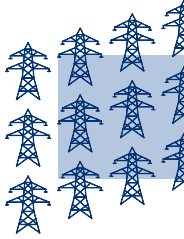


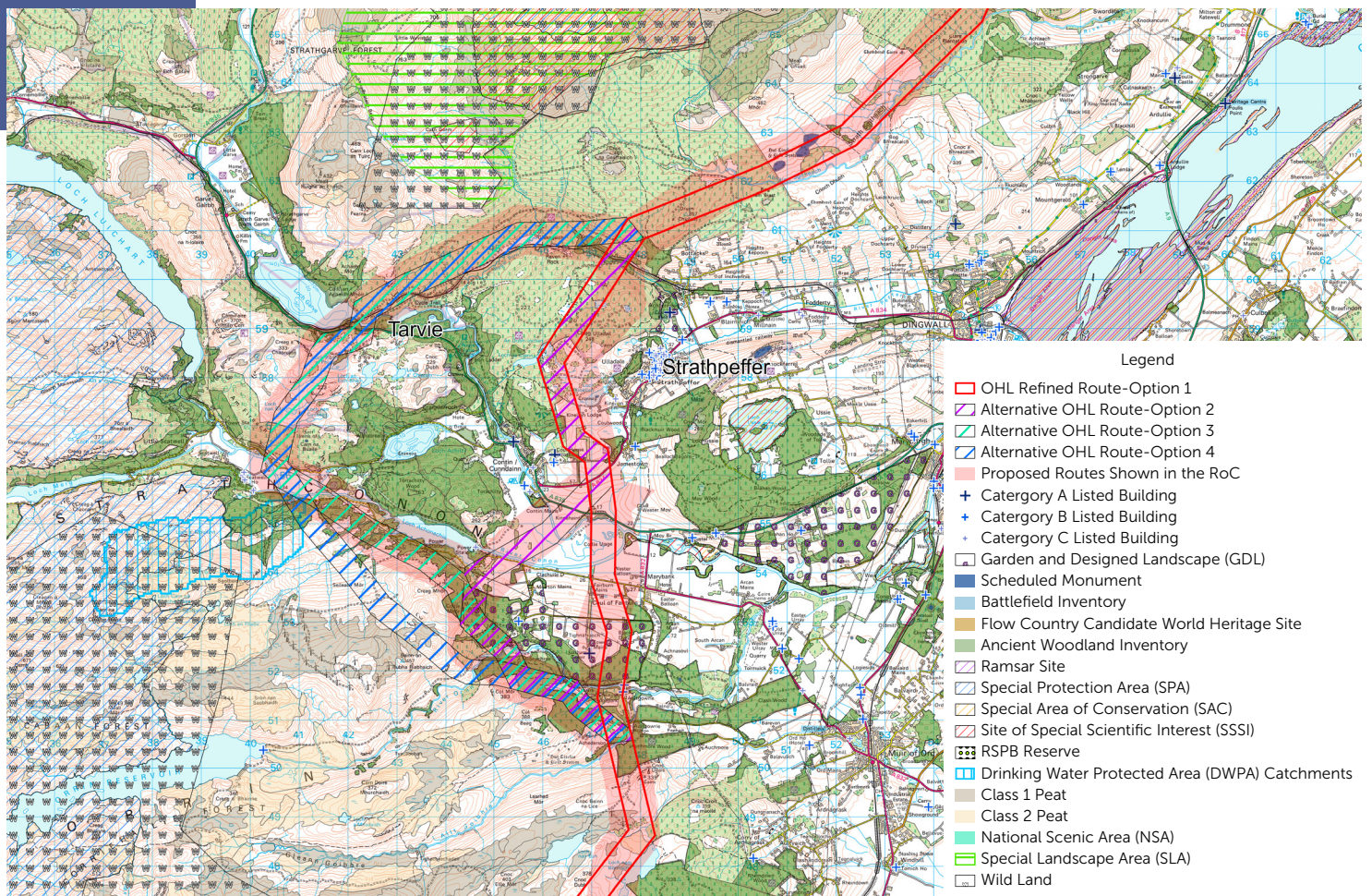
Section D/E Alternative Route Options



Introduction

Consultation on the route options presented in February 2023 has resulted in further consideration of previously lesser preferred options and exploration of new route options suggested. These are referred to as the Section D/E Alternative Route Options and are illustrated in Figure 1.

Constraints in the area include areas of ancient woodland of semi-natural origin, a Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA), the Fairburn Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) and the Grade A-listed Fairburn Tower and Coul House. Proximity to communities at Strathpeffer, Contin, Marybank and Tarvie are also a key consideration.



