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13. FORESTRY

13.1 Executive Summary

- 13.1.1 This chapter presents the assessment of the potential significant construction and operational effects of the Proposed Development on forestry. The assessment has been undertaken by RTS Forestry in accordance with UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) guidance.
- 13.1.2 The assessment includes sites identified within both the NatureScot published Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI), (as illustrated on **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Designated Sites**), and the Forestry Commission Scotland published Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) database (as illustrated in each individual woodland report (**Volume 5, Appendix 13.1, Figure 1: Woodland Impacted by the Proposed Development**)).
- 13.1.3 The Applicant has produced a series of Woodland Reports (**Volume 5, Appendix 13.1**) to indicate the areas of forestry or woodland that would be intersected by the Proposed Development. The Woodland Reports set out details of the current baseline in terms of describing the woodland type (species, condition, current management), with reference to the inclusion of the Proposed Development within ongoing forest management activities.
- 13.1.4 It is predicted that the Proposed Development would result in the direct loss of 536.74 hectares (ha) of woodland associated with its construction and operation. This loss is primarily associated with the establishment of an Operational Corridor (OC), along with additional forest clearance required for Equipotential Zones (EPZ) pulling positions, new access tracks, and special arrangements. The 536.74 ha direct loss comprises 451.03 ha of commercial conifer woodland (mix of plantations and native conifer woodlands), 73.48 ha of semi-natural broadleaved woodlands and 12.23 ha of ancient woodland.
- 13.1.5 In the forests adjacent to the OC, it is anticipated that there will be a requirement for a further 536.65 ha of management felling (commercial conifer woodland) to mitigate the risk of windblow.
- 13.1.6 The total classified woodland within the AWI and NWSS databases affected by the Proposed Development is 182.89 ha. Of the 182.89 ha, 100.73 ha is native woodland, 67.88 ha is Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin (LEPO), 12.23 ha is ancient woodland, and 2.05 ha is Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). In some instances, AWI and NWSS overlap and therefore areas can be classified under both databases. Any impact on both ancient woodland and semi-natural broadleaved woodland is considered significant in the context of the EIA Regulations.
- 13.1.7 As the Proposed Development would result in the permanent loss of forestry or woodland, the Applicant is committed to provide compensatory planting offsite thus meeting the Scottish Government's (The Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy¹) objective of no net loss of woodland. Replanting or compensatory planting cannot mitigate the loss of ancient woodland, as it is recognised as an irreplaceable habitat.
- 13.1.8 Where management felling is deemed appropriate, these measures can only be undertaken with the agreement of the affected landowner and with felling permission granted by Scottish Forestry. This would require the landowner to fully address the replanting of such areas of felling outside the OC as part of any felling permission application and deliver such restocking as is agreed with Scottish Forestry in line with The Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018². There is therefore no permanent loss of woodland as

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

² [The Forestry and Land Management Act 2018](#) (Scotland)

a result of management felling. It is the intention of the Applicant to encourage landowners to follow this good practice in terms of redesigning their current Long-Term Forest Plans, which in turn would aim to follow the UK Forestry Standard for the implementation of the works required. This management felling is therefore considered temporary.

- 13.1.9 Whilst loss of ancient and semi-natural woodland is deemed significant, the removal of commercial woodland is considered not significant due to its limited scale, the resilience of the wider forest resource, and mitigation through compensatory planting.

13.2 Introduction

- 13.2.1 This chapter assesses the significance of effects resulting from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development on forest and woodland areas. The Proposed Development has been divided into five sections (A to E) which are detailed in **Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development**. Within this chapter, the terms woodland and forestry are deemed interchangeable. This chapter was developed using a combination of desk and site-based assessments to confirm the current status of the forests encountered along the OC and the land immediately adjacent. Local information on individual forests was collated from data held by Scottish Forestry, NatureScot and the forest owners where available. This information, along with the site-based surveys and associated drone and aerial satellite information, has provided sufficient information to inform this chapter.

- 13.2.2 This chapter is supported by **Volume 3, Figure 13.1: Proposed Development Felling Plan** and should be considered alongside the Woodland Reports (**Volume 5, Appendix 13.1: Woodland Reports**) for the individual woodlands within the OC. These reports provide the baseline information on the current status of each woodland, including reference to species, age grouping and condition.

- 13.2.3 The assessment has been undertaken by RTS Forestry in line with the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) guidance³.

- 13.2.4 An assessment of the potential effects of forestry felling is also considered as required within **Chapter 7: Landscape and Visual, Chapter 8: Ecology and Nature Conservation, Chapter 9: Ornithology, Chapter 10: Water Environment, Chapter 11: Geological Environment, Chapter 14: Traffic and Transport, Chapter 15: Noise and Vibration and Chapter 17: Cumulative Assessment**.

13.3 Scope of Assessment and Methodology

Scope of Assessment

- 13.3.1 This chapter considers the potential significant effects of the Proposed Development on forestry, including cumulative effects with other developments, where relevant. This includes an assessment of the sensitivity of the forestry and woodland areas located along the Proposed Development and an assessment of the likely magnitude of the change that would arise, with particular emphasis on forest and woodland structure and management. The assessment is based on the description of the Proposed Development that is provided in **Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development** (and related appendices).
- 13.3.2 The assessment is based on the requirement to form, and maintain, an OC along the alignment of the Proposed Development, while recognising the potential impacts over broader forest management areas (outwith the OC) as a result of the Proposed Development. This chapter reports on the assessment of the effects associated with the creation of the OC and proposed management felling associated with the potential future windblow and does not address the overall Long Term Forest Plans (LTFPs) associated with

³ UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) guidance 2023

individual forest ownerships. Any management felling undertaken cannot be definitively assessed because it would be solely under the control of the relevant landowner (and not the Applicant). Consequently, the assessment is limited to consideration of the effects of the Proposed Development on the present forest composition and yield, at the time of writing. The relevant landowners and forest managers have been consulted on the felling requirements within the OC and how these may impact the overall LTFPs and proposals to develop additional works, in so far as is currently possible. The Applicant will continue to work with landowners on this matter.

- 13.3.3 As provided in terms of the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (ESQCR) 2002⁴ and Schedule 4 to the Electricity Act 1989, the Applicant has the necessary statutory powers to remove woodland for the purposes of construction and ongoing maintenance of new overhead lines (OHLs), and/or protection of electrical plant.

Effects Scoped Out

- 13.3.4 Following careful consideration and using professional judgement, a number of potential effects have been 'scoped out' of the detailed assessment reported in this chapter as they were considered unlikely to be significant during the initial assessment. Effects scoped out for the Proposed Development comprise effects on shelter and effects on deer stalking.

Effects on Shelter

- 13.3.5 Effects on shelter or individual trees are typically attributed to the removal of agricultural shelterbelts in more exposed upland locations. Partial removal of some shelterbelt woodlands is proposed as part of the construction of the Proposed Development. However, there would be sufficient residual shelter in the area, and the likely effect of the loss resulting from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development is not considered to be significant.

Effects on Deer Stalking

- 13.3.6 In relation to deer stalking, the only adverse effect likely to occur as a result of the Proposed Development is that which would be potentially experienced as a result of the tree felling element of the construction phase, whereby deer stalking would be interrupted. It is considered that the extent of the area of the forests not affected by construction of the Proposed Development, which will be retained and available for deer stalking during the felling and construction phase means that significant construction effects on deer stalking are unlikely. No significant effects arising from the operation of the Proposed Development are likely.

Extent of Study Area and Operational Corridor

- 13.3.7 The study area for this assessment initially focused on a Limit of Deviation (LoD) of 200 m total width (100 m either side of the centreline) for the Proposed Alignment and ancillary infrastructure, where relevant, prior to the identification of an OC. The OC is defined with reference to the distance at which a tree could fall and cause damage to the OHL, resulting in a supply outage. As a result, the final OC width is based on the safety distance required from the centreline to allow for a mature tree falling towards the OHL, taking account of topography and tree height at maturity.
- 13.3.8 The typical OC required within areas of conifer woodland for a 400 kV OHL is 90 m (45 m either side of the centreline). Where the OC passes through areas of native woodland, it is proposed that the extent of woodland removal can be reduced due to the lower height of the tree species present. For the purposes of this assessment, this has been maintained at 90 m and presents a worst case scenario.

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2002/2665/contents> (accessed in April 2025)

13.3.9 By definition, the OC is deemed to include any tree with the potential to become a “Red Zone” tree as defined within the Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA), Guidance note 804⁵. This refers to any tree with the potential to fall into the vicinity zone of the OHL conductors or directly onto the conductors, causing damage or failure.

