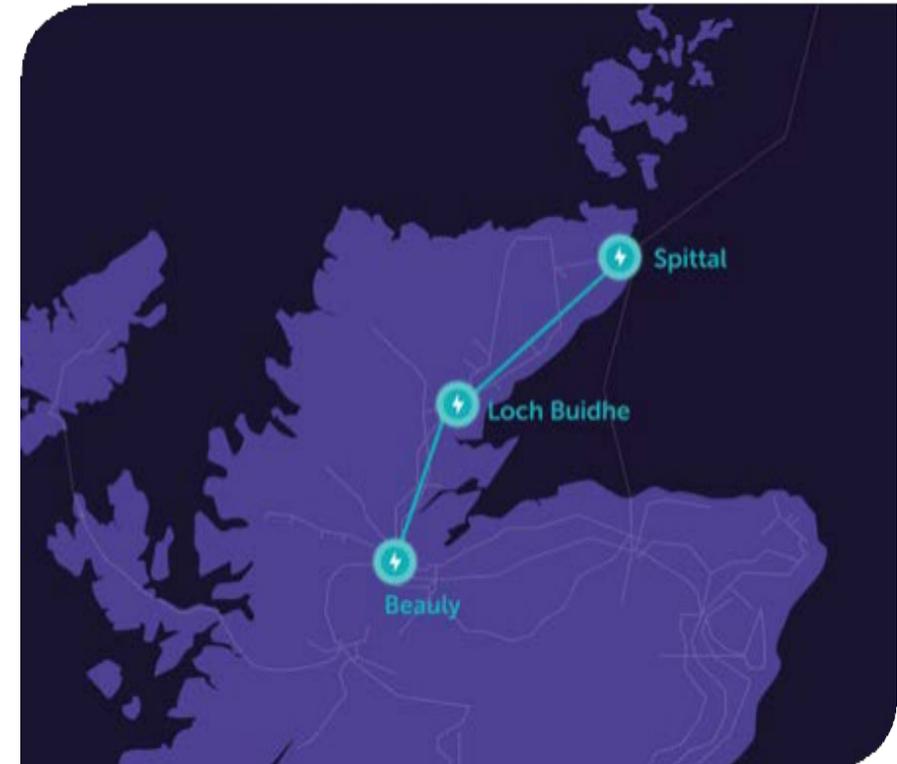
Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Project overview
3. Consultation events overview
4. Report on Consultation
5. Overview of feedback
6. Next steps
7. Questions

Project overview

Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beauly 400kV connection

- New substation sites at Spittal, Loch Buidhe and Beauly
- Approximately 85km of a new 400kV double circuit steel lattice OHL between the proposed new Spittal and Loch Buidhe 400kV substations
- Approximately 82km of a new 400kV double circuit steel lattice OHL between the proposed new Loch Buidhe and Beauly 400kV substations
- Construction of temporary and permanent access tracks along the length of the OHL route
- Rationalisation of existing high voltage and low voltage infrastructure at points of crossing along the new OHL routes, and around new and existing substation sites



Project overview

Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beaully 400kV connection

The consideration of the entire OHL route was divided into five geographical sections to help manage the appraisal and reporting process as follows:

Section A – Spittal to Brora

Section B – Brora to Golspie

Section C – West of Dornoch

Section D – Dornoch to Dingwall

Section E – Dingwall to Beaully



Consultation Events Overview

- Events took place between 20 February and 6 March
- Promoted via local and regional newspapers, SSEN Transmissions social media channels and webpage
- Postcard invites sent to 28,309 homes and 1,133 businesses
- In total, ten events were held with 603 attendees
- The formal feedback period was open between 20 February and 14 April
- 1,103 pieces of feedback received via email, mail (letter/feedback form) and online feedback form



Scan me

New Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beauly 400kV Reinforcement Public consultation events

We have developed proposals to reinforce the onshore transmission network between Spittal and Beauly, via Loch Buidhe. To enable this connection, new additional 400kV substations and associated infrastructure is also required near the three locations mentioned above.

We are inviting interested parties to attend our drop-in consultation events, where the project team will be in attendance to answer any questions and discuss the details of the following proposed projects:

Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beauly 400kV connection

New Loch Buidhe area 400kV substation

New Spittal area 400kV substation and HVDC converter station

New Beauly area 400kV substation and HVDC converter station

We are seeking feedback regarding our preferred route for the new overhead line and our preferred locations for the new 400kV substations and converter stations listed above.

The consultation events will be taking place on:

20th February (2.30–7pm)	Halkirk – Ross Institute
21st February (2.30–7pm)	Helmsdale – Bunilidh Social Club
22nd February (2.30–7pm)	Dunbeath – Dunbeath Hall
23rd February (2.30–7pm)	Gospie – Fountain Road Hall
27th February (3.30–7pm)	Bonar Bridge – Community Hall
28th February (2.30–7pm)	Ardross – Community Hall
1st March (2.30–7pm)	Dingwall – Legion Hall
2nd March (2.30–7pm)	Beauly – Kilmorack Hall
6th March (5–7pm)	Virtual event* *Joining details available on website

If you have any questions, please contact the Community Liaison Manager:

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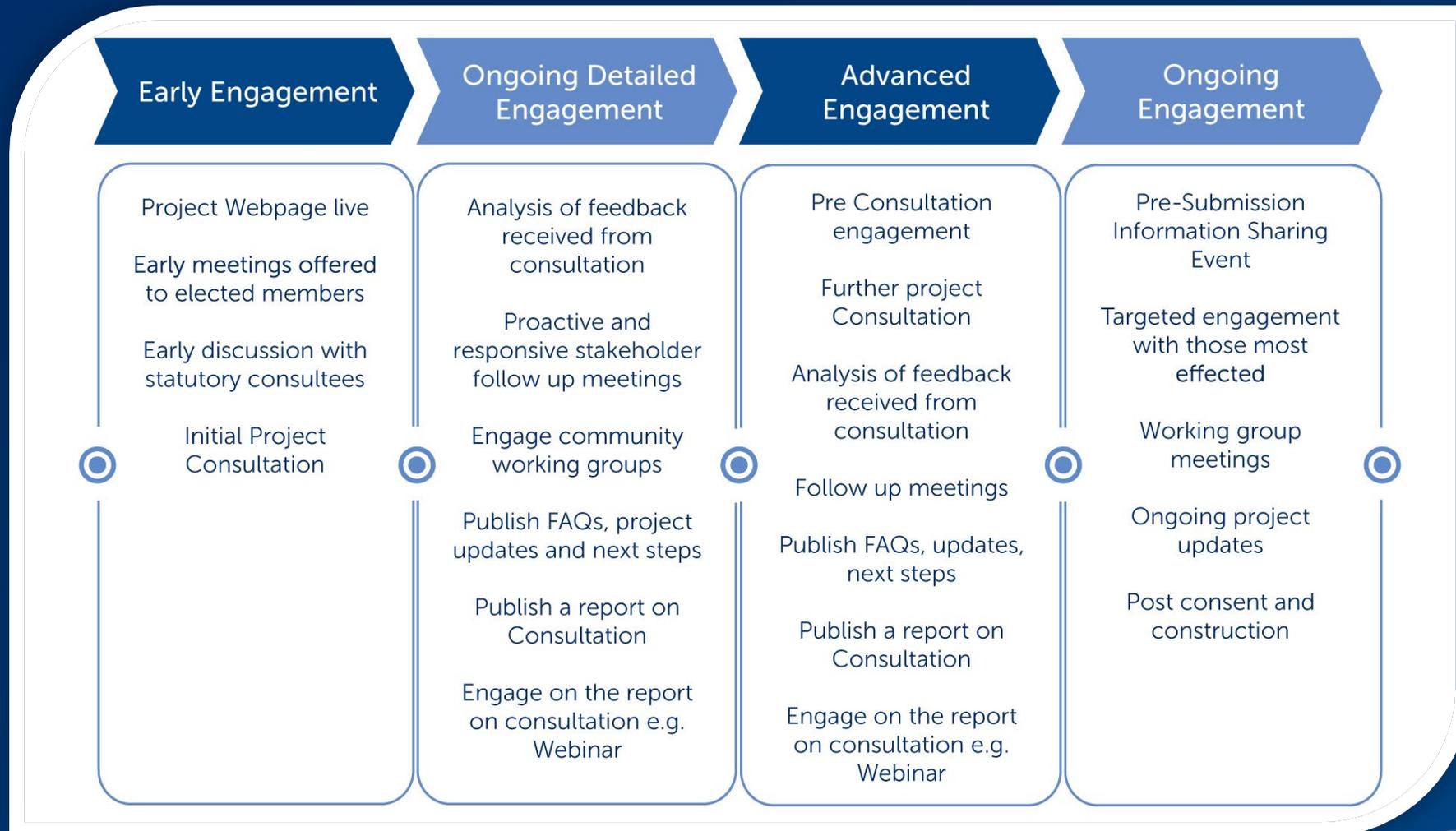
Find out more and register for project updates, visit the project website by scanning the QR code, or use the following URL:

ssen-transmission.co.uk/north-highlands

SSEN Community

@SSETransmission

Engagement process



Report on Consultation

What is the Report on Consultation (RoC)?

- Provides information on the consultation process
- Identifies who we consulted with
- Documents the feedback received and SSEN Transmission's response
 - Common Themes and FAQs
 - Project Specific Feedback
 - The project specific feedback was responded to under the three themes:
 - Community Impact
 - Environmental Impact
 - Economic Impact
- Confirm the proposed routes and sites being taken forward to the next stages of development following consideration of consultation feedback



Why and When do we publish RoCs?

- RoCs are published once all consultation feedback has been analysed and the preferred routes and sites have been reviewed
- Depending on the size of the project this can be upwards of 6 weeks
- For the projects consulted upon, the analysis, route and site reviews along with writing the RoC reports has taken 32 weeks from the end of the consultation period to publication, which allowed for additional engagement requested by communities during the summer months.
- RoCs provide stakeholders with the routes and sites being taken forward to the next stage of development:
 - OHL – Alignment
 - Substations – Design for Pre-Application Consultation

Overview of feedback – Common Themes

Across our Pathway to 2030 project consultations, we received feedback covering several common themes. This overview will concentrate on Section specific feedback, however the common themes identified were as follows:

- **Project Need**
- **Technology Choice**
- **Environmental Impacts**
- **Socio-Economic Impacts**
- **Consultation Process**

Although some of this feedback related to topics which fell outside of the scope of our consultations, we recognise that it is important to address the points that our stakeholders took the time to raise. Therefore, Section 3 of our RoC details out responses to these common themes raised alongside links to further materials.

