

VOLUME 2: CHAPTER 6 – SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

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Figures (Volume 3 of this EIA Report)

There are no figures associated with this chapter.

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Appendix 6.1: Scoping Report

Appendix 6.2: Scoping Opinion

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6. SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations require that an EIA Report should describe the potential significant effects of a proposed development on the environment. Scoping of potential significant effects having regard to the physical impacts of a proposed development provides a basis for ensuring that the assessment of environmental effects concentrates on issues of potential significance. This encourages a proportionate approach to EIA reporting that is focused on potential significant effects to be considered and assessed. Consultation and engagement with stakeholders throughout the process, including key consultees, informs decisions about the design and EIA.
- 6.1.2 This chapter describes the consultation which was specifically undertaken to determine the scope of the EIA, and the consultations that were undertaken more generally to inform the local community and other stakeholders of the progression at each key stage. This chapter also includes a brief description of the environmental effects of potential significance associated with the Proposed Development which are addressed in detail in this EIA Report, as well as those that have been scoped out of further assessment.

6.2 Consultation with the Local Community

- 6.2.1 Throughout all design stages of the Proposed Development, the Applicant has sought to maintain an open dialogue with local communities in proximity to the Proposed Development. This has included carrying out in-person consultation events at a number of locations during the routeing and alignment stages. Additionally, for those members of the public that could not attend the in-person events, the consultation materials could be accessed via the Applicant's website¹. Consultation has involved regular engagement with statutory consultees², non-statutory consultees³, community members and local organisations, as well as landowners and occupiers that may be impacted by the Proposed Development. This engagement has taken place alongside the public events and the feedback has informed the design process.
- 6.2.2 A Pre-Application Consultation Report (PAC Report) supports the Section 37 application and provides detail of the consultation events and engagement. Details on the consultation events undertaken at each stage are outlined in **Chapter 4: The Routeing Process and Alternatives**.
- 6.2.3 SSEN Transmission engaged with Community Councils along the route and updated them on progress and any upcoming consultation events. SSEN Transmission also hosted a number of meetings with local Elected Members and community forums which are detailed within the PAC Report and include, but are not limited to, those described in **Table 6.1** below.

Table 6.1: Community Meetings

Date	Meeting Type	Stakeholder Group in Attendance
15 th February 2023	Pre-consultation presentation meeting with The Highland Council (THC) Ward Councillors (Microsoft Teams meeting)	Highland Councillors invited from wards potentially impacted by our proposals

¹ SSEN Transmission, n.d. Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beauly 400kV Connection webpage. [Online] Available at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/spittal-loch-buidhe-beauly-400kv-connection/>

² Examples include Historic Environment Scotland (HES), SEPA, NatureScot, Local Authorities, Scottish Forestry

³ Examples include RSPB, Scottish Water, Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS)

Date	Meeting Type	Stakeholder Group in Attendance
21 st March 2023	Meeting with cultural heritage groups to discuss potential impacts on cultural heritage, as a result of the Proposed Development	ARCH, NOSAS and other cultural heritage groups located across Caithness and Sutherland
2 nd May 2023	In-person meeting in Inverness regarding our proposals around the Strathpeffer, Contin and Marybank areas	Strathpeffer Community Council; Contin Community Council; Marybank, Scatwell and Strathconon Community Council; Strathpeffer/Contin Better Cable Route group
18 th May 2023	Public meeting in Strathpeffer (Spa Pavilion)	Open meeting for members of the public, at the request of Strathpeffer Community Council, alongside Contin Community Council; Marybank, Scatwell and Strathconon Community Council and Strathpeffer/Contin Better Cable Route Group. Ian Blackford MP and Maree Todd MSP were also in attendance
28 th May 2023	Public meeting in Brora (Brora Primary School)	Open meeting for members of the public, at the request of Brora Community Council; Golspie Community Council; Helmsdale Community Council and Rogart Community Council
29 th May 2023	Virtual meeting with Timespan to discuss archaeology and cultural heritage impacts around the Helmsdale area, as a result of our proposals	Representation from Timespan; Helmsdale Development Trust; Garbh Allt Community Initiative; and Rogart Heritage Trust
12 th June 2023	Ardross area visit	Met with a representative from Ardross Community Council and community members regarding the route option around Strathrusdale
12 th June 2023	Public meeting in Ardgay (Ardgay Public Hall)	Open meeting for members of the public at the request of Ardgay and District Community Council and Creich Community Council
7 th March 2024	Pre-consultation Teams meeting for Community Councils	10 attendees representing five Community Councils
31 st May 2024	In person meeting – <i>Let's Talk Energy</i> summit	Public meeting hosted by Edward Mountain MP with SSEN Transmission representation
18 th June 2024	In person meeting with residents in Culrain in relation to Option C1.	Jamie Stone (candidate for the Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross UK Parliamentary constituency) and staff, as well as local residents and landowner
16 th July 2024	In person cultural heritage workshop in Dornoch	ARCH Highland, Timespan and cultural heritage groups from across the North of Scotland.