13.3.10 The forestry assessment has been limited to the woodland removal required for the OC, required access tracks, EPZ pulling positions and special arrangements, as set out in **Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development**. It is acknowledged that the creation of an OC would result in wider potential indirect effects on the surrounding woodland areas. These areas would be subject to a potential increased risk of damage through windblow effects. As a result, the assessment work includes a series of Woodland Reports (**Volume 5, Appendix 13.1**), in respect of the forests and woodlands affected by the Proposed Development. These Woodland Reports demonstrate how the Proposed Development would be included within ongoing forest management activities. They also identify further areas of felling to establish and leave a windfirm edge for the remaining forestry or woodland (categorised as an indirect effect). Any felling undertaken outwith the OC would be solely under the control of the relevant landowner and not the Applicant.

Consultation and Scoping

13.3.11 The scope of this assessment has been determined through a combination of professional judgement and consultation with key stakeholders (including Scottish Forestry, NatureScot, local communities and landowners) through a formal EIA scoping process.

13.3.12 **Table 13.1** outlines consultation responses relevant to forestry received regarding the Proposed Development. Further detail on scoping responses can be found in **Volume 5, Appendix 6.3: Scoping Matrix**.

Table 13.1: Scoping Responses

Organisation	Comment	Response
Scottish Forestry (SF)	<p>Scottish Forestry strongly supports minimising woodland removal to the absolute necessary extent. They emphasise adherence to the Scottish Government’s Policy on Control of Woodland Removal, National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 6 (Forestry, Woodland and Trees). SF advocates for compensatory planting that exceeds the area of woodland loss to offset environmental impacts.</p> <p>They require a detailed assessment of woodland impacts and mitigation measures, ensuring adherence to UK Forestry Standards for felling, restocking, and compensatory planting. Additionally, any felling beyond the Proposed Development’s application must seek separate permissions from SF.</p>	<p>The chapter acknowledges Scottish Forestry’s support for minimising woodland removal and recognises all forestry elements within the Proposed Development have been evaluated in accordance with the Scottish Government Policy on Control of Woodland Removal, National Planning Framework (4) (NPF4 Policy 6 Forestry, Woodland and Trees).</p> <p>A detailed assessment of woodland impacts and mitigation measures has been included in this chapter and Volume 5, Appendix 13.1: Woodland Reports, aligning with UK Forestry Standards. Volume 5, Appendix 13.3: Compensatory Planting Strategy also sets out Compensatory planting requirements, where relevant.</p> <p>The Applicant acknowledges that any additional felling not included in the planning application will require permission from Scottish Forestry, as stipulated under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018.</p> <p>The Applicant will remain committed to working closely with SF to ensure all felling, restocking,</p>

⁵ Safety Guide 804 Electricity at work: Forestry, Forest Industry Safety Accord (FISA)

Organisation	Comment	Response
		and compensatory planting measures align with best practices and policy requirements.
The Highland Council (THC)	<p>THC highlighted concerns regarding the Proposed Development's impact on sensitive, designated woodlands. They stress compliance with NPF4 Policy 6 (Forestry, Woodland, and Trees), and the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) Policies 51 and 52, which strongly favour woodland protection.</p> <p>They recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimising the OC to avoid high-biodiversity woodlands. Prioritising restocking with native species where felling is unavoidable. Implementing compensatory planting as a key mitigation measure for permanent woodland removal. Securing off-site compensatory planting through legal agreements between the Council, the Applicant and landowners. Assessing trees of particular merit value using the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (BS5837:2012). Distinguishing between permanent woodland loss and restructuring activities in the development plans. 	<p>This chapter provides a specific assessment on forestry interests, including commercial forestry plantations, areas of native woodland and areas of ancient woodland. A baseline survey of habitats and species is included in Chapter 8, Ecology and Nature Conservation and Volume 5, Appendix 8.3: Habitats Technical Report. Compensatory planting requirements and potential windblow effects form part of the forestry assessment and Volume 5, Appendix 13.1: Woodland Reports. Appendix 13.3: Compensatory Planting Strategy also sets out Compensatory planting requirements, where relevant.</p>
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Scotland	RSPB advises that compensatory planting should avoid deep peat areas and follow Scottish Forestry guidance.	<p>This will be considered in the Compensatory Planting strategy (Volume 5, Appendix 13.3) to ensure ecological sustainability and compliance with best practices.</p> <p>Current UK Forestry Standards will exclude Compensatory Planting carried out in deep peat.</p>
NatureScot	<p>NatureScot has raised concerns about the route passing through multiple Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), including:</p> <p>Dunbeath Water, Berriedale Water, Langwell Water, Allt nan Caorach SSSI – Upland birch woodlands.</p> <p>Strathfleet SSSI – Upland oak woodland.</p> <p>Kyle of Sutherland Marshes, Lower River Conon SSSI – Wet woodlands.</p> <p>Conon Island SAC – Alder woodland on floodplains</p>	<p>A baseline survey of habitats and species is included in Volume 2, Chapter 8: Ecology and Nature Conservation and Volume 5, Appendix 8.3: Habitats Technical Report. Compensatory planting requirements and potential windblow effects form part of the forestry assessment and Volume 5, Appendix 13.1: Woodland Reports recognise areas within the Dunbeath Water, Berriedale Water, Langwell Water, Allt nan Caorach SSSI – Upland birch woodlands.</p> <p>Strathfleet SSSI – Upland oak woodland.</p> <p>Kyle of Sutherland Marshes, Lower River Conon SSSI – Wet woodlands.</p>

Organisation	Comment	Response
		Conon Island SAC – Alder woodland on floodplains.
SEPA (Scottish Environment Protection Agency)	SEPA advises that the forestry layout should minimise large-scale felling to prevent excessive waste material generation.	Information relating to the removal of woodland is included within this chapter and Volume 5, Appendix 13.1: Woodland Reports .
Woodland Trust (WT)	<p>The Woodland Trust urges careful consideration of the impacts on Ancient Woodland designated in NatureScot's Ancient Woodland Inventory. They recommend:</p> <p>Assessing potential impacts on woodlands within 30 meters of the proposed boundary due to risks of root encroachment and indirect damage.</p> <p>Protecting LEPO-designated woodland sites under the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) where native canopy cover is present.</p> <p>Identifying previously unmapped Ancient Woodlands by assessing also non-ancient sites.</p> <p>Checking the Ancient Tree Inventory for recorded or potential veteran trees. The Woodland Trust objects to the Proposed Development due to concerns over loss or deterioration of Ancient Woodland and veteran trees.</p>	An assessment has been carried out to identify potential effects on forestry and native woodland (including AWI) throughout the route. Volume 5, Appendix 13.1: Woodland Reports also confirm compensatory measures where woodland loss is anticipated.

Policies

13.3.13 The assessment of the effect of the Proposed Development on the long-term loss of forest resources has been undertaken in the context of Scottish Government policy. This policy is detailed within the following documents:

- Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029⁶: includes a policy to increase new woodland planting across the country from the existing 10,000 ha of new planting per annum up to 15,000 ha per annum. Therefore, the long-term removal of forestry within the OC resulting from the Proposed Development conflicts with the woodland expansion objectives;
- The Scottish Government Policy on the Control of Woodland Removal⁷: published in 2009 includes a presumption in favour of protecting Scotland's woodland resources. Woodland removal should only be permitted where it would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits. Where woodland removal is associated with development, compensatory planting may form part of the balancing exercise; and
- The Scottish Government National Planning Framework Version 4 (NPF4) Policy 6 refers to the treatment of Forestry, Woodlands and Trees including:

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-forestry-strategy-20192029/> - Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019-2029

⁷ <https://www.forestry.gov.scot/publications/349-scottish-government-s-policy-on-control-of-woodland-removal-implementation-guidance> Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal (2009)

- Development proposals that enhance, expand and improve woodland and tree cover will be supported.
- Development proposals will not be supported where they will result in:
 - Any loss of ancient woodlands, ancient and veteran trees, or adverse impact on their ecological condition;
 - Adverse impacts on native woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees of high biodiversity value, or identified for protection in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy;
 - Fragmenting or severing woodland habitats, unless appropriate mitigation measures are identified and implemented in line with the mitigation hierarchy;
 - Conflict with Restocking Direction, Remedial Notice or Registered Notice to Comply issued by Scottish Forestry.
- Development proposals involving woodland removal will only be supported where they will achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits in accordance with relevant Scottish Government policy on woodland removal. Where woodland is removed, compensatory planting will most likely be expected to be delivered.
- Development proposals on sites which include an area of existing woodland or land identified in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy as being suitable for woodland creation will only be supported where the enhancement and improvement of woodlands and the planting of new trees on the site (in accordance with the Forestry and Woodland Strategy) are integrated into the design.

Methodology for the Assessment of Effects

13.3.14 Whilst there is no definitive methodology for the assessment of effects on forestry, the assessment is based on the methodology set out in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology** and is based on the requirements of the EIA Regulations.

