

Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beauly 400 kV OHL Connection

Direct Effects on Fairburn Garden and Designed Landscape Heritage Assessment

Additional Environmental Information to Chapter 12 and Appendix 12.5 of the EIAR

March 2026



PURPOSE OF THIS ADDITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION

In response to an additional environmental information request from Historic Environment Scotland (HES), a further heritage assessment of the *direct* effects on Fairburn Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL) has been drafted to provide clarity on the effects reported in the submitted Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

This document is provided as additional environmental information to **Volume 2, Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage and Volume 5: Appendix 12.5** submitted as part of the S37 application for the Spittal to Loch Buidhe to Beaully (SLBB) 400 kV Overhead Line (OHL) Connection Project.

DIRECT EFFECTS ON FAIRBURN GARDEN AND DESIGNED LANDSCAPE HERITAGE ASSESSMENT

EIAR Approach to Direct Impacts on Designated Assets

Section 19.2 of Volume 2, Chapter 19: Schedule of Mitigation and **Section 1.4 of Volume 5, Appendix 12.7: Mitigation Summary** provide full descriptions of the embedded mitigation strategies to be adopted.

Direct physical impacts to designated heritage assets have been avoided through the refinement of the Proposed Development Limits of Deviation (LoD), which has been adjusted where practicable to exclude such assets and protect their in-situ preservation through embedded design mitigation. As such, in general direct impacts to designated assets have been scoped out. However, there are exceptions, for which impact assessment was carried out (see **Sections 12.4.3-5 of Volume 2, Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage**).

In instances where designated heritage assets remain within the LoD, or within close proximity to the LoD (c.5m), a commitment has been made to implementing a suite of precautionary measures to prevent any physical interaction. These measures will include, but are not limited to:

- the establishment of exclusion zones around sensitive heritage assets, within which no construction activities will occur; and
- the installation of physical protective barriers (e.g., Heras fencing) to clearly demarcate and safeguard these areas throughout the duration of nearby construction works.

Where the Proposed Development intersects with the boundaries of designated heritage assets, it is confirmed that no physical alteration or impact to the assets will occur where the interaction is caused by the oversailing of wirelines (e.g. SM5230 and BTL19). These crossings will be managed in a manner that enables full preservation of the heritage assets affected, with no construction-related activity taking place within the asset or exclusion zone.

As such, any further assessment of direct impact upon designated heritage assets has been scoped out of the assessment with the following three exceptions to be discussed (as outlined in **Section 12.4.4 of Volume 2, Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage**)¹:

- Settlement 600m E of Invershin Primary School (SM5498).
- Cairns, hut circles & clearance cairns 400m E of Morvich Lodge (SM1809).
- Fairburn GDL (GDL00174).

Direct impacts to heritage assets beyond the LoD are not anticipated to result from the Proposed Development and have been scoped out of any further consideration (**Section 12.4.6 of Volume 2, Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage**).

The potential direct impacts upon Fairburn GDL (GDL00174) are the focus of this document and are discussed in detail below.

Fairburn GDL (GDL00196)

Nature of Impact

The installation of five towers (S182-S186; see **Table 3.2 of Volume 2, Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development** for design specification and dimensions) within the western boundary plantation woodland, including access tracks and tree-felling within the Operational Corridor (OC) (see **Volume 2, Chapter 13: Forestry, Sections 13.8, 13.9 and Volume 3, Figure 13.1- 13.21**), is anticipated to result in a degree of direct (physical) impact. The proposed area(s) for management felling for the OC comprises approximately 14.59 ha².

¹ SM1809 is included following discussion with HES concerning the proximity of the proposed access track.

² Areas of additional proposed felling, known as management felling, may be required to reduce the risk of windthrow (see **Volume 2, Chapter 13: Forestry**). As the areas vulnerable to windthrow lie outwith the OC, the Applicant has no mechanism for felling and/or replanting these areas as part of any Section 37 consent. The felling of these areas will require the agreement of the landowner, and will be delivered under a felling license to be applied for by the landowner.

Table 3.2 of Volume 2, Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development clearly states the design parameter descriptions for aspects of the Proposed Development included in forestry operations. New forestry removal access tracks may be installed up to 20 m (10 m either side), with said tracks ultimately dictated by ground conditions, topography, and surrounding habitats. Upgrades to existing access tracks will be dictated by the conditions of the existing tracks. Alternatives were explored during the optioneering process and fully discussed with HES.