Date	Meeting Type	Stakeholder Group in Attendance
1st October 2024	In person data sharing meeting with local cultural heritage representative ahead of surveys being undertaken in local area	Local cultural heritage representative alongside our environmental consultants from ERM and AOC
8 th October 2024	In person meeting with Timespan ahead of cultural heritage surveys being undertaken in local area	Timespan alongside our environmental consultants from ERM and AOC.

6.2.4 SSEN Transmission also engaged and hosted a number of meetings with statutory consultees which are detailed within the PAC Report and include, but are not limited to, those described in **Table 6.2** below.

Table 6.2: Statutory Consultee Meetings

Date	Meeting Type	Stakeholder Group in Attendance
7 th and 10 th March 2023	Virtual Consultation event with Statutory Consultees (Microsoft Team meeting)	THC; NatureScot; Historic Environment Scotland (HES); apologies from Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
13 th September 2023	Formal Pre-Application meeting with THC and Statutory Consultees to discuss the Proposed Development	THC; NatureScot; HES; apologies from SEPA
10 th September 2024	Online statutory consultee pre-application consultation meeting on Microsoft Teams	SEPA
13 th September 2024	Online statutory consultee pre-application consultation meeting on Microsoft Teams	THC
Recurring Meetings	Online statutory consultee pre-application consultation meeting on Microsoft Teams	Nature Scot

6.3 Further Consultee Engagement

6.3.1 Consultation engagement has been ongoing throughout the different stages of the Proposed Development and continued throughout the Scoping and EIA process. This engagement kept key EIA consultees updated on the Proposed Development and allowed SSEN Transmission to agree important methodological issues for EIA related activities such as survey scopes and approaches, assessment methods, and approaches to mitigation.

6.3.2 **Table 6.3** outlines some of the key additional meetings and engagement that has been undertaken by the Applicant to help inform design decisions.

Table 6.3: Additional Meetings

Consultee	Date	Engagement Topic
NatureScot	18 th April 2024	Ecology

Consultee	Date	Engagement Topic
HES	22 nd April 2024 29 th April 2024	Cultural heritage
HES	19 th August 2024	Special arrangements
NatureScot	19 th August 2024	Special arrangements
NatureScot	29 th August 2024	Designated Sites
SEPA	10 th September 2024	Special arrangements
NatureScot	27 th November 2024	Ornithology
NatureScot	19 th February 2025	Designated Sites
HES	7 th – 11 th April 2025	Cultural heritage (site visit)
NatureScot	22 nd May 2025	WHS
HES	13 th June 2025	Cultural heritage

6.4 EIA Scoping

6.4.1 An EIA Scoping Report was issued to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) in October 2024 (see **Volume 5, Appendix 6.1: Scoping Report**). A Scoping Opinion⁴ was provided by ECU in February 2025 and is included in **Volume 5, Appendix 6.2: Scoping Opinion**. The content of this EIA Report is based on the Scoping Opinion.

6.4.2 **Volume 5, Appendix 6.3: Scoping Matrix** of this EIA Report includes details of the key issues that were raised during Scoping consultation and how and where they are addressed within this EIA Report.

6.5 Key Scoping Issues

6.5.1 The Scoping Opinion includes items raised by the Scottish Ministers to be considered and addressed in this EIA Report. This section sets out the issues referenced within the Scoping Opinion (direct quotes indicated *in italics*) and explains where – within this EIA Report – each issue has been addressed.