13.3.15 The assessment is made based on professional judgement, with reference to:

- The sensitivity of the different types of woodland present in the study area taking account of the degree and rate of change in the woodland, both in the recent past and that anticipated in the near future, and therefore the susceptibility/vulnerability of the woodland to change; the quality of the woodland and the extent to which it is rare or distinctive, and the value attributed to the woodland through designations;
- Magnitude of change and the extent of woodland removal;
- Duration and Reversibility - timescale of effect (days/weeks/months/years) until recovery. Permanent effects are described as such, and the likelihood of recovery is detailed where appropriate; and
- Adverse/Beneficial - if the effect will be beneficial or detrimental to the feature.

13.3.16 The effect on woodland is normally considered to be of an adverse nature (i.e. tree felling); however indirect beneficial effects in some areas may arise where the introduction of the Proposed Development allows for the removal of ecologically habitat-poor conifer plantation. This may be followed by natural regeneration or planting of more diverse woodland tree mix or introduction of native woodland species, and the development of more open ground than that which existed originally. While there may be an ecological benefit from the removal of conifer plantation forest, there is a presumption against all forest removal which is supported by the Scottish Government's policy on Control of Woodland Removal⁸. As such for the purposes of this assessment tree removal is to be considered as having an adverse effect. Further arboricultural works i.e.

⁸ Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal; implementation guidance (2019).

crown reduction or limb removal to achieve the necessary safety clearance, removes the necessity for tree removal, thereby reducing the adverse effect on the woodland habitat.

Criteria for Assessing Sensitivity / Importance of Receptors

13.3.17 Four categories of sensitivity / importance of a forest or woodland are defined in **Table 13.2** below:

Table 13.2: Sensitivity Criteria

Category	Description
High	Highly sensitive areas of woodland are considered to be those that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly valued, subject of national designation e.g. Ancient Woodland Category 1a; Particularly rare or distinctive in a national context; or Considered susceptible to small changes.
Medium	Moderately sensitive areas of woodland are considered to be those that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valued more locally; and Are tolerant of moderate levels of change.
Low	Low sensitive areas of woodland are considered to be those that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally, more commonplace; Considered potentially tolerant of noticeable change; and Undergoing substantial development such that their character is one of change.
Negligible/None	Negligible/None sensitive areas of woodland are considered to be those that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to the OHL 'oversailing' the woodland area with no adverse impact; Tolerant of major changes, e.g. plantation forest where major structural changes are regular or planned as part of a normal felling cycle; and With no designations and considered of low or no ecological or landscape value.

Criteria for Assessing Magnitude of Change

13.3.18 The following criteria have been used to inform the assessment of the magnitude of changes as a result of the Proposed Development (see **Table 13.3**).

Table 13.3: Magnitude of Change Criteria

Category	Description
High	A noticeable change to the woodland over a wide area or an intensive change over a limited area.
Medium	Small changes to the woodland over a wide area or a noticeable change over a limited area.
Low	Very minor changes to the woodland over a wide area or minor changes over a limited area.
Negligible/None	Effectively no change.

Significance Criteria

13.3.19 The sensitivity of the woodland (**Table 13.2**) and the magnitude of change criteria (**Table 13.3**) are then used to inform a professional judgement on the likely significance of the effect. **Table 13.4** below provides a framework for reaching a judgement as to the significance of predicted effects.

13.3.20 All effects are considered and presented as either significant (major or moderate) or not significant (minor or negligible/none) in the context of the EIA Regulations.

Table 13.4: Significance of Effect Matrix

Magnitude	Sensitivity			
	High	Medium	Low	Negligible/None
High	Major	Major	Moderate	Minor/None
Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	None
Low	Moderate	Minor	None	None
Negligible/None	Minor	None	None	None

Desk Study

13.3.21 Searches of the Land Register of Scotland for the Proposed Development provided the property boundary information of each landholding. A desk-based appraisal of Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, aerial photography and review of web-based data provided by Scottish Forestry⁹ identified the existing forest and woodland cover within the study area. Where engagement was possible this was supplemented by consultation with landowners and/or forest managers and a review of existing forest data on woodland type (species / age / class) and the existing woodland management regime, including woodland restructuring and LMP/LTFP information. Forest Research, Forest GALES 2.5 model¹⁰ for predicting risk of windblow ("Forest GALES 2.5") was also utilised where applicable.

Field Surveys

13.3.22 Field surveys were undertaken between December 2024 and May 2025 to supplement and verify the desk-based work, and consultations, and to further inform the assessment. The surveys comprised walking (where forest density allowed) along the route which comprises the Proposed Development. The use of aerial assessments utilising drones was also undertaken where required.

13.3.23 Forest characteristics, including forest type and detailed descriptions of the area, age, species mix and stocking density, together with the length of the proposed connection passing through the forest, were recorded. A general site assessment was conducted to evaluate the potential risk of windblow to trees outside the OC. This assessment, based on the professional judgment of the forestry surveyor, considered key factors such as tree species, age, height, and overall forest conditions. In addition, a range of site conditions were considered, including aspect, altitude and soil type.

Assessment Limitations

13.3.24 The assessment limitations primarily relate to the availability of historical land-use data and seasonal constraints affecting survey accuracy. However, the combination of desk-based research and field surveys has provided a robust basis for evaluating potential impacts.

13.3.25 During site assessments, access to existing data sources for most of the large commercial forest areas was provided by FLS and a number of private forest landowners. For most broadleaved areas, there was limited or no age and species data available from the landowners. In these cases, adequate information to assess

⁹ Scottish Forestry - [Scottish Forestry Map Viewer](#)

¹⁰ [ForestGALES](#) ForestGALES 2.5

the forest was gathered from site inspections and the use of the national database records for AWI and NWSS. For the assessment of the local forest resource, data from SF and THC reports were used.

13.3.26 In areas where access to land was not granted or was inaccessible (limited to circa 2% of the route), the survey was undertaken by viewing the woodland from adjacent land and public access tracks. This was supplemented by aerial photography and, where available, online forest data.

13.4 Baseline

13.4.1 THC area has approximately 310,000 ha of forestry, covering 13% of its land. The area features a diverse landscape of forestry and agriculture, with 75% of the forest being coniferous (mainly Sitka spruce, Lodgepole pine, and Scots pine) and 25% broadleaved, primarily birch.

13.4.2 The study area comprises a mixture of large conifer woodlands, as well as areas of native broadleaved woodland, a number of which are recorded as ancient woodland.

13.4.3 NatureScot's Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) identifies three types of ancient woodland, all valued for their biodiversity and cultural importance due to their long-standing woodland cover:

- Ancient Woodland (1a/2a): Semi-natural woodland continuously present since at least 1750 or 1860. Sites planted with non-native species are classed as PAWS;
- Long Established of Plantation Origin (LEPO) (1b/2b): Woodlands that began as plantations in 1750 or 1860 and have remained continuously wooded, often developing semi-natural features over time; and
- Other woodlands on 'Roy' woodland sites (3) - Shown as unwooded on the 1st edition maps but as woodland on the Roy maps. Such sites have, at most, had only a short break in continuity of woodland cover and may still retain features of ancient woodland.

13.4.4 The total length of the Proposed Alignment is approximately 173 km. Of this, 50.8 km passes through areas of forestry. The Proposed Development passes through 41 km of conifer woodland and 7.4 km of broadleaved/native woodlands. An additional 2.3 km passes through clear-felled woodlands which are awaiting restocking. These restocking areas refer to recently felled forest sites that, at the time of the survey, did not contain trees. These areas are considered in the assessment of permanent forest loss, as they are required to be replanted under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2008¹⁴. Consequently, they are included in the evaluation to reflect their future replanting obligations.

13.4.5 This assessment is based on the site baseline condition as of December 2024 – January 2025, with additional site surveys completed in early May 2025. This is considered to be valid for the purposes of the assessment. **Table 13.5** summarises the current lengths of forest types for each of the five sections from A to E of the Proposed Development. **Volume 3, Figure 13.1: Proposed Development Felling Plan** details the areas of projected tree removal.

Table 13.5: Baseline of the current lengths of forestry per section of the OHL A to E

Section	Total Length (Km)	Total forestry- Length (Km)	Broadleaved woodland - Length (Km)	Conifer woodland - Length (Km)	Currently awaiting restocking- Length (Km)
A	67.00	7.80	2.70	5.10	0.00
B	29.00	8.00	0.60	6.00	1.40
C	14.00	7.10	0.10	7.00	0.00

¹⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents> (last accessed April 2025)

Section	Total Length (Km)	Total forestry- Length (Km)	Broadleaved woodland - Length (Km)	Conifer woodland - Length (Km)	Currently awaiting restocking- Length (Km)
D	37.00	20.20	1.90	17.50	0.70
E	26.00	7.70	2.10	5.40	0.20
Total	173.00	50.80	7.40	41.00	2.30

Future Baseline

13.4.6 In the absence of the Proposed Development, forest areas would continue to be managed by the respective forest owners or managers in line with their Forest and Management Plans. Commercial woodlands would be expected to undergo a series of thinning operations followed by felling and restocking, aimed at developing a more diverse age and species structure in the next crop rotation. This approach aligns with the objectives outlined in LTFPs for privately owned forests and Land Management Plans for areas managed by FLS.