Overview

The Fairburn GDL spans an area of 440.4 ha from Exhibition Wood (East) to Muireton Wood (West) (see **Figure 1**). It is located along the south side of Strathconon, sloping northwards to the banks of the River Conon. It is bounded to the south by the River Orrin which is a tributary of the River Conon. The surrounding landscape is largely upland in character; the land rises towards Beinn an Rubha Riabhaich and the Cabaan Forest to the west and south, and slopes more gradually to the east towards Muir of Fairburn. Much of the wider landscape was improved during the early part of the 19th century when the shelterbelt strips were planted within the park and the land drained.

The following listed buildings are located within the GDL (see **Figure 1**):

- Fairburn House (Category B; LB14030); and
- Fairburn Tower (Category A; LB14031).

The following listed buildings are located immediately south-east of the GDL (see **Figure 1**):

- Gate House Aultgowrie Lodge (Category B; LB14032); and
- Orrin Bridge (Cat B; LB14020).

Cultural Significance

To decide if a GDL is nationally important (warranting inclusion on the Inventory), its cultural significance is examined under seven headings.³ These interests are referred to in the official Inventory Record for Fairburn GDL⁴, and the extent to which they each apply is described as follows:

- **Artistic interest:** Little. *'The designed landscape at Fairburn has a little value as a Work of Art'*.
- **Historical interest:** Some. *'Fairburn has some Historical value although there is limited evidence of its development'*.
- **Horticultural interest:** Outstanding. *'The range and size of the conifers in the woodland garden provide Fairburn House with outstanding Horticultural value'*.
- **Architectural interest:** High. *'The policies are of high Architectural value as they provide the setting to category B listed buildings'*.
- **Archaeological interest:** Not assessed.
- **Scenic interest:** Outstanding. *'The woodland canopy and open parkland of the designed landscape make an outstanding contribution to the surrounding scenery'*.
- **Nature conservation interest:** Little. *'The woodland flora provides a little Nature Conservation interest.'*

From the perspective of the assessment of direct (physical) impact, there is substantial variance for each of the contributors to Fairburn GDL's overall cultural significance. These interests, and any anticipated change that the Proposed Development might result in, are discussed individually below.

Artistic Interest

The 'little' **Artistic** interest of Fairburn GDL may be seen to primarily relate to architectural design components, with limited scope to qualify the layout and particularly the western woodland, as of artistic value. Thus, the OC's (Operational Corridor) creation of a break in woodland coverage, does not adversely affect the **Artistic** interest attributed to Fairburn GDL.

³ Historic Environment Scotland 2019. Designation Policy and Selection Guidance.

⁴ Historic Environment Scotland. Online, amended 2024. Fairburn GDL List Entry. Available at: FAIRBURN (GDL00174). (Accessed: 26/02/2026).

Historical Interest

The **Historical** interest is derived from the historical associations with the area as an historic park and residence, with limited modern development within the established boundary. The scope for change relates to the physical alteration of land use and introduction of larger-scale transmission infrastructure, alongside the existing OHL that runs broadly east-west across the GDL. Therefore, it may be argued that no impact is likely to result, given Fairburn GDL will remain a recognisable historic park and the historical associations remain intact, despite the additional transmission infrastructure.

Horticultural Interest

As stated within the Listing description for the asset, the outstanding **Horticultural** interest pertains to the 'Woodland Garden', which is defined as extending 'southwards around the kitchen garden and along the Orrin Drive [and] in the old garden and along the drive. The garden extends to the river and alongside the spectacular Orrin Falls', wherein the exotic specimens were mainly planted by John Stirling. The Proposed Development OC was specifically located, in line with HES consultation, to avoid interacting with these aspects.

The associated access tracks (requiring upgrades) are located within the described area of the 'Woodland Garden' to the south, approaching the River Orrin. The management of this is to be confirmed by the Principal Contractor. However at this stage, an appropriate mitigation approach would prioritise the avoidance and preservation of specimen trees within the 'Woodland Garden',⁵ when considering the requirements for the access track upgrades. The nature of the potential impact requires consultation with HES, wherein requisite tree-felling within the 'Woodland Garden' would be seen as a direct impact to the **Horticultural** interest.

Architectural Interest

Architectural interest should not be seen to be at risk as a result of potential direct (physical) impact, given the Proposed Development is not anticipated to interact with built elements of the GDL.