EIA Consultation and Scope

6.5.2 “*Scottish Ministers expect the EIA report which will accompany the application for the proposed Development to consider in full all consultation responses attached in Annex A and Annex B.*”

6.5.3 To demonstrate the Applicant’s adherence to this, **Volume 5, Appendix 6.3: Scoping Matrix** of this EIA Report includes a summary of all consultation comments received as part of the Scoping process and where these are addressed within this EIA Report, where relevant.

⁴ The Scottish Government, Energy Consents Unit (2025) Scoping Opinion on behalf of Scottish Ministers under the Electricity Works. [Online] available at: <https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx?cr=ECU00006008>

Drinking Water Protected Areas and Scottish Water Assets

- 6.5.4 *“Scottish Water did not provide information on whether there are any drinking water protected areas or Scottish Water assets on which the development could have any significant effect. However, Scottish Ministers request that the company contacts Scottish Water (via EIA@scottishwater.co.uk) and makes further enquires to confirm whether there 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”.*
- 6.5.5 *“Scottish Ministers request that the Company investigates the presence of any private water supplies which may be impacted by the development. It did not respond to the consultation. 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.”*
- 6.5.6 The location of Scottish Water assets has been checked so any impacts have been assessed. Scottish Water will also be contacted three months in advance of any works commencing on site, as requested.
- 6.5.7 Desk studies, site surveys and questionnaires have been conducted to identify any presence of private water supplies. **Chapter 10: Water Environment** of this EIA Report identifies any potentially impacted private water supplies and sets out suitable mitigation measures as needed.

Aquatic Ecology

- 6.5.8 *“Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD) provide generic scoping guidelines for overhead line development (<https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/Freshwater/Research/onshoreren>) which outline how fish populations can be impacted during the construction, operation and decommissioning of a wind farm 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.”*
- 6.5.9 *“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.”*
- 6.5.10 *“MD-SEDD also provide standing advice for overhead line development (which has been appended at Annex B) which outlines what information, relating to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, is expected in the EIA report. Use of the checklist, provided in Annex 1 of the standing advice, 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.”*
- 6.5.11 Potential effects on fish and aquatic ecology (including freshwater pearl mussel) are detailed within **Chapter 8: Ecology and Nature Conservation**. The MD-SEDD checklist has been completed and included within **Volume 5, Appendix 8.5: Watercourse Crossing Ecological Appraisal**. The survey methodology for freshwater pearl mussel was agreed through consultation with NatureScot and has been scoped into the assessment in recognition of the River Oykel SAC and the River Evelix SACs.
- 6.5.12 Best practice mitigation in the form of SSEN Transmission’s General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) and Species Protection Plans (SPPs) will be implemented to protect the water environment and the conservation status of other aquatic ecological features, including fish. In addition, to avoid harm to the aquatic environment all proposed watercourse crossings will be constructed in accordance with SEPA guidance, and where freshwater pearl mussel are present, crossings will be by way of a single span structure. With the best

practice mitigation in place, it is considered that there is no likely impact pathway that could significantly affect the conservation status of aquatic ecological features.

Peat Landslide Risk

6.5.13 *“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), published at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/04/8868>, should be followed in the preparation of the EIA report, which should contain such an assessment and details of mitigation measures. Where a PLHRA is not required clear justification for not carrying out such a risk assessment is required.”*

6.5.14 A PLHRA is included as an appendix to **Chapter 11: Geological Environment** in **Volume 5, Appendix 11.1: Peat Landslide and Hazard Risk Assessment**.

Visualisation Viewpoints

6.5.15 *“The scoping report identified viewpoints will be contained within Volume 4 of the EIA Report. Any additional viewpoints that are to be agreed must be within the scope of the EIA and best practice approach/ methodologies.”*

6.5.16 Viewpoint locations for the Proposed Development have been selected and consulted on with the NatureScot and THC.

Habitat Enhancement

6.5.17 *“Habitat enhancement and mitigation measures should be detailed within the EIA, however the Scottish Ministers note that some details may not be available at time of application for certain compensatory enhancement schemes.”*

6.5.18 *“A draft or outline Habitat Management Plan and Species Protection Plan should be produced as part of the EIA, including any proposals for mitigation and enhancement in relation to important habitats and species. However, the Scottish Ministers note that some strategies for habitat restoration require third party agreement and so may not be available at the time of application.”*