13.4.7 For both planted and native broadleaved woodlands, it is assumed (based on information from current LTFPs, Land Management Plans, and best practice guidance) that these areas would otherwise be retained, with minimal intervention in most cases. Additionally, in areas identified as PAWS, landowners would have the option to restore these areas to native woodland following the felling of the current commercial crop. This restoration aligns with the UK Forestry Standard and UK Woodland Assurance Standard, which promote the maintenance, enhancement, or restoration of high conservation value woodland areas. It is not considered likely (in the absence of the Proposed Development) that there would be a net reduction in the area of forest, although there will clearly be local changes.

13.4.6 Any assessment of the future baseline must also take account of climate change. The main consequences of climate change on forestry are considered to include the following:

- Change to species composition and range;
- Increased risk of large windblow events;
- Increased risk of forest fires;
- Increased risk of forest pathogens and pests; and
- Increased risk of landslip and pollution runoff from harvesting and restock sites.

13.4.8 Specific issues relating to the future management of the forests that will be affected by the Proposed Development in relation to climate change potentially include:

- A review of the species planted to address the impact of change in temperature and other weather conditions with a move towards species more adaptable to the projected future weather. These species choices will also be required to address the associated change in pests and other pathogens which are likely to increase risk to tree species;
- The risk of increased high wind events resulting in windblow in commercial woodland is likely to be addressed by the division of larger woodland areas into smaller distinct forest blocks to assist in creating more windfirm boundaries. Current and well used ground preparation techniques are already being used to address tree stability in future crop rotations; and
- More dramatic weather events and their associated risk of water runoff from forest sites, particularly post-harvesting, will be addressed by individual project design and the inclusion of increased open ground adjacent to watercourses. Open ground acts as filtration for runoff from the harvested site. The general breakdown of larger forest blocks into smaller distinct areas helps to reduce the scale of individual harvested site which reduces the risk of the associated runoff.

13.5 Embedded Mitigation

13.5.1 Embedded mitigation relevant to woodland and forestry includes the minimisation of woodland clearance within designated areas, retention of stable woodland edges to reduce windblow risk, and compensatory planting as per The Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy (2009) to address permanent loss of forest resource in appropriate locations. During the alignment and EIA stage, further design modifications have been undertaken to avoid or minimise effects on forestry.

13.5.2 Where temporary tree clearance is required as part of the construction process, the replanting of these areas is embedded mitigation, which will be undertaken onsite to adhere to the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018.

Iterative Design Process

13.5.3 Prior to commencement of the EIA, the routeing and alignment selection process for the Proposed Development sought to prevent or minimise effects on environmental constraints where possible, including forestry. This process is outlined in **Chapter 4: The Routeing Process and Alternatives**, with further detail presented in both the Routeing¹⁵ and Alignment¹⁶ Reports on Consultation. The rules applied to the routeing studies sought to avoid areas of forestry unless there was 'no reasonable alternative'. However, due to the large scale and central position of the areas of commercial conifer woodlands in relation to the 'fixed' connection points (i.e. the substations), the avoidance of forestry had to be balanced against other technical and environmental considerations. Similarly, it has not been possible to avoid all areas listed in the AWI. Where these areas are impacted by the Proposed Development, this is considered in the assessment in **Section 13.6** below. As required by the Scoping Opinion, potential biodiversity effects on ancient woodland are considered in **Chapter 8: Ecology and Nature Conservation**.

Good Practice

13.5.4 In addition to the changes made through the design of the Proposed Development to take account of potential effects on forestry, a series of good practice measures will be put in place through the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) provided by the Principal Contractors during construction to minimise the effect of the Proposed Development on forestry. The assessment has been undertaken on the basis that these measures will be in place:

- Adherence to Forest Industry Safety Accord FISA guidance¹⁷ during felling and extraction of forestry. This is a UK-wide initiative (not specific to Scotland) aimed at improving health, safety, and welfare standards within the forestry industry;
- Adherence to SF & SEPA¹⁸ Guidelines e.g. to ensure protection and enhancement of the water environment during felling and construction;
- Implementation of tree harvesting and extraction methods to ensure minimisation of soil disturbance and compaction during felling and construction;
- Restricting the width of the felling corridor to the minimum required for operational safe clearances. This will predominantly be delivered by the identification of any areas where the individual tree is of a species which can be deemed to be low growing to the extent that they can remain in parts of the OC without conflicting with the safe construction and operation of the OHL within the OC;
- A further opportunity for restricting the width of the OC will be implemented where individual trees within the corridor (which will be predominantly mature broadleaved trees) can be managed through crown

¹⁵ Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beaully OHL Routeing Report on Consultation (December 2023), produced by SSEN Transmission

¹⁶ Spittal – Loch Buidhe – Beaully OHL Alignment Report on Consultation (January 2025), produced by SSEN Transmission

¹⁷ <https://ukfisa.com/Safety/Safety-Guides> Forestry Industry Safety Accord (FISA)

¹⁸ <https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/pollution-control/water-run-off-from-construction-sites/> - Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)

reduction, thereby removing the need to fell the whole tree. This will be undertaken prior to felling as part of the pre-construction final design process; and

- The Applicant will commit to working with the landowners through the construction period to facilitate ongoing forest management where possible within the constraints of safe working practices and the associated Construction (Design and Management) Regulations¹⁹.

13.6 Assessment of Potential Significant Effects

13.6.1 The assessment of potential significant effects associated with the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development is based on the typical activities and characteristics described in **Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development** and related appendices.

13.6.2 The introduction of OHLs into forestry and woodland can give rise to a combination of short-term and long-term effects during both construction and operation. The following interrelated effects can arise from the introduction of OHLs within forest and woodland areas, principally associated with the requirement for tree felling and vegetation management:

- Direct construction and operational effects: loss of areas of forest resource as a result of felling of trees for the OC and access tracks, in the context of the regional forest resource for both commercial woodland, ancient woodland and semi-natural woodlands;
- Indirect construction effects: increased windblow and secondary felling agreed with landowners;
- Indirect operational effects: effects on forest management systems, including fragmentation;
- Indirect operational effects: restrictions on forest access; and
- Cumulative effects: combined loss of woodland from direct and indirect (secondary) felling.

Construction Effects - Woodland Removal

13.6.3 The direct loss of woodland from the construction of the Proposed Development is set out for each section in **Table 13.6**, which shows the breakdown of commercial and semi-natural woodlands. The semi-natural woodlands category includes broadleaved woodlands, naturally established or planted. The named woodland that would be affected in each of the sections is quantified in the relevant Woodland Reports in **Volume 5, Appendix 13.1**.

Table 13.6: Construction Phase Woodland Removal

Section	Woodland Type	Woodland classification	Area (ha)	Felling Requirement
A	Semi-natural	Ancient Woodland	4.19	OC
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	45.23	OC
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	19.55	OC
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	4.43	Access Tracks
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	1.32	Access Tracks
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	0.23	EPZ pulling positions
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	0.12	EPZ pulling positions
B	Semi-natural	Ancient Woodland	0.60	OC

¹⁹ CDM 2015

Section	Woodland Type	Woodland classification	Area (ha)	Felling Requirement
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	67.57	OC
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	5.77	OC
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	10.34	Access Tracks
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	2.65	Access Tracks
	Semi-natural	Ancient Woodland	0.05	EPZ pulling positions
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	0.49	EPZ pulling positions
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	0.22	EPZ pulling positions
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	0.16	Special Arrangements
C	Semi-natural	Ancient Woodland	0.11	OC
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	63.27	OC
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	1.66	OC
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	10.11	Access Tracks
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	0.23	Access Tracks
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	2.58	EPZ pulling positions
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	0.02	Special Arrangements
D	Commercial	Ancient Woodland	0.37	OC
	Semi-natural	Ancient Woodland	2.14	OC
	Semi-natural	Ancient Woodland	0.53	Access Tracks
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	166.37	OC
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	17.05	OC
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	17.57	Access Tracks
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	0.17	Access Tracks
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	5.13	EPZ pulling positions
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	1.67	EPZ pulling positions
E	Commercial	Ancient Woodland	1.57	OC
	Semi-natural	Ancient Woodland	1.71	OC
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	16.44	OC
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	48.88	OC

Section	Woodland Type	Woodland classification	Area (ha)	Felling Requirement
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	7.38	Access Tracks
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	2.83	Access Tracks
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	1.40	EPZ pulling positions
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	0.57	EPZ pulling positions
	Semi-natural	Ancient Woodland	0.96	Special Arrangements
	Commercial	Coniferous Woodland	0.03	Special Arrangements
	Semi-natural	Broadleaved Woodland	3.07	Special Arrangements

13.6.4 As detailed in **Table 13.6**, the total direct loss of forestry and woodland for construction of the Proposed Development equates to 536.74 ha; this includes 451.03 ha of commercial coniferous woodland removal, 73.48 ha of semi-natural broadleaved woodland removal and 12.23 ha of ancient woodland removal.

