Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection

Additional Information

Cumulative Assessment Addendum

June 2025

Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

STRATHY WOOD WIND FARM GRID CONNECTION: CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT ADDENDUM

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 In November 2024, Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc (the Applicant) who, operating and known as Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (SSEN Transmission), submitted an application to the Scottish Ministers to seek consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act, and deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act (as amended), to construct and operate approximately 4.5 km of new 132 kV overhead line (OHL) (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development).

1.1.2 The Proposed Development would transport electricity generated from the consented Strathy Wood Wind Farm to the existing electricity network at Connagill 275/132 kV substation initially via a 'T' onto the existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL. Following construction of a new double circuit steel lattice OHL, from within the vicinity of the 'T' point to Connagill 275/132 kV substation (referred to as 'Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection'), the Proposed Development would then join that new steel lattice OHL at the 'T' point. This would allow the Proposed Development to also act as 'shared infrastructure' for part of the connection for the consented Strathy South Wind Farm.

1.1.3 The Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection is subject to a separate section 37 application which was submitted to the Scottish Ministers by the Applicant in February 2025 (ECU Reference: 00005081).

1.2 Cumulative Assessment in the 2024 EIA Report

1.2.1 In accordance with the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ("the EIA Regulations"), the EIA Report submitted in November 2024 (referred to in this report as the '2024 EIA Report') with the application provided an assessment of cumulative effects. The individual topic based technical chapters of the 2024 EIA Report considered the cumulative effects of the Proposed Development with other existing or future committed development that have the potential to result in significant cumulative effects in combination with those resulting from the Proposed Development.

1.2.2 The developments taken into consideration with respect to cumulative effects were mainly associated with Connagill Cluster Grid Connections[1] and their associated wind farms, although individual technical topics considered other existing or future committed development, as appropriate. For example, the cumulative ornithological assessment considered developments ranging across a wider area to allow for the mobility of bird species and to fully consider impacts across the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA.

1.2.3 Two scenarios were considered in respect of the proposed Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection to ensure that all potential connection options were appraised:

[1] The Proposed Development forms part of a wider connection strategy for renewable generation referred to as Connagill Cluster Grid Connections. The developments that make up the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections include the consented Strathy Wood Wind Farm, the consented Strathy South Wind Farm, the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub and the proposed Kirkton Energy Park. To facilitate the connections, a new switching station, known as Strathy Switching Station would also be required.

- Scenario 1 assumed that the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub was not granted consent and hence included the consideration of the Proposed Alignment of the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (and not the Alternative Alignment or Melvich Wind Energy Hub), and
- Scenario 2 assumed the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub was granted consent and hence included consideration of the Alternative Alignment of the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (and not the Proposed Alignment).

1.2.4 It should be noted that at the time of compiling the 2024 EIA Report, all developments associated with the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections were at scoping or pre-scoping stage. This included the (now) proposed Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection.

1.2.5 When undertaking the cumulative assessments for the Proposed Development, the design of the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection was still being finalised, and the EIA had not been completed. As such, for some technical disciplines, the development did not have sufficient information on potential effects to be subject to a detailed cumulative effects assessment. However, an assessment of likely / potential cumulative effects with the Proposed Development was undertaken where possible, informed by any relevant information available, with professional judgement applied.

1.2.6 The EIA Report subsequently compiled for the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection, and submitted alongside the section 37 submission in February 2025 (referred to in this report as the '2025 EIA Report'), did include a technical cumulative assessment of the Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment in Volume 1 and the Alternative Alignment in Volume 5), where this was considered to be required.

1.3 Purpose of this Report

1.3.1 For completeness, this Addendum includes an updated assessment of cumulative effects that includes full consideration of the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment), where this was not captured in the 2024 EIA Report. The additional cumulative assessment is included in **Table 1**.

1.3.2 Where the potential for cumulative effects between the Proposed Development and the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection were considered in the 2024 EIA Report, the relevant section of the 2024 EIA Report is signposted in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Summary of Cumulative Assessment of the Proposed Development in-combination with Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection

EIA Report Chapter (Volume 1)	Considered in the 2024 EIA Report Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment	Considered in the 2024 EIA Report Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment	Additional Cumulative Information Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment	Additional Cumulative Information Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment
Chapter 6: LVIA	The cumulative landscape and visual assessments were restricted to those receptors predicted to accrue effects from the Proposed Development in isolation greater than negligible. The assessment recognised that the Strathy South Wind Farm 'Northern Section' Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment) was at scoping stage and had not yet been the subject of a landscape and visual impact assessment. <u>Landscape Cumulative Effects were reported in Paragraph 6.11.19 of Chapter 6</u> *The majority of the Strathy South Wind Farm 'Northern Section' Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment) would be located within Landscape Character Type (LCT) 134 Sweeping Moorland and Flows and would have both direct and indirect effects on this LCT. The OHL would be supported on steel lattice towers with heights up to 46 m. Examination of the ZTV included in the Strathy South Grid Connection Scoping Report[2] indicated* that there *would be relatively widespread theoretical visibility of this development from this LCT within the Proposed Development's study area but that medium to low numbers of towers would be visible from areas of lower ground to the east of the River Strathy with higher numbers of towers theoretically visible from the higher slopes west of the river which are under forest plantation. This development would replace a section of the existing 132 kV trident H-wood pole mounted OHL between Strathy North substation to within the vicinity of Melvich Wind Energy Hub substation, which would be removed on completion of construction. The vertical elements of this development would be taller than those of the existing OHL, but it is considered that the cumulative effects within the study area would be no greater than those assessed for the Proposed Development in isolation – i.e. Minor – Moderate adverse and not significant.* <u>Visual Cumulative Effects on Building Receptor B3 (Bowside Cottage / Gamekeepers Cottage) were reported in Paragraph 6.11.16 of Chapter 6.</u> *The southernmost towers of the Strathy South Wind Farm 'Northern Section' Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment) would be visible but not from the south facing windows from this built receptor. The level of effect would therefore be no*	Assumptions were as per the Proposed Alignment. <u>Landscape Cumulative Effects were reported in Paragraph 6.11.28 of Chapter 6</u> *The Strathy South Wind Farm 'Northern Section' Grid Connection (Alternative Alignment) would generally be further away from the study area as it deflects to the north, then east and then south to skirt the northern edge of Melvich Wind Energy Hub. Where it lies within the study area, it would follow the same alignment as the Strathy South Wind Farm 'Northern Section' Grid Connection Proposed Alignment and the consequent cumulative effects on LCT 134 can be expected to be broadly similar.* <u>Visual Cumulative Effects on Building Receptor B3 (Bowside Cottage / Gamekeepers Cottage) were reported in Paragraph 6.11.33 of Chapter 6.</u> *As per the Proposed Alignment.* <u>Visual Cumulative Effects on Building Receptor B4 (Dallangwell) was reported in Paragraph 6.11.34 of Chapter 6.</u> *As per the Proposed Alignment.* <u>Visual Cumulative Effects on Route Receptor R1 (Scottish Hill Track 344) was reported in Paragraph 6.11.35 of Chapter 6.</u> *As per the Proposed Alignment.* <u>Route Receptor R2 (Access Track from R1 to Dallangwell and Strathy North Substation) was reported in Paragraph 6.11.36 of Chapter 6.</u> *As per the Proposed Alignment.* <u>Recreation Receptor Rec 1 (River Strathy) was reported in Paragraph 6.11.37 of Chapter 6.</u> *As per the Proposed Alignment.*	No additional information required.	No additional information required.

[2] SSEN Transmission (2024) Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Scoping Report. Available at: https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx?cr=ECU00005081

EIA Report Chapter (Volume 1)	Considered in the 2024 EIA Report Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment	Considered in the 2024 EIA Report Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment	Additional Cumulative Information Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment	Additional Cumulative Information Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment
	greater than that assessed for the Proposed Development in isolation – i.e. Minor[3] *adverse and not significant.* Visual Cumulative Effects on Building Receptor B4 (Dallangwell) was reported in Paragraph 6.11.20 of Chapter 6. *The addition of the Proposed Development to Cumulative Scenario 1 developments is unlikely to increase the level of effect arising from the Proposed Development (Minor adverse and not significant) for this building receptor due to the screening effects of topography and/or vegetation.* Visual Cumulative Effects on Route Receptor R1 (Scottish Hill Track 344) was reported in Paragraph 6.11.21 of Chapter 6. *Effects for this route arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to Cumulative Scenario 1 developments are unlikely to increase above the level of* ***Moderate adverse and significant*** *as assessed for the Proposed Development in isolation, although it would be seen in the context of increased numbers of wind turbines in distant views, particularly for north bound walkers, and together with Strathy Switching Station in some views for receptors headed in both directions.* Route Receptor R2 (Access Track from R1 to Dallangwell and Strathy North Substation) was reported in Paragraph 6.11.22 of Chapter 6. *Effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development to Cumulative Scenario 1 developments are unlikely to increase above the level of Minor adverse and not significant as assessed for the Proposed Development in isolation due to the screening effects of topography and/or vegetation.* Recreation Receptor Rec 1 (River Strathy) was reported in Paragraph 6.11.23 of Chapter 6. *The addition of the Proposed Development to Cumulative Scenario 1 developments is unlikely to increase the level of effect arising from the Proposed Development (Minor adverse and not significant) for this recreation receptor as there would be very limited visibility of turbines at Strathy South Wind Farm, of Strathy South Wind Farm 'Northern Section' Grid Connection, no visibility of turbines at Kirkton*			