6.5.19 *“The Scottish Ministers expect that all survey information will be up to date and include all areas of proposed construction but understand that some temporary areas may not yet be confirmed.”*

Habitat enhancement and mitigation is considered within **Chapter 8: Ecology and Nature Conservation** of this EIA Report or appendices associated with these chapters. An outline Habitat Management Plan (HMP) has also been included as an annex to **Volume 5, Appendix 8.8: BNG Report**. More detailed information on necessary mitigation and enhancement will be provided at a later stage based on information available post-submission of this EIA Report. This is due to the requirement for landowner agreement which will be clarified and confirmed in the applicable chapter of this EIA Report as appropriate. SSSEN Transmission's Species Protection Plans are included in **Volume 5, Appendix 3.4**.

6.5.20 **Chapter 8: Ecology and Nature Conservation** and **Chapter 9: Ornithology** and appendices associated with these chapters, detail the survey information collected for the Proposed Development.

Noise

- 6.5.21 *"The noise assessment should be carried out in line with relevant legislation and standards as detailed in Chapter 13 of the scoping report."*
- 6.5.22 The relevant legislation and standards identified for the noise assessment are included in **Chapter 15: Noise and Vibration**.

Lighting and Air Traffic

- 6.5.23 *"The Scottish Ministers note Highlands and Islands Airport Limited state aviation lighting would be required for each tower. Scottish Ministers expect the Company to further engage with Highland and Islands Airport where required in order to mitigate any aviation safety concerns."*
- 6.5.24 SSEN Transmission has provided the exact coordinates (Eastings and Northings) for each tower location as part of the submission (**Volume 5, Appendix 3.1: Indicative Tower Schedule**) and will continue to consult with Highlands and Islands Airport Limited regarding the Proposed Development. Lighting requirements will be assessed further and if the need for obstruction lighting is identified then this will be included within this EIA Report within **Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development** and any potential impacts assessed within **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual**.

Ornithology

- 6.5.25 *"It is recommended by the Scottish Ministers that decisions on bird surveys – species, methodology, vantage points, viewsheds & duration - site specific and cumulative – should be made following discussion between the Company and NatureScot."*
- 6.5.26 NatureScot have been consulted throughout the design phases of the Proposed Development and will continue to be consulted upon regarding ornithological matters (see in **Chapter 9: Ornithology**).

Borrow Pits

- 6.5.27 *"The Scottish Ministers note that borrow pits will be required to provide stone for the proposed Development. Where known, these borrow pits should be considered as part of the EIA process and included in the EIA Report detailing information regarding their location, size, and nature. It should include the proposed depth of the excavation compared to the actual topography and water table, proposed drainage and settlement traps, turf and overburden removal and storage for reinstatement, and details of the proposed restoration profile. The impact of such facilities (including dust, blasting and impact on water) should be appraised as part of the overall impact of the working. Information should cover the requirements set out in 'PAN 50: Controlling the Environmental Effects of Surface Mineral Workings'."*
- 6.5.28 As there is insufficient information on the location, number and scale of borrow pits at time of submission, planning permission for borrow pits will be sought by the Principal Contractors for the Proposed Development separately to the Section 37 application.

Cultural Heritage

- 6.5.29 *"Regarding Cultural Heritage impacts, alongside the assessment on Category A listed buildings the Scottish Ministers would expect an assessment on significant Category B and C listed buildings."*
- 6.5.30 An assessment of Category B and C listed buildings is included in **Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage**.

Forestry

- 6.5.31 *“Scottish Ministers note that with regards to compensatory planting, felling and re-stocking out-with the operational corridor, full details may not be known at the time of application as these take place on third party land and require landowner agreement.”*
- 6.5.32 Information on compensatory planting is included within **Chapter 13: Forestry** of this EIA Report or appendices associated with these chapters. However, more detailed information on necessary compensation will be provided at a later stage based on information available post-submission of this EIA Report. This is due to the requirement for landowner agreement which will be clarified and confirmed in the applicable chapter of this EIA Report as appropriate.