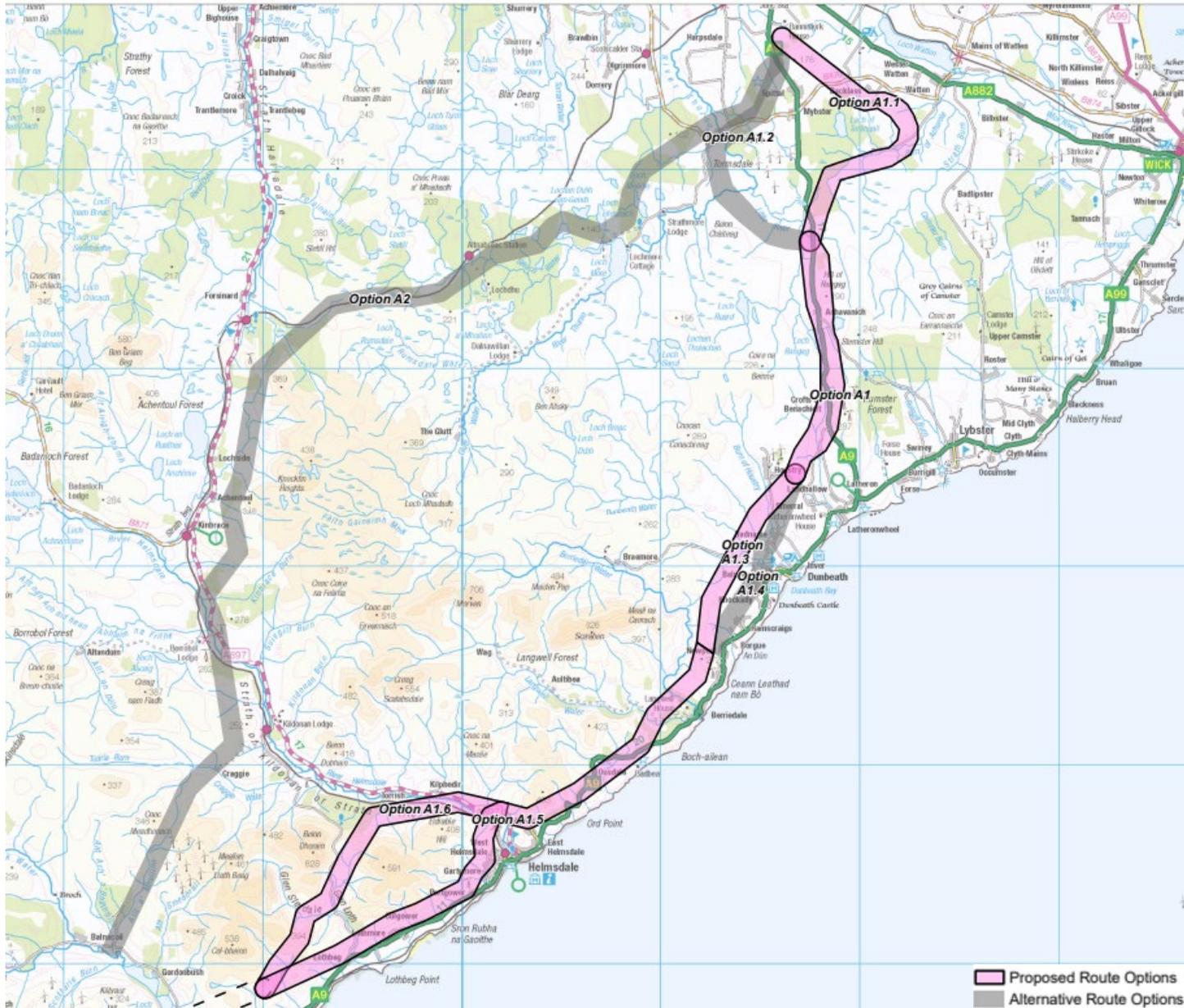
In addition, we have also developed a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).



Frequently Asked Questions
from Consultation

Proposed routes following consultation

Section A: Spittal to Brora



Feedback:

Local community comments in relation to this Section focused on wildlife, peat and the candidate flow country world heritage site, cultural heritage, visual amenity, tourism and private water supplies.

Historic Environment Scotland advised that there are significant challenges with all routes although A1.4 and A1.6 were preferred, and careful design of an alignment will be required to avoid issues of national interest.

NatureScot advised that from a landscape and visual perspective option A1 is less likely to have impact than A2 with options A1.1 and A1.4. Routes A1.5&A1.6 require further work to minimise impact to landscape character and wild land. From a protected species perspective options A2 and A1.2 are less preferred, although all routes have challenges.

The Highland Council highlighted potential impacts on the value or setting of the proposed UNESCO peatland site.

Decisions made:

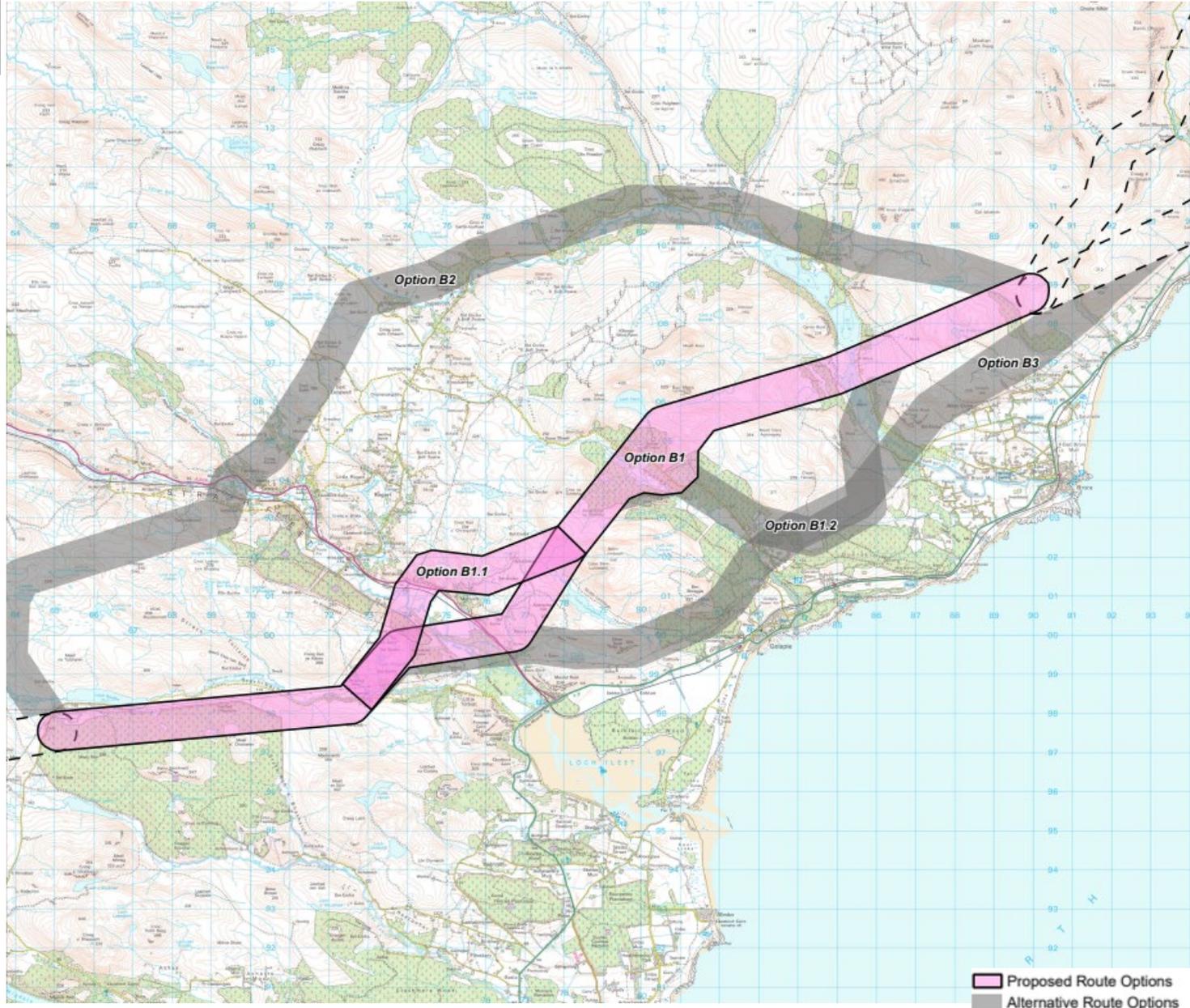
We are proposing the following route sections are to be taken forward to the alignment stage:

A1 , A1.1, A1.3, A1.5, A1.6 (southern section only)

Next Steps:

Further environmental and engineering survey work will be undertaken to find an acceptable alignment and/or design solution through this Section, particularly in reference to routing south of Helmsdale, where no clear preference has been established currently. This work is currently being undertaken and will be reported on during the next design stage.

Section B: Brora to Golspie



Feedback:

Local community comments focused on whether the existing transmission corridors could be used, wildlife, cultural heritage, access tracks and private water supplies.

Historic Environment Scotland advise that there are significant challenges with all routes although B3 is preferred and careful design of an alignment will be required

NatureScot advise that from a landscape and visual perspective options B2 and B3 may have less impact than Option B1. From a protected species perspective option B1, B1.1 and B3 have potential for less impact, although all routes have challenges

The Highland Council highlighted potential for impacts on the Special Landscape Area from B1 and B3 of the overhead line.

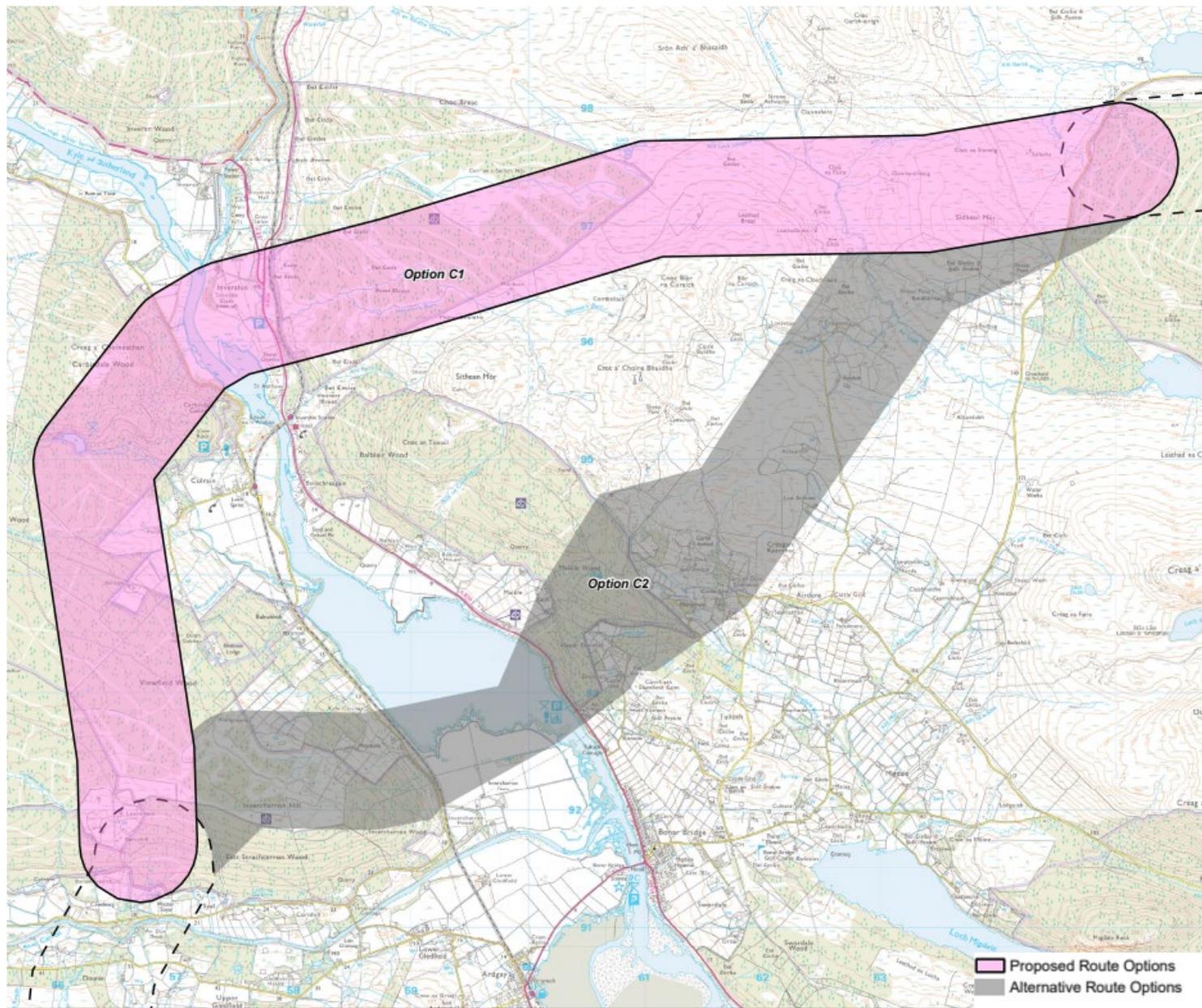
Decisions made:

We are proposing the following route sections are to be taken forward to the alignment stage: **B1 and B1.1**

Next Steps:

Further environmental and engineering survey work will be undertaken to find an acceptable alignment and/or design solution through this Section. This work is currently being undertaken and will be reported on during the next design stage.

Section C: West of Dornoch



Feedback

Local Community comments in relation to this Section focused on use of visualisations at consultation, visual amenity, wildlife and habitat, cultural heritage, access tracks, flood risk and private water supplies. Concerns were also raised regarding the potential impact of route C1 on the village of Culrain and Carbisdale Castle.

Historic Environment Scotland advised that C2 is preferred due to the battlefield landscape and scheduled monuments along Route C1.

NatureScot advised that there is no preference from a landscape and visual perspective but that C1 has potential for less impact than C2 from a protected areas perspective.

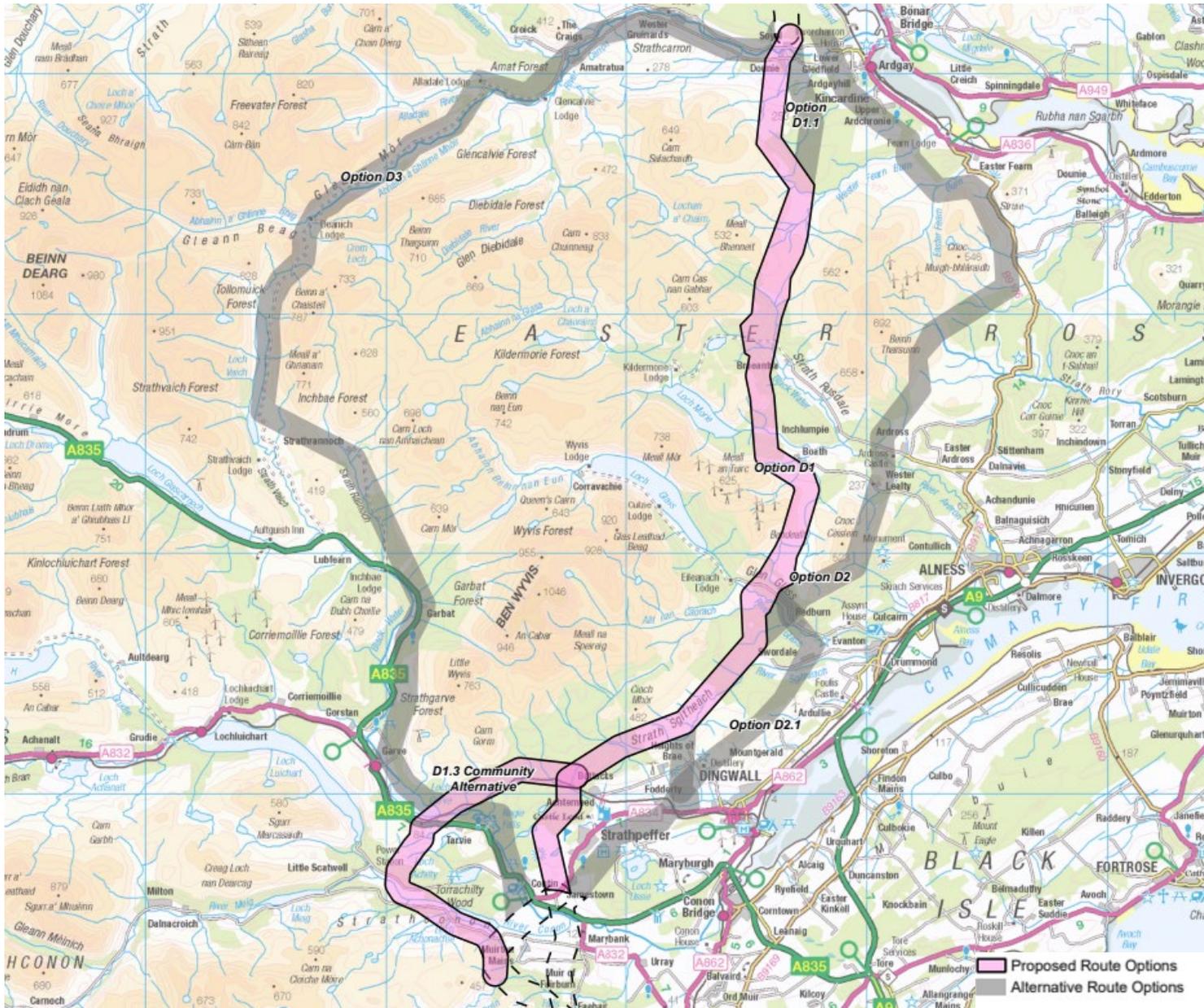
Decisions Made

Our proposed route option to be taken to alignment stage is **C1**.