Archaeological Interest

Though the **Archaeological** interest of the GDL has yet to be fully assessed, given the known historical use of the asset, and the presence of historic built fabric and garden infrastructure, it is considered to retain some degree of archaeological potential in certain areas, although there is scope to suggest a level of disturbance resulting from use as plantation woodland.

The potential for archaeological impact is likely to pertain primarily to historic horticultural, tree husbandry and/or agricultural activity; any currently unrecorded remains that might survive buried within the GDL would most probably comprise the remains of horticultural/agricultural features, e.g., remnant garden soils/walls/pathways and remnant field boundary ditches, walls, outbuilding foundations etc., associated with the known settlement foci around the house and tower. Although the presence of Fort An Dun, Cornhill Wood (MHG60939) south of the River Orrin, may indicate a potential for earlier remains to be present.

Scenic Interest

The requirement for tree-felling ahead of the installation of the OC, and the introduction of the transmission towers, would result in a level of adverse effect upon the asset's **Scenic** interest. The OC would create a break in the woodland canopy (located to minimise and screen impact, within the segregated bulk plantation area extending west from the curated woodland garden), but preserving wholly the open parkland within the designation boundary; while the overall legibility and cohesiveness of the designed landscape would be maintained, this alongside the presence and visibility of the towers would physically alter the character of this area of the designed landscape, as perceived from certain locations in and around the asset, resulting in a modest reduction in its **Scenic** interest.

⁵ Specialist input from a suitably qualified Ecologist or Arboriculturist would be required to assess the appropriate mitigation that may include, for example: root protection zones to safeguard trees from compaction by works or plant, ground clearance investigation, or considerations of works timing to accommodate for breeding birds or protected species that may be present, such as bats, including licensing requirements.

Nature Conservation Interest

The introduction of the OC would have the effect of fragmenting and removing an area of natural habitat, and this would have a level of adverse effect upon the asset's **Nature Conservation** interest.⁶ However, this interest is described as 'little' in the official Listing Description, and the OC would only require the removal of trees associated with plantation woodland referred to in the listing as the '*policy woodlands*' that extend west from the house (planted c.1800, partially replanted from 1920 onwards), and potentially the outer-lying '*commercial woodlands*' on the higher ground, felled during the World Wars (see Ecology note on coniferous woodland **Volume 5: Appendix 8-3, Section 3.3.108**).⁷ Restriction of the tree-felling activity to these areas of less sensitive tree cover, and the recognised limited contribution that this interest makes to the asset's cultural significance, means that any adverse effect upon that significance would be minimal. In addition, there may also be the potential for a level of beneficial impact resulting from the removal of an invasive non-native species (rhododendrons) that are likely to have spread beyond the bounds of the managed '*Woodland Garden*'.

Summary

The magnitude of change to the Fairburn GDL has been assessed within the context of the nature, extent, and relative importance of the elements affected. The direct impacts result from the construction of five towers (S182-S186) within the designation boundary and the removal of a limited proportion of designed woodland in order to facilitate the OC. While the designed woodland forms part of the GDL's historic structure, the areas affected represent only a fraction of the overall woodland and greater GDL.

On balance, the retained woodland will provide substantial screening and continue to retain much of its **horticultural** and **archaeological** interest, thereby limiting the degree to which the new infrastructure alters the character and cohesion of the parkland, and the legibility of the principal designed views associated with Fairburn House (LB14031) and Fairburn Tower (LB14030); these key views are largely oriented toward the core landscape and open spaces of the GDL rather than the peripheral areas where the woodland removal and proposed towers are located.

Although the affected woodland contributes to the GDL's character, the area affected by felling is one of the less sensitive components of the designed landscape when considered in relation to its overall scale, composition, and principal designed relationships. The direct physical changes are therefore localised and should not be seen to fundamentally alter the way in which the GDL conveys those interests for which it was designated.

Route Option

During the Routing Process and Alternatives discussions (see **Sections 4.6.33- 4.6.38 of Volume 2, Chapter 4: The Routing Process and Alternatives**), HES was consulted on the three route options affecting Fairburn GDL (Section E: routes E1, E2, and E3). As a result of this consultation, Route Option E1 was ultimately chosen as the preferred route as it was considered to best minimise any direct and/or setting impact.