Rail Networks

- 6.5.33 *“The Scottish Ministers recommend that potential impacts of construction and completed development on safe and efficient operation of the railway are assessed. This includes conducting a Traffic Assessment and providing details of proposed construction and engineering works near the railway, as detailed in Network Rail’s Scoping response.”*
- 6.5.34 The proximity of the Proposed Development to existing railways has been considered as part of the design. Further information is contained within **Chapter 14: Traffic and Transport** of this EIA Report which includes a Traffic Assessment for proposed construction and engineering works.

Socio-Economics

- 6.5.35 *“With regards to Socio-Economics, the Scottish Ministers note that Socio-Economics will be scoped out of the EIA, however the Company have confirmed it will provide a stand-alone Socio-Economics report. The Scottish Ministers would therefore recommend that in the stand-alone report the proposed Development should be appropriately and fully assessed on both a national and local scale, with consideration of the relevant Planning Authority Development Plans. The Scottish Ministers also request the submitted report estimates who may be affected by the proposed Development, in all or in part, which may require individual households to be identified, local communities or a wider socio-economic grouping such as tourists and tourist related businesses, recreational groups, attractions and events. The Socio-Economic report should also include relevant economic information connected with the proposed Development, including the potential number of jobs, and economic activity associated with the procurement, construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed Development. This should set out the impact on the regional and local economy, not just the national economy. Any mitigation proposed should also address impacts on the regional and local economy.”*
- 6.5.36 A Socio-Economic Report has been prepared as part of the Section 37 application and will be submitted as a separate document to this EIA Report to address the information requested by Scottish Ministers.

Cumulative Assessment

- 6.5.37 *“Regarding cumulative assessment, it is recommended by the Scottish Ministers that in order to assess the full environmental impact of the Development, the Company include within the cumulative impact assessment, OHL and Substation infrastructure that is associated with SSEN Transmission ASTI projects.”*
- 6.5.38 SSEN Transmission developments which are required to connect the Proposed Development are included within the cumulative assessment in each technical chapter as outlined in **Section 5.5 of Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**.

Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF) Exposure

6.5.39 *"The Proposed Development must be designed in compliance with the ICNIRP Guidelines, and also the UK Government's Code of Practice entitled "Power Lines: Demonstrating compliance with EMF public exposure guidelines" which implements the policy to comply with the ICNIRP guidelines. The Company's approach to design also takes into account their statutory requirements in relation to the minimum height of overhead lines and ground clearance, and the position, insulation, and protection of OHLs to ensure compliance with the Electrical Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002. The Scottish Ministers note that a separate human health and population impact assessment chapter will not be presented in the EIAR, however welcome the Company's commitment to provide a separate report alongside the EIAR demonstrating the compliance of the electricity transmission systems for the proposed Development with the UK guidelines on EMF exposure."*

6.5.40 An EMF Compliance Report has been provided in a report separate to this EIA Report as part of the Section 37 application.

Hazards Assessment

6.5.41 *"The Scottish Ministers request that the company assess the impact of the proposed development on existing and/or planned infrastructure. In particular, the Company should carry out the necessary assessments to confirm if any part of the proposed Development is within the consultation zone of any of the following:*

- a licenced explosives site;*
- gas (or any other) pipeline;*
- existing overhead electric lines;*
- underground cables;*
- water pipes; or*
- telecommunications links."*

6.5.42 *"Scottish Ministers also request the Company to assess if any flammable, toxic or explosive chemicals detailed in The Town and Country Planning (Hazardous Substances) (Scotland) Regulations 2015 would be stored on site in quantities such that a Hazardous Substances Consent would be required under section 2 of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) (Scotland) Act 1997."*

6.5.43 The necessary hazard assessments have been undertaken as part of the design development during the routing and alignment selection stages and any constraints of this nature have been avoided as far as practicable within the design of the Proposed Development. Where avoidance has not been possible, appropriate engineering mitigation solutions have been developed. A detailed description of the Proposed Development including the approach for crossing existing overhead lines is provided as part of this EIA Report (**Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development**).

6.5.44 The assessment of impacts upon Major Accidents and Disasters is scoped out of this EIA Report with the agreement of the Scottish Ministers.

Mitigation Measures

6.5.45 *"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."*

6.5.46 Mitigation measures, where required, are set out within each technical chapter of this EIA Report and consolidated within **Chapter 19: Schedule of Mitigation**.