Next Steps

Further environmental and engineering survey work will be undertaken to find an acceptable alignment through this Section where we will be seeking to minimise and mitigate impacts as we develop this route alignment. This work is currently being undertaken and will be reported on during the next design stage.

Section D: Dornoch to Dingwall



Feedback

Local community feedback in this Section focused on core paths, recreation and tourism, visual amenity, technology choice, wildlife, habitat and cultural heritage. Community feedback also identified an alternative route option (D1.3) in response to these concerns. Around Strathrusdale, feedback suggested D1 being routed further west would provide better access with less disruption to livestock and people.

Historic Environment Scotland do not advise of a preference although identify the potential for significant adverse impacts in option D2 and a pinch point in option D1. From a landscape and visual perspective,

NatureScot advised that Option D1 is their preference between Dornoch and the River Glass with Option D2.1 from the River Glass to Strathpeffer. NS notes option D1 interacts with lower number of protected areas.

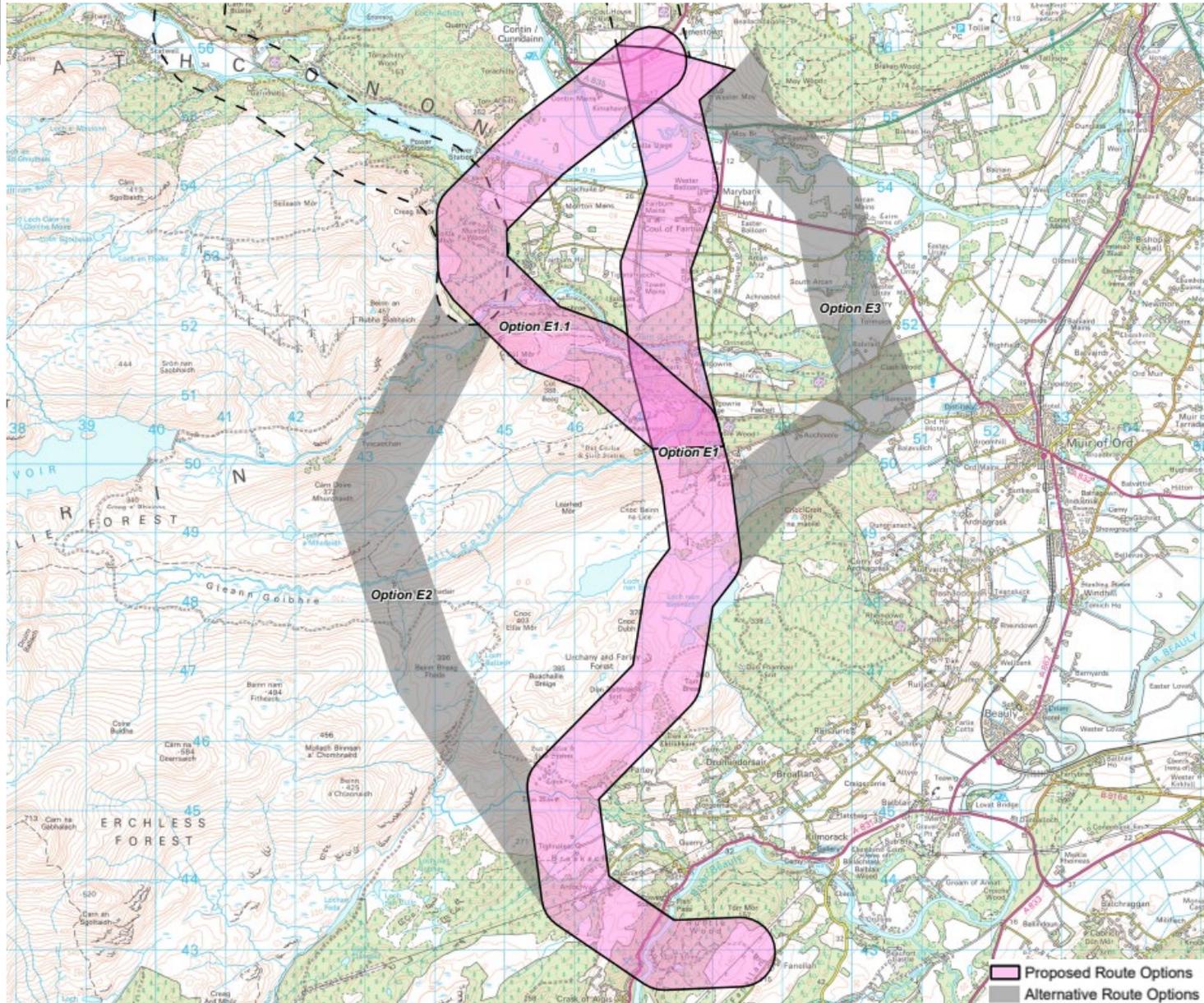
Decisions Made:

Our proposed route options to be taken to alignment stage are: **D1 and Community Alternative Option D1.3.**

Next Steps:

D1.3 will be taken to the alignment stage alongside D1 and fully appraised. Further environmental and engineering survey work will be undertaken to select a proposed route and find an acceptable alignment through this Section. This work is currently being undertaken and will be reported on during the next design stage.

Section E: Dingwall to Beauly



Feedback

Local Community comments received in relation to this Section focused on core paths, recreation and tourism, visual amenity, technology choice, wildlife, habitat and cultural heritage.