Alternative Route Assessment

A red, amber, green (RAG) rating has been applied to each topic area within each section, indicating potential impacts. This rating is based on a four-point scale of comparative appraisal ranging from scenarios of potentially minor effects or technical challenges, with little or no requirement for mitigation (Green rating) through to potentially major effects or technical

challenges which may be difficult to mitigate (Red rating). The objective of the RAG rating is to identify points of difference between the potential impacts of the route options; accordingly, the topic areas that scored equally across the assessment of the route options are not included in the comparative table shown below.

Key topics relating to the site: Section D/E											
Option	Cultural Heritage Designations	Cultural Heritage Assets	Landscape Designations	Agriculture	Planning Proposals	Elevation	Terrain	Route Length	Access	Angle towers	Third Party Developments
Option 1	H	H	H	M	L	L	L	L	L	L	L
Option 2	H	M	H	M	L	L	L	M	L	M	L
Option 3	H	L	H	L	M	M	M	H	H	H	H
Option 4	M	L	M	L	M	M	M	H	H	H	H

Option 1

A refined overhead line route of our option identified as preferred during our 2023 consultation, furthest East of all route options.

Option 2

This refined overhead line route follows the previously identified preferred route for Section D before moving west near the Jamestown area, forming the E1.1 route option which joins up with the E1 route to the south of Aultgowrie.

Option 3

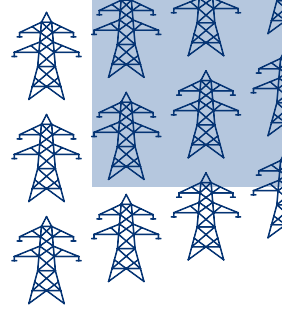
This alternative route goes to the west of Strathpeffer, would cross land at Tarvie, Little Scatwell and then following a route to the south of Loch Achonachie until it joins up with the Section E route options.

Option 4

This alternative route goes to the west of Strathpeffer, would cross land at Tarvie, Little Scatwell and then follows a route further south of option 3 until it joins up with Section E.



Section D/E Alternative Options Assessment



The options have been assessed against a number of environmental criteria. All options pass through areas of ancient woodland with Option 3 passing through a greater extent of ancient woodland of semi-natural origin (grades 1a and 2a). Options 3 and 4 are likely to result in a greater loss of sensitive habitat due to access requirements and the greater length. Options 3 and 4 are likely to present a greater risk to birds due to the increased length and greater potential for collision and barrier effects.

Options 1, 2 and 3 pass through the Fairburn GDL. These options are all likely to compromise the designating features of this nationally designated asset through changes to setting. Option 4 avoids passing through the GDL directly but would be visible on the hillside to the south. Option 1 and 2 have the potential to impact the setting of the Category A listed Coul House and Option 1 will also impact the setting of the Category A listed Fairburn Tower. Options 3 and 4 are further removed from the Category A listed Fairburn Tower with larger areas of woodland in the intervening landscape so have a lesser potential for impact on its setting.

Options 1 and 2 pass close to more densely populated areas including the communities of Contin and Strathpeffer and associated recreational areas. There are dispersed properties within and adjacent to all of the route options, with potential for visual impact. Options 3 and 4 pass in close proximity to a surface water Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA) with Option 4 having greater

potential to compromise the quality and/or quantity of surface waters or groundwaters which provide public supply. Ben Wyvis Special Landscape Area and Wild Land Area is within 1 km of options 3 and 4. The proposed Fairburn Wind Farm Extension and the proposed Tarvie Wind Farm are located within or adjacent to Options 3 and 4 and there is the potential for interaction and cumulative effects. Options 1 and 2 have the potential to affect prime agricultural land.

The options have also been assessed against various technical criteria to provide a RAG scoring. Option 1 and 2 are predominantly green or amber scoring as they largely route through agricultural land with good public roads for accesses with gentle gradients of slope. Main challenges for both Options 3 and 4 are third party developments, terrain and access. Both Options 3 and 4 run through the proposed Tarvie Wind Farm. Options 3 and 4 site the route on slopes, with large cross sections observed where Option 3 runs parallel to Loch Achonachie which may lead to difficulty in construction and accesses.

Taking the above factors into account Option 1 or 2 are the preferred overall routes as there are fewer technical constraints associated with these options than with Option 3 or 4. The 'preferred route' refers to the option which we believe offers an appropriate balance of technical and environmental impact considerations identified through initial assessment. This is then subject to consultation with stakeholders, where local and previously unknown considerations may confirm or alter the initial preference.