6.6 Gate Check

6.6.1 The guidance for gate checking procedures, Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989, was updated in February 2025 and therefore the submission of a Gate Check Report prior to submission of the Section 37 application is no longer required.

6.7 Issues Scoped out of Assessment

6.7.1 During the Scoping process, it was identified that a number of environmental topics do not require detailed assessment within this EIA Report as it was considered that they are not likely to give rise to significant effects. These topics were referred to in the Scoping Report (see **Volume 5, Appendix 6.1: Scoping Report**). Generally, the Scoping Opinion (see **Volume 5, Appendix 6.2: Scoping Opinion**), supported the proposed scope of the EIA confirming in Section 3.5 that “*Scottish Ministers are satisfied with the scope of the EIA set out within the scoping report*”.

6.7.2 The Scoping Opinion included responses from six Community Councils who raised some concerns regarding scoped out topics. Their responses identified that the Proposed Development could potentially impact on major accidents, land use, human health, particularly in relation to EMFs and radio and TV interference, and socio-economics⁵. A full account of issues raised by the Community Councils is documented within **Volume 5, Appendix 6.3: Scoping Matrix**.

Land Use

Baseline Conditions

6.7.3 Land use across the Proposed Development includes forestry/woodland and agriculture, with some areas of moorland, settlements, scattered properties (residential and commercial), hamlets, roads, railway and wind farms. The Proposed Development does not directly interface with any areas which have been specifically allocated as sites for future development as listed in the Local Development Plans for THC.

6.7.4 Impacts on forestry are discussed in **Chapter 13: Forestry** and are not discussed further here.

Potential Effects

6.7.5 Potentially significant effects which can arise on land use from developments of this type include temporary or permanent loss of utilised land, including agricultural land; temporary or permanent severance and impact on the viability of existing activities; and impacts on land identified for future development.

6.7.6 The temporary and permanent loss of land due to tower locations and new access tracks will be managed through agreements with the relevant landowners and tenants, and is not considered to result in a significant effect on land use during the operational lifetime of the Proposed Development.

6.7.7 Dialogue will be maintained by the Applicant and/or the Principal Contractors with landowners and tenants throughout the construction period to minimise any potential disruption as a result of the proposed construction works. Potential environmental effects will be minimised through the implementation of mitigation measures, in particular a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and relevant GEMPs.

⁵ To address this, a socio-economic report is submitted as part of the Section 37 application as a separate document to this EIA Report.

Issues Scoped Out

- 6.7.8 Regarding land use specifically, no potential significant effects are predicted as a result of the Proposed Development and therefore an assessment on land use (with the exception of forestry, tourism and recreation) was scoped out of this EIA Report.

Air Quality

Baseline Conditions

- 6.7.9 Local air quality is a combination of background air quality which is representative of general levels of pollution away from busy roads and industrial activity as well as the added emissions from local sources such as road traffic. Due to the generally rural location of the Proposed Development, contribution from road traffic and polluting industrial sources are minimal. The Proposed Development does not pass through any Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs).

Potential Effects

- 6.7.10 Impacts can arise on air quality from developments of this type due primarily to generation and dispersal of dust and airborne particulate matter and emissions from plant, construction traffic and construction activities. However, as construction works would be temporary and short term at any specific location the effects will be localised, and intermittent, and therefore not considered to be significant in terms of effects on localised or regional air quality. Potential effects will be minimised through the implementation of mitigation measures, in particular the Proposed Development CEMP and relevant GEMPs.

Issues Scoped Out

- 6.7.11 No significant effects on air quality are predicted as a result of the Proposed Development and therefore an assessment on air quality was scoped out of this EIA Report.

Climate Change

- 6.7.12 Climate change has been considered both in terms of life cycle/embodied carbon and land use change carbon.