Commercial (Coniferous) Woodland

Permanent Loss of Commercial Woodland from OC Felling

13.6.5 As detailed in **Table 13.6**, the direct loss of commercial conifer woodland as a result of the Proposed Development is primarily because of the requirement to form an OC. Commercial woodland loss is spread across all sections included within the assessment (i.e. Sections A to E), with the greatest losses shown in Section D (166.37 ha). Losses of below 70 ha are predicted in Sections A, B, C and E.

13.6.6 Creation of the OC (in accordance with the safety requirements shown on **Volume 3, Figure 13.1 Proposed Development Felling Plan**) will result in the permanent loss of commercial coniferous woodland of 391.32 ha in total over the five sections of the Proposed Development. As the OC requires to be kept clear of trees which may impinge on the safety clearances for the duration of the operational life of the OHL, the effect is a permanent loss of the forest resource.

13.6.7 The OC is required to provide sufficient clearance for the safe construction and operation of the proposed OHL to a width of up to 90 m. The sensitivity of the local forest resource to this loss is low in that the area is considered to be tolerant to moderate change. The magnitude of change is medium in that it is an intensive change over a limited area. As such, the significance of the effect is **minor** and **not significant** in the context of the EIA Regulations.

Loss of Commercial Woodland from the Creation of EPZ pulling positions, Special Arrangements and Construction Access Tracks

13.6.8 Further construction effects on commercial woodland include the felling of 49.83 ha of forestry for the creation of access tracks, 0.05 ha for the creation of permanent special arrangements and 9.83 ha for the creation of EPZ pulling positions.

13.6.9 The sensitivity of commercial woodland resource to this loss is low in that the area is considered potentially tolerant to moderate change. The magnitude of change is low in that it is a minor change over a limited area. As such, the likely effect is **none** and **not significant** in the context of the EIA Regulations.

Semi-Natural (Broadleaved) Woodland

Permanent Loss of Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland from OC Felling

13.6.10 As detailed in **Table 13.6**, the direct loss of semi-natural broadleaved woodland to form an OC is predicted in all sections, with the greatest areas of loss in Sections A (19.55 ha), D (17.05 ha) and E (16.44 ha). Within Section C, the loss of semi-natural woodland is lower, at approximately 1.66 ha.

13.6.11 The combined and direct loss of semi-natural woodland (mixed native broadleaved woodland), including recently planted woodland, due to construction of the Proposed Development across all sections included within the assessment, will be 60.47 ha. Semi-natural broadleaved woodlands are primarily composed of a mix of native Scottish species, predominantly birch, along with mixed stands of willow, alder, hazel, rowan, and some non-native species such as beech on recently planted woodlands.

13.6.12 The sensitivity of semi-natural woodland within the OC is considered within this assessment as medium as they are valued more locally. The magnitude of change is considered medium, presenting noticeable change over limited areas, and as such, the effect is assessed as **moderate** and **significant** in the context of the EIA Regulations.

Loss of Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland from the Creation of EPZ pulling positions, Special Arrangements and Construction Access Tracks

13.6.13 As detailed in **Table 13.6**, 7.20 ha of semi-natural broadleaved woodland is to be felled outwith the OC for access tracks, 2.58 ha for EPZ pulling positions and 3.23 ha for the special arrangements.

13.6.14 The sensitivity of semi-natural woodland as part of the creation of temporary EPZ pulling positions, permanent special arrangements and permanent and temporary access tracks is considered within this assessment as medium as they are valued more locally. The magnitude of change is considered medium, presenting noticeable change over limited areas, and as such, the effect is assessed as **moderate** and **significant**.

Ancient Woodland

Permanent Loss of Ancient Woodland from OC Felling

13.6.15 All sections of the Proposed Development pass through areas of ancient woodland and are composed of either conifer or broadleaved woodlands. The areas of ancient woodlands are shown on **Volume 3, Figure 8.1: Designated Sites**.

13.6.16 As detailed in **Table 13.6**, the direct loss of ancient woodland to form an OC is predicted in all sections, with greatest losses occurring in Sections A (4.19 ha) and E (3.28 ha). Section C is least impacted (0.11 ha). The loss of ancient woodland from the Proposed Development impacted by the OC across all sections would be 10.69 ha.

13.6.17 The sensitivity of ancient woodland sites is high. This is based on the understanding that ancient woodlands within the Proposed Development are highly valued, particularly for their crop species and age, and are regarded as irreplaceable habitats. Woodlands are considered highly sensitive when they hold significant value and carry national designations, such as Ancient Woodlands, Category 1a. The magnitude of change is considered to be medium in that this shows small changes to the woodland over a wide area or noticeable

change over a limited area. Overall, the potential significance of the effect as a result of the loss of ancient woodland resource is assessed as being **major** and **significant** in the context of the EIA Regulations.

Loss of Ancient Woodland from the Creation of EPZ pulling positions, Special Arrangements and Construction Access Tracks

13.6.18 As detailed above in **Table 13.6**, 0.53 ha of ancient woodland is to be felled for access tracks, 0.05 ha for EPZ pulling positions and 0.96 ha for special arrangements. Losses are predicted in Sections B, D and E.

13.6.19 The sensitivity of ancient woodland is high as it includes highly valued areas of national woodland designation. The magnitude of change is low in that it is a minor change over a limited area. As such the effect is **moderate** and **significant** in the context of the EIA Regulations.

Classified Woodland

13.6.20 The total area of classified woodland within the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) and Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) databases affected by the Proposed Development is 182.89 ha. Of this, 100.73 ha is classified as native woodland, 67.88 ha as LEPO, 12.23 ha as ancient woodland, and 2.05 ha as PAWS.

13.6.21 Ancient woodlands and native woodland areas affected by the Proposed Development are included within the overall loss of forest resource and are detailed in **Tables 13.7** to **13.12** below.

13.6.22 The assessment of the impact of clearance of ancient woodland sites with regards to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is considered within **Volume 2, Chapter 8: Ecology and Nature Conservation**.

Table 13.7 Woodlands within NWSS classified as PAWS

Section	Woodland Type	AWI- ASNW (2a) &NWSS-PAWS	AWI- ASNW(1a) &NWSS-PAWS
A	N/A	0	0
B	N/A	0	0
C	N/A	0	0
D	Mix of Broadleaved and Conifer plantation (ha)	0.48	0
E	Clear felled awaiting restocking (ha)	0	1.57

Table 13.8: Woodland designations within the OC

Section	Woodland Type	AWI- ASNW (2a)	AWI- ASNW (1a)	AWI-LEPO (2b)	NWSS- Nearly Native Woodland	NWSS- Native woodland
A	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	0	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0.54	3.65	0	0	3.98
B	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	0	0	3.27
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0.60	0	0	0	4.18
C	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	15.46	0	15.95

Section	Woodland Type	AWI- ASNW (2a)	AWI- ASNW (1a)	AWI-LEPO (2b)	NWSS- Nearly Native Woodland	NWSS- Native woodland
D	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0.11	0	0	0	0.73
	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0.37	0	11	1.1	10.39
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	2.14	0	0	0	8.34
E	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	29.72	0	26.89
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	1.71	0	4.05	0	11.30
	Clear felled awaiting restocking (ha)	0	1.57	0	0	0

Table 13.9: Woodland designations within new Permanent Access Tracks

Section	Woodland Type	AWI- ASNW(2a)	AWI-LEPO (2b)	NWSS- Native woodland
A	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0.05	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0	0
B	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	3.17
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0	0.24
C	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	1.08	1.21
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0	0.22
D	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	0.56
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0.53	0	0.11
E	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0.78	1.30
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0	0.09

Table 13.10: Woodland designations within new Temporary Access Tracks

Section	Woodland Type	AWI-LEPO (2b)	NWSS- Native woodland
A	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0
B	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	1.24
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0.05
C	Coniferous woodland (ha)	2.75	0.74
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0
D	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0.7	0.20
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0
E	Coniferous woodland (ha)	1.93	0.14
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0.50
	Clear felled awaiting restocking (ha)	0	0

Table 13.11: Woodland designations within EPZ Pulling Positions

Section	Woodland Type	AWI-ASNW(2a)	NWSS- Native woodland
A	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0

Section	Woodland Type	AWI-ASNW(2a)	NWSS- Native woodland
B	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0.05	0.22
C	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0
D	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0.21
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0.20
E	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	1.13
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0

Table 13.12: Woodland designations within Special Arrangements

Section	Woodland Type	AWI-ASNW(1a)	NWSS- Native woodland	AWI-LEPO (2b)
A	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0	0
B	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0	0
C	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0	0
D	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0	0
E	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0.96	3.07	0.36

Construction Effects - Windblow

13.6.23 The tree felling required to establish the OC should be planned to create a stable forest edge, minimising the risk of windblow in adjacent retained trees. The area required to be felled outwith the OC is known as management felling and is scoped into this assessment.