[3] Paragraph 6.11.16 of Chapter 6 of the 2024 EIA Report erroneously reports that in isolation the Proposed Development would result in a Minor - Moderate adverse (and not significant) effect.

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	Energy Park and visibility only from the northern beats of Strathy Switching Station.			
Chapter 7: Ecology	The potential cumulative effect of the Proposed Development in-combination with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment was set out in Table 7.10 of Chapter 7. <u>Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar and West Halladale Site of Special Scientific Interest</u> *Potential for direct impacts within the SAC / Ramsar and SSSI boundary, although the extent of impact, and habitat types affected are not quantifiable without further survey information. However, the magnitude of impact* [with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment*] is limited to a small section of the OHL (and likely up to 2 towers) at the western end, and therefore is very minor in the context of the wider designation. Indirect effects on peatland habitats may occur in localised areas where SAC habitats are within the Zone of Influence of construction activities e.g. through changes in hydrology.* <u>Flow Country World Heritage Site</u> *Potential for direct impacts within the WHS boundary, although the extent of impact, and habitat types affected are not quantifiable without further survey information.* <u>Protected Species</u> *The scheme may affect protected species, but as the Proposed Development will not significantly affect any protected species, the potential for cumulative effects is low.*	As per the 2024 EIA Report Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment.	In consideration of the assessment of habitat loss for the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment (as set out in Volume 1, Chapter 7: Ecology of the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection EIA Report (February 2025)), the cumulative loss in association with the Proposed Development is summarised below: <u>Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar and West Halladale Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</u> Direct and indirect permanent habitat loss within the Caithness and Sutherland SAC / Ramsar and West Halladale SSSI for the Proposed Development is calculated at 1.49 ha in total, as well as 1.08 ha of temporary habitat loss. Cumulative permanent habitat losses with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment (0.023 ha of direct habitat loss and 0.109 ha of indirect permanent habitat loss within the SAC / Ramsar and SSSI) are calculated at 1.62 ha. Cumulative temporary habitat losses would be 1.11 ha (0.03 ha from Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment). Cumulative permanent and temporary habitat losses are very small in context with the areas of land covered by the SAC / Ramsar designation (of which the SSSI forms part), which covers hundreds of thousands of hectares of peatland. The permanent unmitigated cumulative losses would not reasonably substantially affect the distribution or extent of Annex I habitats within the designated sites. The unmitigated effect of cumulative temporary and permanent habitat losses within the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar is therefore assessed as **Minor adverse (Not significant)**. <u>Flow Country World Heritage Site (WHS)</u> Direct habitat loss within the Flow Country WHS is calculated at 8.19 ha in total [for the Proposed Development] and therefore the cumulative habitat losses with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment (25.8 ha of direct and indirect permanent habitat loss) are calculated at 33.99 ha.	In consideration of the assessment of habitat loss for the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Alternative Alignment (as set out in Volume 5, Chapter 5: Ecology – Alternative Alignment of the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection EIA Report (February 2025)), the cumulative loss in association with the Proposed Development is summarised below: <u>Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar and West Halladale Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)</u> Direct and indirect permanent habitat loss within the Caithness and Sutherland SAC / Ramsar and West Halladale SSSI for the Proposed Development is calculated at 1.49 ha in total, and therefore the cumulative permanent habitat losses with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (Alternative Alignment) (0.023 ha direct habitat loss and 0.109 ha of indirect permanent habitat loss within the SAC / Ramsar and SSSI) are calculated at 1.62 ha. This is the same as for the Proposed Development with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment because Tower 21 and its access track, which are within the boundary of the designated site, are common to both alignments. Cumulative temporary habitat losses would also be the same. Cumulative permanent and temporary habitat losses are very small in context with the areas of land covered by the SAC / Ramsar designation (of which the SSSI forms part), which covers hundreds of thousands of hectares of peatland. The permanent unmitigated cumulative losses would not reasonably substantially affect the distribution or extent of Annex I habitats within the designated sites. The unmitigated effect of cumulative temporary and permanent habitat losses within the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar is therefore assessed as **Minor adverse (Not significant)**. <u>Flow Country World Heritage Site (WHS)</u> Direct and indirect habitat loss within the Flow Country WHS is calculated at 8.19 ha in total for the Proposed Development and therefore the cumulative habitat impacts (temporary and permanent) with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (Alternative Alignment) (30.07 ha of direct and indirect permanent habitat loss) are calculated at 38.26 ha.