Life Cycle/Embodied Carbon

- 6.7.13 Carbon in materials and components for OHLs is acknowledged in National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) as requiring consideration for adverse climate effects. However, the carbon quantum embedded into materials and components associated with the infrastructure is not predicted to be significant in relation to the carbon saving, because of the carbon reduction targets the Proposed Development would facilitate at a national level. The priority is therefore to minimise the carbon embodied in the Proposed Development as far as possible (as NPF4 Policy 2a requires) through commitments in relation to activities such as re-use, recycling of materials, circular economy principles, supply chain procurement requirements in contracts and adoption of low carbon construction methodologies. This will also support compliance with the principles of NPF4 Policy 12 (Zero Waste).
- 6.7.14 It was proposed that an assessment of life cycle/embodied carbon was scoped out of this EIA Report as it was demonstrated through the integrated impact assessment produced for NPF4 that *"the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions assessment concludes this development will likely have an overall net positive impact on achieving national greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets"*. This is because of the role that renewable energy, and the necessary transmission infrastructure, provides in meeting the national greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.
- 6.7.15 There is no potential significant adverse effects a result of the Proposed Development and therefore an assessment on life cycle/embodied carbon was entirely scoped out of this EIA Report.

Land Use Change Carbon

- 6.7.16 Impacts from loss or damage to peatlands and/or from loss of woodlands are also acknowledged in NPF4 as having some potential for adverse climate effects. While it is acknowledged that NPF4 Policy 5d(iii) indicates a requirement for an assessment of net climate effects, the policy also identifies the process that should be followed to avoid and reduce effects on peatland and woodland. This will be through design and by following the mitigation hierarchy.
- 6.7.17 In the context of EIA therefore, mitigation has been considered in determining whether the effects of OHLs on peatlands would be significant. Mitigation measures include the avoidance of peat through design (as the NatureScot peatland guidance identifies) and the production of relevant plans such as the CEMP, HMP and Peat Management Plan (PMP). Further compensatory measures such as woodland planting and/or peatland restoration also provide opportunities to create carbon sequestering habitats, and these will be considered within the relevant technical chapters.
- 6.7.18 Although the design process has sought to avoid peatland wherever practicable, there are some areas within the footprint of the Proposed Development where there are nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat or priority peatland habitat. Due to the extent of carbon-rich soils, a peatland specific carbon assessment has been undertaken in line with national standards and based on total life-cycle perspectives of the Proposed Development. The objective was to both quantify the magnitude of change and support appropriate measures to mitigate effects on peatlands. Further information is presented in **Chapter 11: Geological Environment**.

Material Assets and Waste

Potential Effects

- 6.7.19 Materials use and waste generation will be limited in type and quantity, and significant effects are not anticipated. The use of recycled materials, where it is feasible to do so, and minimisation of waste will be included in the CEMP which will be produced and implemented by the Principal Contractors.

Issues Scoped Out

- 6.7.20 There is no potential for significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development and therefore an assessment of material assets and waste is scoped out of this EIA Report.

Major Accidents and Disasters

Potential Effects

- 6.7.21 The potential for the risk of a major accident and disaster affecting the OHL is 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.

Issues Scoped Out

- 6.7.22 There is no potential for significant effects in relation to the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to major accidents and disasters, taking account of the existing SSE Group crisis management and continuity plans and therefore an assessment of this topic is scoped out of this EIA Report.

EMF

Baseline Conditions

- 6.7.23 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. The Applicant ensures that they comply with relevant legislation, which in turn is based on the advice of the UK Government's independent scientific advisers the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB), now part of the Health Protection Agency, to ensure the appropriate level of protection for the public. 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.

Potential Effects

- 6.7.24 As EMF limits will be adhered to there is no potential for significant effects. However, an EMF Compliance Report has been produced by the Applicant to accompany the Section 37 application for consent.

Issues Scoped Out

- 6.7.25 There is no potential for significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development and therefore an assessment on EMF is scoped out of this EIA Report.

Radio and TV interference

Baseline Conditions

- 6.7.26 At high voltages and in particularly adverse weather, radio interference may occur due to corona, a phenomenon which causes the air surrounding conductors to become ionized, resulting in the conductors to discharge electromagnetic radiations (which cause radio interference). This only affects longwave (LW) and medium wave (MW) signals, which carry Amplitude Modulation (AM) radio.
- 6.7.27 LW and MW interference can occur for a wide variety of reasons including differences in atmosphere, electric motors within common household appliances, light-emitting diode (LED) lights, street lighting and passing traffic. Under certain weather conditions, there may be cases of limited AM radio interference at properties in proximity to the OHL.
- 6.7.28 The Radio and Television Investigation Service (RTIS), as the regulatory body, and The Office of Communications (Ofcom) undertake investigations into complaints of radio and television interference. Published information indicates few cases of interference attributable to OHLs of 100 kV and over, and the number of complaints has fallen over recent years.