13.6.24 The Applicant has produced Woodland Reports included in **Volume 5, Appendix 13.1**, which recommend proposals to landowners to reduce this risk by identifying additional areas of felling out to the nearest 'windfirm' edge (known as a 'green edge'), identified as management felling in the Woodland Reports where the trees have developed next to open ground. This area is shown on individual maps within the Woodland Reports. The extent of the management felling required to achieve this reduction in windblow risk would be 536.65 ha.

13.6.25 Due to the conditions placed on landowners by SF in requiring the replanting² of the management felling areas, the impact is considered to be temporary. Areas of proposed management felling required to reduce the risk of windthrow are shown in **Figure 13.1: Proposed Development Felling Plan**. As the areas vulnerable to windthrow are outwith the footprint of the Proposed Development, the Applicant has no mechanism for felling and/or replanting these areas as part of the Section 37 consent. This approach to mitigation in relation to additional felling to protect against future windblow is discussed in **Section 13.7**.

13.6.26 A requirement on the Applicant to replant in those areas would not be appropriate.

13.6.27 The felling of these areas would require the agreement of the relevant landowners and would be delivered in line with a felling licence to be applied for by the landowner to SF on behalf of the Scottish Ministers. It is anticipated that each felling licence would be granted subject to a condition to ensure that the felled

woodland is replanted. In terms of the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 and associated regulations, in making a decision on any felling licence application, the Scottish Ministers acting through SF must have regard to their duty under Section 2 to promote sustainable forest management. In addition, SF is entitled to impose conditions in relation to the retention of, or increase in, woodland cover.

13.6.28 The sensitivity of commercial woodlands within the Study Area is low since the character is one of continual change. The magnitude of change would be low with minor changes to the woodland over a wide area, and therefore this additional area is assessed as **minor** and **not significant** in the context of the EIA Regulations.

13.6.29 **Table 13.13** shows the management felling predicted for the different sections of the OHL.

Table 13.13: Management Felling per section of the OHL

Section	Total Management Felling (ha)
A	77.64
B	58.53
C	237.12
D	124.16
E	39.2
Total	536.65

13.6.30 There is no ancient woodland or semi-natural broadleaved woodland within the areas indicated for management felling as reflected on **Table 13.14** below.

Table 13.14: Woodland designations within Management Felling areas

Section	Woodland Type	AWI-LEPO (2b)	NWSS- Native woodland
A	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0
B	Coniferous woodland (ha)	0	0
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0
C	Coniferous woodland (ha)	94.24	115.21
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0
D	Coniferous woodland (ha)	31.62	33.26
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0
E	Coniferous woodland (ha)	32.49	16.94
	Broadleaved woodland (ha)	0	0

Construction Effects on Forest Management

13.6.31 Commercial conifer forests impacted by the Proposed Development are relatively unconstrained in terms of access for forest management during construction.

13.6.32 The ability to manage the forest during construction can be accommodated with minor variations to the timing of any specific management tasks during the construction period.

13.6.33 The magnitude of change on forest management varies across sites along the Proposed Development. Overall, it is assessed as low, representing very minor changes across a wide area or minor changes over a more limited area. The sensitivity of the woodlands to forest management impacts during construction is considered medium, indicating a tolerance of moderate levels of change. Therefore, the overall significance of the construction effect on forest management is assessed as **minor** and **not significant**.

Operational Effects - Woodland Removal

13.6.34 The direct operational effects on forests and woodland associated with the Proposed Development would be limited to periodic vegetation management to maintain the OC. Within the OC, following the construction of the Proposed Development, there would be an ongoing need to manage the growth of vegetation to facilitate access for maintenance of the OHL and to maintain the required tree clearance zones for the safe and resilient operation of the OHL.

13.6.35 In addition, there is the potential for a medium to long-term beneficial effect through the opportunity to manage lower-growing vegetation to provide biodiversity enhancement in the OC. The development of a species diverse area of lower-growing shrub species would provide valuable habitat for local fauna and flora.

13.6.36 The OC, after woodland removal, is deemed to be of negligible sensitivity and the impact of vegetation management is considered to represent a low magnitude of change. Overall, the adverse effect during operation is assessed as **none** and **not significant**

Operational Effects - Forest Management

13.6.37 The future management of forests within the Proposed Development will be affected by the introduction of the Proposed Development and the associated felling requirements.

13.6.38 This is likely to require woodland managers to amend current objectives, LTFPs, landscape design plans and management techniques for the affected forests, to incorporate the felling requirements associated with the Proposed Development.

13.6.39 Operational effects of the felling required for the Proposed Development on forest management processes include:

- Taking account of the weakened nature of the new edge of the crop;
- Requirement to re-design felling coupes;
- Amendments to harvesting techniques and extraction routes to take account of the presence of the OHL;
- Relocation of loading areas to avoid working adjacent to overhead conductors;
- Disruption to the periodic felling and removal of timber (thinning and felling) from plantations adjacent to the OC due to the presence of the OHL, especially where access is difficult due to adverse terrain and ground conditions; and
- Taking account of the presence of the OHL during re-stocking, which occurs after clear-felling, and in certain areas, restructuring which may be necessary to take account of landscape design considerations.

13.6.40 The projected operational effects of the Proposed Development on forest management are assessed on a case-by-case basis across the different sections of the route. Overall, the sensitivity is considered low, given that is considered potentially tolerant of noticeable change and the magnitude is considered medium, due to the presence of existing commercial woodland management practices that are subjected to small changes to the woodland over a wide area. Consequently, the significance of this effect is assessed as **minor** and **not significant**.

Operational Effects - Restrictions on Forest Access

13.6.41 At the time of tree harvesting the forest industry has a range of operations, some of which can be restricted by the presence of an OHL. Live electrical OHLs provide a number of risks in terms of tree felling and extraction of the timber to the roadside near the OHL. Loading and haulage of the timber off-site can also be restricted within proximity of the OHL.

13.6.42 The sensitivity of the forestry and woodlands to this impact is considered to be low, and the magnitude of change is defined as none due to the working area being removed by approximately 45 m from the centre of the Proposed OHL (in commercial woodlands) due to the presence of the OC. Assuming that all proposed felling works would incorporate standard health and safety management measures (e.g. the forest industry safety accord), the effect is assessed as **none** and **not significant**.

Cumulative Effects -Woodland Removal

13.6.43 The cumulative effect of direct woodland removal associated with creating an OC, access tracks, EPZ pulling positions and special arrangements (predicted to be 536.74 ha), combined with the potential indirect (secondary) effect of management felling (predicted to be 536.65 ha) would potentially comprise up to 1,073.39 ha of woodland. This is assessed as a medium magnitude of change. Given the low sensitivity of commercial woodland within the study area, this cumulative effect is assessed as **minor** and **not significant**. There are no additional indirect cumulative effects associated with ancient or native woodland.

13.6.44 Other developments within the vicinity of the Proposed Development that have been considered within the cumulative assessment include: Banniskirk Hub 400 kV Substation and high voltage direct current (HVDC) Converter Station, Carnaig 400 kV Substation, and Fanellan 400 kV Substation and Converter Station. These are the developments considered for 'intra' project in-combination effects, as defined in **Chapter 5: EIA Process and Methodology**. **Table 13.15** below summarises the overall effects, i.e. loss of woodland resource for these developments.

Table 13.15 Overall Cumulative Effects

Development	Application Status	Sections of Relevance	Overall effects
Banniskirk Hub 400 kV Substation and High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Converter Station	Under Consideration	A	Approximately 4.8 hectares of non-commercial conifer woodland will need to be cleared (and subsequently will be restocked onsite) to enable construction of the Banniskirk Hub 400 kV Substation and associated HVDC Converter Station. The permanent loss of forest resource is 1.41 ha of low ecological sensitivity.
Carnaig 400 kV Substation	Under Consideration	B, C	The construction of the Carnaig 400 kV Substation will occupy 23.52 hectares of woodland for the substation site and an additional 69.54 ha of felling for windblow prevention. These woodlands are composed of a standing conifer crop, which will be felled. This represents less than 5% of the planted area of Achormlarie, and the changes are not significant.

