

**Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV
OHL Connection
Environmental Impact Assessment
Volume 5 | Technical Appendix**

**Appendix 13.3 | Compensatory
Planting Strategy**

July 2025



VOLUME 5: APPENDIX 13.3 – COMPENSATORY PLANTING STRATEGY

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1. COMPENSATORY PLANTING STRATEGY

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Appendix presents information relevant to the Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully 400 kV OHL Connection (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'). It should be read in conjunction with **Volume 2, Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development** and **Volume 2, Chapter 13: Forestry** of this Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report. The location and layout of the Proposed Development are shown in **Volume 3, Figure 3.1: The Proposed Development**.
- 1.1.2 As detailed in **Volume 2, Chapter 13: Forestry**, the Proposed Development impacts a total area of 536.74 ha of forestry and woodland. This area has been identified as the maximum area for woodland removal for the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.3 In accordance with the Applicant's commitment to achieve no net loss of woodland for new Development Projects, the area of woodland removal for the Proposed Development will be replanted through the application of this Compensatory Planting Management Strategy.

1.2 Purpose of the Strategy

- 1.2.1 This report explains the management strategy that will be undertaken by the Applicant prior to and during the Development construction phase, to implement the replanting of the total area of woodland removed.

1.3 Woodland Planting Management Constraint

- 1.3.1 The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002 (ESQCR, 2002)¹ specify safety standards to protect the general public and consumers from danger of overhead electricity powerlines and infrastructure. These standards outline minimum safety clearances and the Distribution Network Operator's (DNO's) duty to maintain these safety clearances.
- 1.3.2 The regulations also contain requirements on quality and continuity of electricity supply to ensure an efficient and economic service to customers and consumers.
- 1.3.3 Further legislation arrived in 2006 with the ESQCR, 2006; Amendment², which extended the above duties of the DNO to make their overhead powerlines resilient to the effect of major storms. This includes reducing the risk of trees and branches hitting the electricity network.
- 1.3.4 The result of this legislation is that the DNOs in addition to maintaining the vegetation to minimum safety clearances, now must seek to achieve further clearances for trees which may be affected by storm weather conditions.
- 1.3.5 Due to the requirements of the ESQCR it is generally not feasible to replant woodland within the operational areas of the Development. Therefore, in order to replant the woodland removal area of the Development, 'off-site'³ woodland planting must be achieved. Some limited woodland may be developed on site as part of landscaping proposals, although this has not been considered as compensatory planting and will be in addition

¹ Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002 (ESQCR, 2002) URL: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2665/contents/made

² Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity (Amendment) Regulations 2006 (ESQCR, 2006) URL: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1521/made

³ 'off-site' meaning alternative bare land areas suitable for woodland planting out-with the Development's operational area.

to the compensatory planting proposal. The applicant has used Scottish Forestry guidance for new woodland creation to define what may be considered woodland within a landscape planting and may count towards Compensatory planting / restocking. For broadleaved planting areas, blocks of less than 0.25 ha would not be considered as woodland. For conifer woodland block of less than 2 ha would not be considered as woodland.

1.4 Compensatory Planting Plan

- 1.4.1 The area of woodland impacted by the Proposed Development amounts to 536.74 ha, which includes both permanent and temporary woodland removal. Temporary woodland removal areas will be restructured and replanted on site following the construction phase. In contrast, areas intended for permanent woodland removal will be compensated offsite through appropriate Compensatory Planting. The total area of permanent woodland removal equates to 491.83 ha. This comprises 462.48 ha for the creation of an operational corridor (OC), 25.11 ha for the creation of permanent access tracks, and 4.24 ha for the creation of special arrangement areas. These works are further detailed in **Volume 2, Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development**.
- 1.4.2 The Applicant will therefore create new woodland planting of no less than 491.83 net planted hectares, or no less than such area as matches the final measured felling area, through the management of a Compensatory Planting Scheme. This management process is based on securing agreements with landowners that are located within the same Local Authority area as the impacts from the Proposed Development occur, or as agreed with respective stakeholders, for woodland planting of suitable bare land by the Applicant.
- 1.4.3 The Applicant is in discussion with and will continue to undertake liaison with:
- Landowners who are impacted by woodland removal as result of the proposed Development and who wish to develop 'replacement' woodland on their land;
 - 'Not for Profit' Organisations e.g. Community Trusts, who own or have rights to areas of land and wish to plant woodland of appropriate type; and
 - Landowners within the Local Authority area of the proposed Development, who wish to plant woodland.
- 1.4.4 Through liaison with these landowners, areas of bare land suitable for woodland planting will be identified and whereby they would enter into a Compensatory Planting Scheme agreement with the Applicant. Such agreements will be to establish, manage and maintain the Compensatory Planting Scheme(s) for 20 years, beyond which time woodlands shall be sufficiently established to have protection from provisions of the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 Part 4.
- 1.4.5 The total area of bare land secured for woodland planting would as a minimum meet the total area of woodland removal of the Proposed Development.
- 1.4.6 Replacement woodland shall in most cases be of a similar type to that removed:
- Replacing productive or native woodland with similar (subject to compliance with UKFS design standards), and
 - Alternative proposals may be offered where those proposals can deliver additional public benefit for example:
 - Developing community woodlands;
 - Protecting/ expanding ancient woodland; and
 - Delivering environmental benefit e.g. riparian planting for water quality or species habitat enhancement within designated areas (SAC/SSSI etc).

- 1.4.7 On agreement with the landowner formal woodland planting scheme designs will be produced and submitted to Scottish Forestry⁴ and the Planning Authority for consultation and approval.

(1) The Compensatory Planting shall comply with the requirements set out in the UK Forestry Standard and the guidelines to which it refers, or such other replacement standard agreed by the Planning Authority. All compensatory planting schemes proposals shall be subject to EIA screening by Scottish Forestry (or Full Environmental Assessment if screening determines this is required). A detailed compensatory planting & management plan to be submitted to Scottish Forestry and the Planning Authority shall include:

- a) details of the location(s) of the area(s) to be planted;
- b) the nature, design and specification of the proposed woodland(s) to be planted;
- c) the phasing and associated timescales for implementing the Replanting Scheme;
- d) proposals for the maintenance of the Replanting Scheme, including annual checks, replacement planting, fencing, ground preparation and drainage; and
- e) proposals for reporting to the Planning Authority on compliance with timescales for obtaining the Necessary Consents and implementation of the Replanting Scheme.

(2) The approved Compensatory Planting (or, as the case may be, an approved amended Replanting Scheme) shall be implemented in full, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

- 1.4.8 Following completion of the approval process, the Applicant will undertake the woodland planting as per the approved Compensatory Planting Plan with all initial establishment planting to be completed before completion and operation of the Development. The Applicant will maintain the newly planted area for a minimum of 20 years to ensure successful woodland establishment is achieved.

1.5 Reporting

- 1.5.1 After the planting scheme approval is received from Scottish Forestry, the Applicant will formally report to the Planning Authority that the required woodland planting area has been achieved to meet the total woodland removal area of the Proposed Development and has secured no net loss of woodland.

⁴ Scottish Forestry - the Scottish Government agency responsible for forestry policy, support and regulations. URL: www.forestry.gov.scot