Desk-based review alongside consultation discussions with HES (during workshops), indicate that the alignment option adopted by the Proposed Development has endeavored, through design review, to avoid impact to woodland areas considered more sensitive to change, as a contributor to the **Horticultural** and **Archaeological** interest of the GDL. It was determined that the curated woodland garden that surrounds Fairburn House somewhat diminishes in significance as it extends away from the House and associated structures, towards the Proposed Development, where Towers S182-S186 are located within a long-standing mixed pine woodland of limited ecological/**Nature Conservation** value.

Rationale

The impact assessment analysis (see **Section 12.7.32- 12.7.40 of Volume 2, Chapter 12: Cultural Heritage**) identified an adverse effect resulting from the introduction of the Proposed Development into the woodland in the west of the designed landscape, between Towers S182 and S186, the contribution of which to the parkland character of the asset

⁶ Any assessment of Nature Conservation should be considered distinct from the Horticultural interest of the '*Woodland Garden*'.

⁷ Small pockets of oak, ash and beech are noted as present within the predominantly replanted Scots pine and Sitka spruce within the '*Policy Woodlands*'. Further comment on the nature of any impact on what is technically an ecological receptor, would need to be sought from Ecological topic specialists.

would be reduced to some degree. This area will be affected by woodland loss (of approximately 14.59 ha) due to management felling, as well as by the creation of the tower platforms, new access tracks and the upgrading of existing ones. Detailed design specifications are outlined in **Table 3.2 of Volume 2, Chapter 3: Description of the Proposed Development**.

The impact assessment took account of the potential for the compound loss of contributory interests through the disturbance of potential material remains, woodland removal and the physical installation of transmission infrastructure. A medium magnitude of impact has been assigned as the result of the direct physical impact of the Proposed Development upon Fairburn GDL, resulting in a Major adverse effect.⁸

It is relevant to consider that the route assessed (route option E1) was influenced, and ultimately selected following consultation with, HES.

Summary

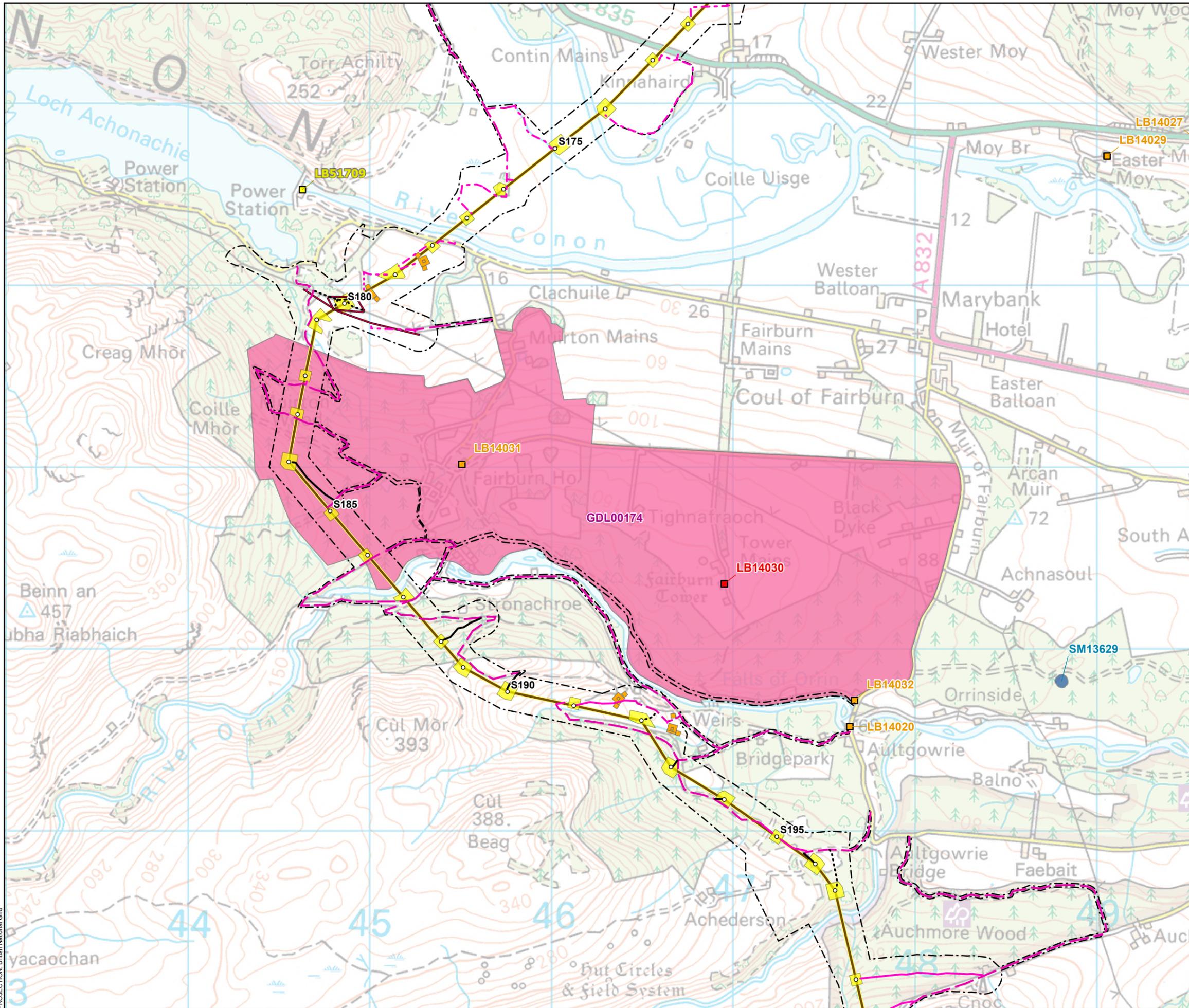
A review of the EIAR confirms that direct impacts on designated heritage assets have been largely avoided through refinement of the project design and the application of embedded mitigation.