Historic Environment Scotland do not advise of a preference although identify the potential for significant adverse impacts in option E1 and E1.1 due to scheduled monuments in the south and the Fairburn GDL and A listed tower in the north.

NatureScot advised that Option E1 is their preference from a landscape and visual perspective, whilst from a protected areas perspective options E1 and E1.1 are preferred.

Decisions Made

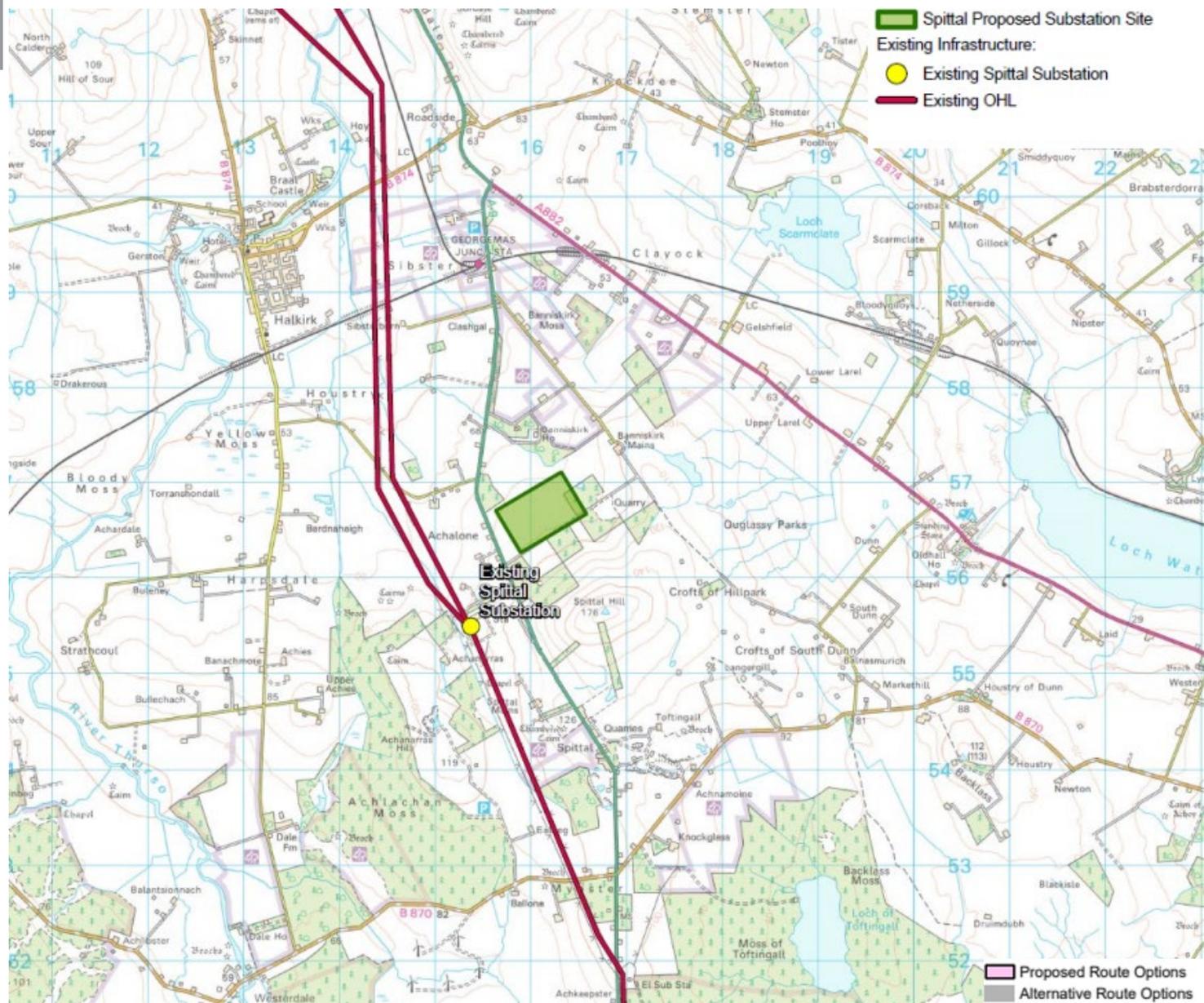
Our proposed route option to be taken to alignment stage is **E1 and E1.1**.

Next Steps

Further environmental and engineering survey work will be undertaken to find an acceptable alignment through this Section. This work is currently being undertaken and will be reported on during the next design stage.

Proposed site options following consultation

Spittal area substation and HVDC converter



Feedback

Local Community comments were in relation to proximity to residential properties, and noise and traffic impacts.

Historic Environment Scotland advised that the Preferred Site Option 12 is unlikely to raise issues of national interest but did mention that Site Option 11 would have significant impact on cultural heritage, due to the setting of St Magnus' Church, burial ground and hospital.

SEPA raised concerns regarding the presence of peatland and a number of small watercourses on Site Option 12 and asked that we carefully consider surface water flooding as the project develops.