Development	Application Status	Sections of Relevance	Overall effects
Fanellan 400 kV Substation and HVDC Converter Station	Under Consideration	E	Loss of forest resource of commercial conifers (3.33 ha) and semi-natural broadleaved woodland (3.76 ha), and Arboricultural features (4 of high quality and 30 of moderate quality, 11 of low quality and 2 of very low quality). The construction of the Fanellan 400 kV Substation will require the removal of approximately 7.09 hectares of forestry, including 3.76 hectares of native broadleaved woodland and 3.33 hectares of commercial conifer woodland, along with the removal or partial removal of 47 Arboricultural features. (4 of high quality and 30 of moderate quality, 11 of low quality and 2 of very low quality).

13.6.45 Given the Scottish Government's policy on Woodland Removal¹, it can be assumed there would be no residual loss of woodland associated with these projects as the developers will be required to undertake compensatory planting for any areas of felling. As such, the cumulative effect on commercial woodland is assessed as **none** and **not significant**.

13.6.46 The above describes the significance of in-combination effects in relation to forestry. **Chapter 17: Cumulative Assessment** provides a summary of effects interactions, i.e. the combined or synergistic effects caused by the combination of a number of effects on key sensitive receptors.

Cumulative Effects - Forest Management

13.6.47 The cumulative effect on forest management during construction and operation is assessed as **minor** and **not significant**.

Cumulative Effects - Windblow

13.6.48 Predicted indirect effects on commercial woodland outside the OC are primarily associated with the risk of windblow following construction phase felling. The area proposed for management felling as part of the Proposed Development overlaps with that associated with the Carnaig substation. As a significant portion of the woodland removal required for the Carnaig substation (approximately 45%) overlaps with the area already accounted for by the Proposed Development, no additional or cumulative windblow effects are expected. Therefore, the cumulative windblow impact is assessed as **minor** and **not significant**.

13.7 Mitigation

Mitigation During Construction

13.7.1 The 'good practice' mitigation measures outlined above (**Section 13.5**) will be implemented within the OC (i.e. land over which the Applicant has control) to reduce, as far as possible, the net loss of woodland resource as a result of construction of the Proposed Development. This includes restricting the width of the felling corridor to the minimum required for statutory safe clearances and implementing a suite of standard

good practice working methods to ensure that all construction activity (including woodland removal) avoids significant effects on ecological and hydrological receptors.

- 13.7.2 These mitigation measures will be integrated into the CEMP and support the protection concerning the areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland impacted by the Proposed Development (85.71 ha). This could potentially be further reduced to a limited extent through micro-siting within the LoD where a combination of factors (e.g. topography, tower height, tree species and height) may reduce the area of ancient and semi-natural woodland defined as being within the OC. For example, the extent of tree clearance may be reduced where it can be demonstrated that trees can be safely overflowed by the OHL conductors or that the trees can be accommodated within closer proximity to the Proposed Development with either no work being required, or a degree of crown reduction only. There may also be opportunities to further retain scrub/understorey layers in areas where existing tree cover does not breach safety clearances and allows for safe construction activity.
- 13.7.3 The design recommendations of the felling identified in the Woodland Reports have been developed in conjunction with the landowners / forest managers, in so far as is currently possible. The Applicant has agreed the use of the 'Woodland Reports' to confirm the extent of woodland removal required. This proposed felling will be further reviewed with the landowners to link this with their existing LTFP/LMP or Felling Permission (FP), which will, once amended, be required to adhere to the UKFS as part of the approval process with Scottish Forestry. This approval is required prior to any felling being undertaken outwith the OC or access tracks. This method of addressing felling has been successfully used on a number of other OHL projects and has delivered forest design to the satisfaction of Scottish Forestry as the statutory authority.
- 13.7.4 As noted above, the embedded mitigation measures during construction for woodland management will be implemented, including the commitment of the Applicant to work with the landowners throughout the construction period to facilitate ongoing forest management where possible within the constraints of safe working practices and the associated CDM working.
- 13.7.5 The Applicant is committed to continuing to review opportunities to reduce the impact on the permanent loss of forest resource within areas of broadleaved woodland by utilisation of crown reduction in preference to tree clearance. With landowner agreement, the Applicant will seek to encourage natural regeneration on certain sections of the OC and on the edge of low-growing shrub species where possible, which are not deemed to put at risk the ongoing safe operation of the line.
- 13.7.6 For PAWS identified within the data sources within NWSS and AWI, the landowner will have the option to return these to native woodland, which would be considered after the felling of the current commercial timber crop. This opportunity of restoring such areas to native woodland is as per the guidelines for PAWS within the UK Forestry Standard and is in keeping with the UK woodlands assurance standards, to maintain, enhance or restore features and areas of high conservation value. The Study Area comprises areas of commercial conifer woodlands as well as blocks of broadleaved woodland, both planted and natural, and smaller scattered shelterbelts. Within these areas, there are a number of areas of woodland which are included within the AWI and the NWSS databases for native woodland sites (some of which are also identified as PAWS).

Mitigation During Operation

- 13.7.7 The primary mitigation of the effect of the Proposed Development on operational forest management is associated with the initial routeing decisions^{10,11}. These decisions have aimed to take account of and minimise the above effects within the constraints of the overall routeing process. Whilst no significant

operational effects have been identified that require mitigation, the following measures will be put in place once the Proposed Development is operational:

- In areas adjacent to the OC where 'forwarding' or timber haulage is undertaken underneath the proposed OHL, 'goal-posts' should be erected in accordance with HSE²⁰ and industry guidelines to determine and indicate the maximum safe working height;
- Opportunities to encourage regeneration of low-growing shrub species within the sterilised areas of the OC under the OHL, only low-growing scrub species (under 1.5 m) such as heather, bell heather, blaeberry, and cowberry will be promoted. In areas where slightly taller vegetation (up to 3 m) is acceptable, mainly outside the immediate OHL footprint, species like hazel, dwarf willows, hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, gorse, and broom may be suitable. This strategy will assist the woodland managers in their objective of increasing woodland diversity;
- Soil disturbance and compaction will be minimised during maintenance by the use of low ground pressure tree harvesting and extraction methods;
- Where appropriate, topping of trees will be restricted to removing a maximum of 30% of the live crown of trees as standard, so that some growth will continue and so disguise the felling line. This approach may not be suitable for older stands with shallow canopies for reasons of effectiveness – here coppicing will be considered if appropriate. Local drainage systems will be maintained; and
- Tree clearance operations associated with maintaining clearance distance from the Proposed Development within the operational will strictly adhere to the Forestry Commission publication 'Forest and Water Guidelines', UK Forestry Standard version five, 2023²¹.

13.7.8 In addition to the measures above, the Applicant will also implement the following measures where possible, in agreement with the landowners:

- Opportunities to introduce different species (conifers, broadleaves, evergreen, deciduous, varieties of size and shape) will be taken where appropriate;
- New planting, restocking, and the management of natural regeneration will be undertaken in agreed designated areas, following negotiation with relevant landowners. This will target areas where maximum ecological advantage will be gained. This will include riparian areas and areas of existing biodiversity; and
- In addition to monitoring and removal of windblown trees, consideration will also be given to the implementation of associated forest landscaping, including replanting.

Monitoring and Landowner Liaison

13.7.9 Subject to agreement with the landowners, the Applicant will commit to monitoring windblow associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development in relation to compensatory measures and tree removal.

13.7.10 Subject to agreement with the landowners, a programme of future vegetation management will be undertaken, incorporating an assessment of tree and shrub growth within and immediately adjacent to the OC to ensure the safe operation of the Proposed Development.

13.7.11 Post application design works to consider the benefits of additional tree felling to achieve more landscape sensitive and windfirm forest boundaries will be continued. This work will aim to reach agreement, where necessary with the landowner to undertake works outwith the 90 m corridor as detailed within **Figure 13.1 Proposed Development Felling Plan**.

²⁰ HSE - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/treework/safety-topics/forestry.htm>

²¹ Forestry Commission (2023) Forests and Water, UK Forestry Standard Guidelines.

13.7.12 The model for doing this is referred to within the document Working with Grantors²² as produced by the Applicant.

Compensatory Planting Strategy

13.7.13 This section outlines the management strategy (as detailed in **Volume 5, Appendix 13.3: Compensatory Planting Strategy**) that the Applicant will implement prior to and during the construction phase of the Proposed Development to ensure the replanting of all woodland areas that are removed considered as permanent, long-term, loss of woodland.

13.7.14 The Electricity Safety, Quality, and Continuity Regulations 2002 (ESQCR, 2002) establish safety standards aimed at protecting the public and consumers from the dangers posed by overhead electricity powerlines. These standards dictate minimum safety clearances and impose a duty on the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) to maintain these clearances. The regulations also encompass requirements for the quality and continuity of electricity supply, ensuring an efficient and economical service for customers.

13.7.15 Further legislation was introduced in 2006 through the ESQCR, (2006 Amendment), which expanded the responsibilities of DNOs to enhance the resilience of overhead powerlines against severe storm impacts. This includes minimising the risk of falling trees and branches colliding with the electricity network. Consequently, DNOs are not only responsible for maintaining minimum vegetation clearances but must also seek to achieve additional clearances for trees susceptible to storm damage.