In reference to Fairburn GDL (GDL00174), a medium magnitude of direct impact is anticipated for the GDL, within the western plantation woodland (between Towers S182-S186), due to tower construction, management felling (OC) and access track works. This reflects the compound nature of impacts to the asset's **Scenic**, and to a lesser degree **Archaeological** and **Nature Conservation** interests. Given the diverse nature of the contributing interests to cultural significance, and the nature of impact from the Proposed Development, the resulting magnitude of impact assessment only marginally concluded that the combined direct impact was to be considered medium, rather than low.

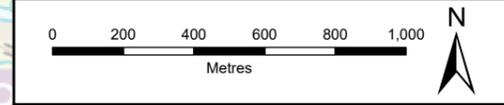
In summary, the Proposed Development has been designed to avoid or minimise direct interaction with designated heritage assets wherever practicable, consistent with Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS).⁹ Embedded mitigation and ongoing consultation with HES will ensure that any further direct impacts to cultural heritage are appropriately managed through the detailed design and construction phases.

⁸ Note: Footnote 29 in Volume 2: Chapter 12, incorrectly assigned a 'low' magnitude of impact in contrast to the reporting in Volume 5: Appendix 12.5. Further, it erroneously used the term 'significant', when attempting to contextualise the scale of impact. This is due to the non-material change that will occur, with the boundary and primary value of the GDL being maintained, and a small portion of a low archaeological potential woodland, being lost as a result of the Proposed Development, while the fuller consideration of the GDL found that 'medium' impact was appropriate.

⁹ HEP3 - Plans, programmes, policies and strategies, and the allocation of resources, should be approached in a way that protects and promotes the historic environment. If detrimental impact on the historic environment is unavoidable, it should be minimised. Steps should be taken to demonstrate that alternatives have been explored, and mitigation measures should be put in place.



- Tower Location
- Alignment Section E
- Special Arrangement
- - - Limit of Deviation (LoD)
- Temporary Tower Compound Area
- Equipotential Zone (EPZ) (Pulling Position)
- Temporary Access Track - Cut/Fill
- Temporary Access Track - Floating
- Temporary Access Track - Trackway Panel
- Permanent Access Track - Cut/Fill
- Permanent Access Track - Floating
- Existing Access Tracks - Upgrade Required
- Scheduled Monument
- Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes
- Category A Listed Building
- Category B Listed Building
- Category C Listed Building



SCALE: See Scale Bar	VERSION: A01
SIZE: A3	DRAWN: DN
PROJECT: 0720281	CHECKED: LT
DATE: 30/01/2026	APPROVED: KG

Figure 1: Fairburn GDL
Spittal - Loch Buidhe - Beauly 400 kV OHL
Connection
Technical Note - Cultural Heritage -
Additional Information

ERM

Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks
TRANSMISSION

PROJECTION: British National Grid