Decision Made

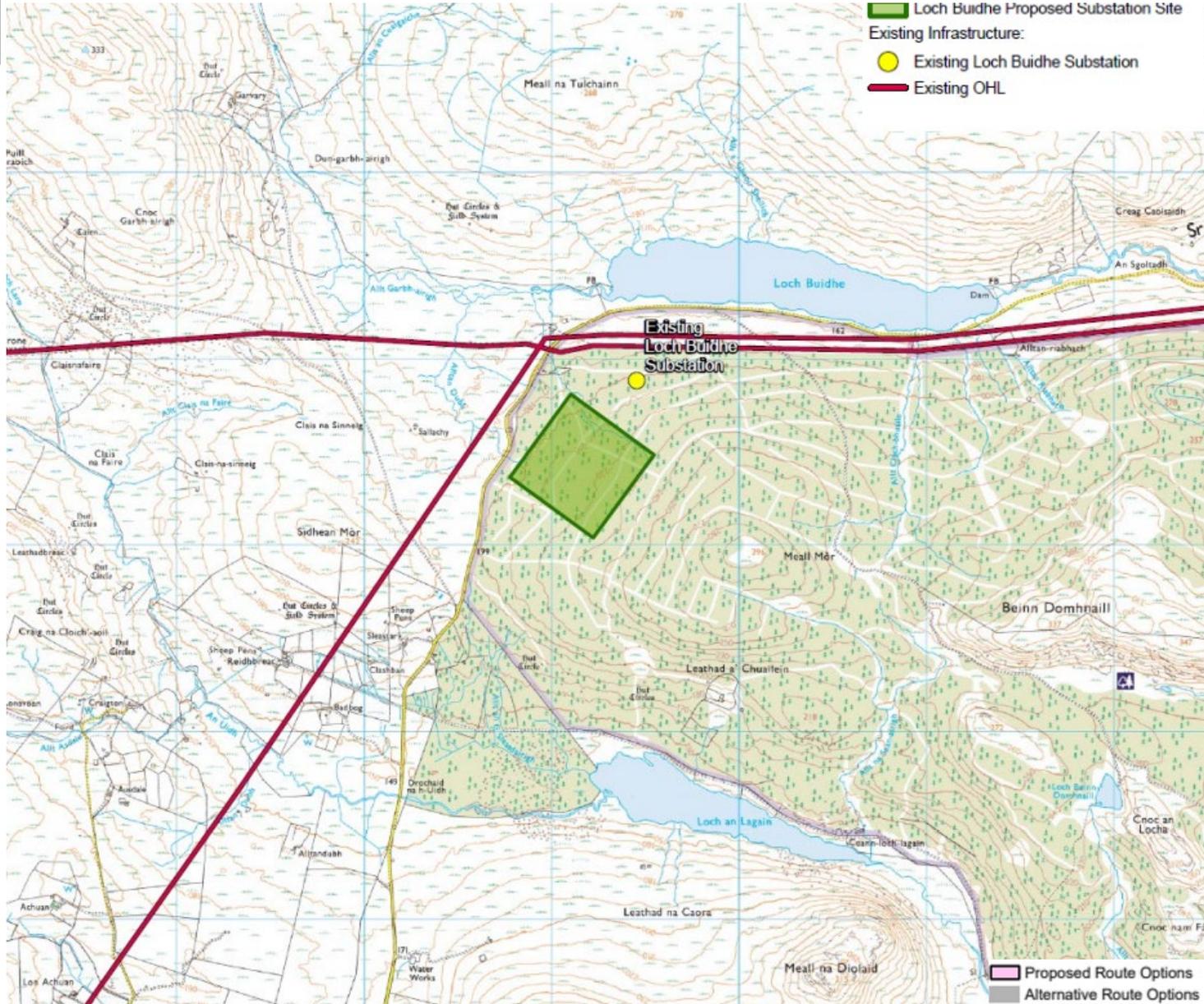
The consultation process has confirmed that the Proposed substation site is Option 12 and this will be taken forward to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and consenting stage.

Next Steps

Supported by specialist consultants and contractors, we will further develop the design of the site. In Spring 2024, we will hold the first formal Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) events, following the statutory requirements of the planning process. This event will be followed by a second PAC event, where we will present our analysis of the consultation feedback and explain how that has informed our final design and proposals that will be the focus of our subsequent planning application.

A request for an EIA Scoping Opinion will be made to The Highland Council and an EIA Scoping Report will be prepared and submitted to support the request.

Loch Buidhe area substation



Feedback

Local Community members and landowners suggested that locating the substation near the A836 could cause less disruption for local residents.

Historic Environment Scotland indicated that Site Option 3 is unlikely to raise issues of national interest.

SEPA agreed that the preferred option for the location of the substation is Site Option 3 but did note that peatland does lie immediately adjacent to the site.

Decision Made

The consultation process has confirmed that the Proposed substation site is **Option 3**. This site option will be taken forward to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and consenting stage.

Next Steps

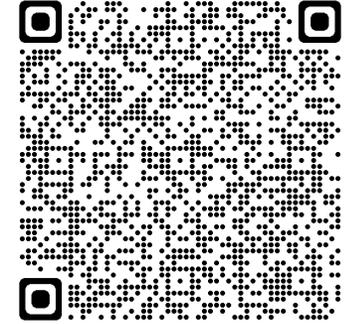
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A request for an EIA Scoping Opinion will be made to The Highland Council and an EIA Scoping Report will be prepared and submitted to support the request.

Next steps

Report on Consultation Engagement

- Online Webinar open to all
 - Wednesday 13 December from 14:00 – 15:30
 - Register via the QR code or visit www.ssen-transmission.co.uk and click on ‘events’



Next Consultation Events

In Early 2024, we will hold our next public consultation events regarding our proposals following further development.

We will also hold the first formal Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) events for the substations, following the statutory requirements of the planning process. At this event we will present the likely extent, layout and appearance of the substations, and give stakeholders the opportunity to comment on our proposals. This event will be followed by a second PAC event, where we will present our analysis of the consultation feedback and explain how that has informed our final design and proposals that will be the focus of our subsequent planning application.

Questions



[Spittal – Loch Buidhe - Beaully project webpage](#)

Useful links

For further information on our Pathway to 2030 projects, please see the links below.



Pathway to 2030 project information
ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/2030-projects/



You can contact us at
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