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			As assessed in respect of cumulative effects on the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar, this magnitude of impact when considered in context with the hundreds of thousands of hectares of peatland within the WHS would be very minor, and cumulative effects are therefore assessed as **Minor adverse (Not significant).** Notwithstanding the outcome of the assessments for both projects as concluding no significant effects to the WHS, it is reasonable to assume that the habitat enhancement measures proposed within the outline Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the Connagill Cluster would successfully mitigate any adverse effects (however minor) on the internationally important peatland habitats that are attributes of the WHS. <u>Protected Species</u> The assessment concluded there would be no significant effects to protected species and therefore there is no potential for cumulative effects with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment [and the Proposed Development]. <u>Shadow Habitat Regulation Appraisal of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Ramsar</u> A Shadow Habitat Regulations Appraisal (HRA) was set out in Volume 4, Appendix V1-7.6 of the 2025 EIA Report. It concluded that there was potential for Likely Significant In-combination Effects for the Proposed Development and the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment on the following qualifying interests, and as such an Appropriate Assessment was completed: • SAC/Ramsar habitats • Ramsar nationally rare mosses and invertebrates *SAC / Ramsar habitats* The OHL and the proposed construction methods have sought to minimise the habitat loss and those indirectly affected by the development. This includes the siting of tower locations to take into consideration peat depths, habitats, and hydrological flows. Through the careful consideration of the development within the design process, permanent habitat loss and change has been minimised to c. 0.12 ha of qualifying habitat across the entire development. Given that habitat losses associated with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed	As assessed in respect of cumulative effects on the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar, this magnitude of impact when considered in context with the hundreds of thousands of hectares of peatland within the WHS would be very minor, and cumulative effects are therefore assessed as **Minor adverse (Not significant).** Notwithstanding the outcome of the assessments for both projects as concluding no significant effects to the WHS, it is reasonable to assume that the habitat enhancement measures proposed within the outline HMP for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections would successfully mitigate any adverse effects (however minor) on the internationally important peatland habitats that are attributes of the WHS. <u>Protected Species</u> As per the Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment. <u>Shadow Habitat Regulation Appraisal of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Ramsar</u> The Shadow HRA (set out in Volume 4, Appendix V1-7.6 of the 2025 EIA Report) is equally applicable to the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Alternative Alignment. The Appropriate Assessment concluded that there would be **no adverse in-combination effects on the integrity** on the qualifying habitats of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar with the combined habitat impacts of the Proposed Development and the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment.

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			Alignment alone are very minor when considered in the wider context of the SAC / Ramsar, it is concluded that the construction and operation of the OHL and access tracks would not contribute to any changes to the structure, function and distribution of Annex I habitats throughout the SAC / Ramsar. The appropriate assessment has concluded that the construction and operation of the OHL would result in **no adverse in-combination effect on the integrity** of the qualifying habitats with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment. *Ramsar nationally rare mosses and invertebrates* As assessed above in respect of the direct and indirect impacts on SAC / Ramsar habitats, the construction and operation of the OHL would not contribute to any significant changes to the structure, function and distribution of Annex I habitats throughout the SAC / Ramsar, or the populations of rare mosses and invertebrates they support. The appropriate assessment has concluded that the OHL would result in **no adverse in-combination effect** on the integrity of qualifying habitats supporting rare plants and invertebrates with the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment.	
Chapter 8: Ornithology	As set out in Table 8.10 of Chapter 8: Ornithology in Volume 1 of the EIA Report, as an impact assessment had not yet been completed for the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment, the development was not included in the cumulative assessment.	As per the 2024 EIA Report for Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment.	The Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection EIA Report (February 2025) provided a cumulative assessment of the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment and the proposed Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection (the Proposed Development), as set out in Table V1-8.7 of Volume 1, Chapter 8: Ornithology, and summarised below: <u>Summary of Potential Cumulative Effects on Relevant Important Ornithological Features (IOFs) during Construction</u> *Potential Effects of Construction Habitat Loss* The cumulative assessment considered that habitat loss due to the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment would be negligible and too low to make a material contribution to potential cumulative effects, and as such, potential effects on IOFs due to habitat loss was scoped out of the cumulative assessment.	It was noted within Volume 5, Chapter 6: Ornithology – Alternative Alignment of the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection EIA Report (February 2025) that the potential for the Alternative Alignment to make a material contribution to cumulative effects on IOFs is considered to be the same as that for the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment.