13.7.16 Due to the stipulations set forth in the ESQCR, it is typically not feasible to replant woodland within the operational areas of the Development. Therefore, to address the replanting of areas affected by woodland removal, off-site woodland planting will be necessary.

13.7.17 The Applicant will implement a Compensatory Planting Scheme to manage the required woodland planting. This process will involve engaging with landowners to identify suitable bare land for woodland planting. The Applicant will maintain ongoing communication with:

- Landowners whose properties are affected by the Proposed Development;
- Not-for-profit organizations, such as Community Trusts, that own or have rights to land and are interested in woodland planting; and
- Other landowners preferably within the Local Authority area, who wish to plant woodland.

13.7.18 Through these collaborations, the Applicant will identify suitable areas of bare land for woodland planting, leading to agreements with landowners under the Compensatory Planting Scheme. The total area secured for woodland planting will correspond to the total area of woodland removed from the Proposed Development and imposed by a planning condition.

13.7.19 Once an agreement with regards to compensatory planting is reached with a landowner, a formal woodland planting scheme design will be developed and submitted to Scottish Forestry for consultation and approval through the EIA determination process

13.7.20 After receiving approval for the planting scheme, the Applicant will execute the woodland planting in accordance with the approved design and maintain the newly planted area following industry best practices to ensure successful establishment.

13.7.21 Upon approval of the planting scheme from Scottish Forestry, the Applicant will formally report to the planning authority, confirming that the required woodland planting area has been successfully established to

²² Working with Grantors SSEN Transmission, March 2023.

offset the total woodland removal associated with the Proposed Development, ensuring no net loss of woodland.

13.8 Residual Effects

13.8.1 A summary of residual effects, after the implementation of mitigation, is described below.

Construction Effects

13.8.2 Whilst there are opportunities to reduce the predicted removal of 85.71 ha of ancient and semi-natural woodland, comprising 73.48 ha of semi-natural woodland and 12.23 ha of ancient woodland, these remain uncertain until further micro-siting and review of wiring operations by the Principal Contractors in combination with an arboriculturist has been undertaken. The residual effect on woodland removal for semi-natural woodland remains **moderate** and **significant** in the context of the EIA Regulations. Similarly, the residual effect on woodland removal for ancient woodland remains **major** and **significant** in the context of the EIA Regulations.

13.8.3 The potential to further reduce construction effects through good practice measures have been identified in the Woodland Reports (in relation to windthrow. At this stage the Applicant is limited to committing to working with landowners to seek to agree felling through the Woodland Reports, which would in-turn lead to changes to the LTFP on land outside of the Applicant's control at this stage.

Operational Effects

13.8.4 No significant operational effects pre-mitigation on woodland removal, forest management or access are identified and consequently there are no significant residual operational effects.

Cumulative Effects

13.8.5 No significant residual cumulative effects have been identified.

Summary of Residual Effects

13.8.6 Whilst the sections above describe the significance of effect for the Proposed Development as a whole, **Table 13.16** below provides a summary of the residual effects for individual sections.

Table 13.16: Summary of residual effects of the Proposed Development by sections

Forest Receptor	Section of the Proposed Development	Effect Prior to Mitigation	Likely Residual Effect post-mitigation measures
Permanent Loss of Commercial Woodland from OC Felling	A	Minor	Minor
	B	Minor	Minor
	C	Moderate	Minor
	D	Minor	Minor
	E	Minor	Minor
	Proposed Development as a whole	Minor	Minor
Permanent Loss of Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland from OC Felling	A	Moderate	Moderate
	B	Moderate	Moderate
	C	Moderate	Moderate
	D	Moderate	Moderate
	E	Moderate	Moderate

Forest Receptor	Section of the Proposed Development	Effect Prior to Mitigation	Likely Residual Effect post-mitigation measures
	Proposed Development as a whole	Moderate	Moderate
Loss of Commercial Woodland from the Creation of EPZ pulling positions, Special Arrangements and Construction Access Tracks	A	None	None
	B	None	None
	C	None	None
	D	None	None
	E	None	None
	Proposed Development as a whole	None	None
Loss of Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland from the Creation of EPZ pulling positions, Special Arrangements and Construction Access Tracks	A	Moderate	Moderate
	B	Moderate	Moderate
	C	Minor	Minor
	D	Moderate	Moderate
	E	Moderate	Moderate
	Proposed Development as a whole	Moderate	Moderate
Permanent Loss of Ancient Woodland from OC Felling	A	Major	Major
	B	Major	Major
	C	Major	Major
	D	Major	Major
	E	Major	Major
	Proposed Development as a whole	Major	Major
Loss of Ancient Woodland from the Creation of EPZ pulling positions, Special Arrangements and Construction Access Tracks	A	Moderate	Moderate
	B	Moderate	Moderate
	C	Moderate	Moderate
	D	Moderate	Moderate
	E	Moderate	Moderate
	Proposed Development as a whole	Moderate	Moderate
Windblow	A	Minor	None
	B	Minor	None
	C	Moderate	Minor
	D	Minor	None
	E	Minor	None
	Proposed Development as a whole	Minor	None
Forest Management	A	Minor	Minor
	B	Minor	Minor
	C	Minor	Minor
	D	Minor	Minor
	E	Moderate	Moderate

Forest Receptor	Section of the Proposed Development	Effect Prior to Mitigation	Likely Residual Effect post-mitigation measures
	Proposed Development as a whole	Minor	Minor
Forest Access	A	None	None
	B	None	None
	C	None	None
	D	None	None
	E	None	None
	Proposed Development as a whole	None	None
Cumulative	A	Minor	Minor
	B	Minor	Minor
	C	Minor	Minor
	D	Minor	Minor
	E	Moderate	Minor
	Proposed Development as a whole	Minor	Minor

13.9 Summary and Conclusions

- 13.9.1 This chapter reports on the significant effects from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development on forest and woodland areas. The assessment is supported by **Volume 5, Appendix 13.1 Woodland Reports**. The Proposed Development is predicted to impact on 536.74 ha of woodland associated with its construction and operation. This includes 451.03 ha of commercial conifer woodland (mix of plantations and native conifer woodlands), 12.23 ha of ancient woodland and 73.48 ha of semi-natural broadleaved woodlands). In the forests adjacent to the operational corridor (OC), it is anticipated that there will be a requirement for a further 536.65 ha of management felling of commercial conifer forest to mitigate the risk of windblow. This management felling will be undertaken only with the landowner's consent and will require replanting.
- 13.9.2 The assessment concludes that the total classified woodland affected by the Proposed Development (excluding Management Felling areas) is 182.89 ha, 12.23 ha of which is ancient woodland, 67.88 ha is LEPO, 100.73 ha of Native woodland and 2.05 ha of PAWS. In some instances, AWI and NWSS do overlap, and therefore, areas can be classified under both databases. The significance of effects of semi-natural broadleaved woodland loss and the ancient woodland sites due to tree felling are considered **moderate** and **major** respectively and **significant** in the context of the EIA Regulations.
- 13.9.3 The Applicant is committed to making arrangements to plant off-site the equivalent area of woodland as Compensatory Planting, meeting the Scottish Government's objective of no net loss of woodland. In the case of ancient woodland, however, the unique character and ecological value of these habitats are considered irreplaceable and cannot be recreated through off-site planting.
- 13.9.4 It is acknowledged that the creation of the OC would result in wider potential indirect effects on the surrounding woodland areas. These areas would be subject to a potential increased risk of damage (windblow). As a result, the Applicant has produced a series of Woodland Reports (**Volume 5, Appendix 13.1**) to address the potential future risk of windblow by identifying management melling areas. The

Woodland Reports identify areas of management felling to leave a windfirm edge. Any felling undertaken outwith the OC would be solely under the control of the relevant landowner and not the Applicant.

- 13.9.5 Overall, the impact of the Proposed Development on forest management across the entire site is assessed as **minor** and **not significant**. Individual woodland reports have been produced for each ownership and notable effects on woodland management have been identified and described in the Woodland Reports (**Volume 5, Appendix 13.1**).
- 13.9.6 Additional good practice measures can be implemented on land outside the OC, for example, further felling may be carried out to create a more natural-looking and wind-firm woodland edge. These measures would require approval through an amendment of the LTFP or FLA with the approval of SF. When restocking works are carried out in areas identified for management felling, a strategic approach is to be applied to minimise the visual and landscape impacts of the OHL. This strategy aims to address future windfirm edges, reduce visual impact, and ensure appropriate planting distances and species in relation to the OHL. Reference to the Forestry Commission guidelines in Design Techniques for Forest Management Planning²³, 2014.

²³ Forestry Commission (2014) [Design Techniques for forest management planning](#)