Potential Effects

- 6.7.29 Potential effects caused by the Proposed Development would be upon LW and MW signals which carry AM radio. AM is the oldest radio broadcasting system and over the years the number of radio stations broadcasting on AM is reducing, as they move to more reliable, higher-quality FM or digital platforms and there are now only a limited number of radio stations still operating on AM. The Proposed Development is not considered to cause interference to Television (TV), Frequency Modulation (FM) or Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) signals.
- 6.7.30 Interference to AM signals is common from a variety of sources and it is considered that the Proposed Development would not cause additional significant AM interference. Any complaints by nearby residents raised to Ofcom or RTIS that are found to be attributable to the Proposed Development would be appropriately dealt with by the Applicant on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, radio and TV interference is scoped out of this EIA Report.

Issues Scoped Out

- 6.7.31 There is no potential for significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development and therefore an assessment of radio and TV interference is scoped out of this EIA Report.

Population and Human Health

Baseline Conditions

- 6.7.32 The Proposed Development passes adjacent to settlements (which also includes some hamlets and scattered residential properties) as well as through a rural to semi-rural landscape.

Potential Effects

- 6.7.33 Aspects which have potential to affect human health during construction and operation of the Proposed Development include land contamination, noise and vibration, air quality, traffic, recreation and socio-economics.

Issues Scoped Out

- 6.7.34 The topics which collectively comprise population and human health are dealt with separately and therefore a standalone assessment has been scoped out. However, the cumulative effect on a receptor, such as local residents, are considered within this EIA Report in **Chapter 17: Cumulative Assessment**.

Socio-Economics

- 6.7.35 The Proposed Development is expected to positively contribute to the economy of Scotland in terms of direct and indirect employment and business investment, with wider economic benefits, including the facilitation of large scale deployment of renewable electricity generation in the north of Scotland. This is supported by its status as a National Development 3 (ND3) "*Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure*" in NPF4.
- 6.7.36 A stand-alone Socio-Economic Report accompanies the Section 37 application which demonstrates how the Proposed Development aligns with national and local development policies and outlines the predicted socio-economic effects.

6.8 The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

- 6.8.1 The EIA Regulations sets out a number of specified factors to be considered within an EIA Report; specifically, those factors listed under *Regulations 4(3) and 4(4)*, and *Schedule 4*. **Table 6.4** describes how this EIA Report addresses these factors.

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

Topic	Potential for Significant Effects
Population and Human Health	<p>Potential effects relating to population and human health have potential to arise from EMF and air quality. Such effects are deemed to be not significant and are scoped out of detailed assessment as discussed within Section 6.6 of this chapter.</p> <p>Potential effects arising from noise and/or vibration are considered in Chapter 15: Noise and Vibration.</p>
Biodiversity ⁶	<p>The potential effects on biodiversity are considered in Chapter 8: Ecology and Nature Conservation and Chapter 9: Ornithology.</p>

⁶ Particularly species and habitats protected by Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conservation of wild birds.

Topic	Potential for Significant Effects
Land (and natural resources availability)	Potential effects relating to land as an agricultural resource are deemed to be not significant and are scoped out of detailed assessment as discussed within Section 6.6 of this chapter.
Soil (and natural resources availability)	The potential effects on geological receptors, peat and groundwater resources are considered in Chapter 10: Water Environment and Chapter 11: Geological Environment .
Water (and natural resource availability)	The potential effects on the water environment and water supplies are considered in Chapter 10: Water Environment .
Air and Climate	The potential effects on air quality and climate change are deemed to be not significant and are scoped out of detailed assessment as discussed in Section 6.6 of this chapter.
Cultural Heritage (material assets)	The potential effects on Cultural Heritage assets are considered in Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage .
Landscape (material assets)	The potential effects on Landscape are considered in Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual .
Major Accidents and Disasters	The potential effects on major accidents are deemed to be not significant and are scoped out of detailed assessment as discussed in Section 6.6 of this chapter.
Interaction Between Factors (cumulative effects)	The approach to cumulative effects is outlined within Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology . It is considered within each of the technical chapters in Volume 2 where relevant and is also detailed within a stand-alone chapter (Chapter 17: Cumulative Assessment).