EIA Report Chapter (Volume 1)	Considered in the 2024 EIA Report Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment	Considered in the 2024 EIA Report Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment	Additional Cumulative Information Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment	Additional Cumulative Information Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment
			Potential Effects of Construction Disturbance The cumulative assessment identified that it was possible that the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment could make a material contribution to a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) on the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA breeding merlin population due to in-combination disturbance effects during construction with the Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection (the Proposed Development). However, it was considered likely that any breeding merlin displaced due to construction of these developments would relocate to another suitable site and there would be **no significant** population-level effects. The Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment cumulative assessment reported no further in-combination disturbance effects during construction for any other relevant IOF (including red-throated diver, black-throated diver, hen harrier or peregrine) in combination with the proposed Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection (the Proposed Development). <u>Summary of Potential Cumulative Effects on Relevant IOFs during Operation</u> *Potential Effects of Operational Disturbance* As a worst-case scenario, the 2024 EIA Report considered that operational disturbance from the proposed Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection could result in displacement of a pair of breeding hen harriers. The 2025 EIA Report also considered that as a worst-case scenario, that the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment could result in displacement of a hen harrier pair due to operational disturbance. The 2025 EIA Report cumulative assessment considered that it would be unlikely that any displaced birds would be lost from the SPA population entirely. While hen harriers are faithful to their breeding territories, the actual nest site moves from year to year within the territory, and historically birds are known to have bred at other locations in the wider area. Overall it was considered that there would be no potential for any in-combination operational effects that could affect the long term viability of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA breeding hen harrier population.	

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			As a worst-case scenario, the 2024 EIA Report considered that the proposed Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection could displace a single breeding merlin territory. The 2025 EIA Report also considered as a worst-case scenario that the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment could result in displacement of 1-2 merlin pairs due to operational disturbance. Given the size and favourable condition of the SPA breeding merlin population, ability of birds to change breeding sites, and availability of suitable alternative habitat in the wider area, it was considered there would not be potential for the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment to make a material contribution to any in-combination operational effects that could affect the long term viability of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA breeding merlin population. The Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment cumulative assessment reported no further operational disturbance effects in combination with the proposed Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection (the Proposed Development) for any other relevant IOF (including red-throated diver, black-throated diver or peregrine). *Potential Effects of Collision during Operation* Given that predicted collision risk to Hen harrier from other developments was low, with no regularly used commuting routes across the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment identified, there was not considered to be any potential for the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment to make a material contribution to an in-combination LSE on the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA breeding black-throated diver population due to collision mortality during operation. As the breeding density of red-throated divers around the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment is higher than that of the black-throated diver, flight activity in this area is expected to be higher. Additionally, 2-3 commuting routes across the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment site were identified. It was therefore considered possible that the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment could make a material contribution to an in-combination	

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			LSE on the Caithness and Sutherland SPA breeding red-throated diver population due to collision mortality during operation, when considered together with surrounding developments including the Proposed Development. The cumulative assessment in the 2025 EIA Report also concluded that it is conceivable that, when considered together with surrounding developments including the Proposed Development, the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment could make a material contribution to an in-combination LSE on the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA breeding hen harrier population due to collision mortality during operation. Collision Risk Modelling (CRM) was not completed for the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment nor the proposed Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection; with the assessments concluding that the potential effects of collision were considered to be of low magnitude (following implementation of targeted mitigation such as line markers). Overall, the effects of cumulative collision risk to the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA breeding red-throated diver, black-throated diver and hen harrier poulations were assessed in the 2025 EIA Report as being of low magniture and **not significant**.	
Chapter 9: Soils, Geology and Water	Soils, Geology and Water Cumulative Effects were considered in Section 9.10 of Chapter 9. The assessment identified that the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment would be located within the same water catchment as the Proposed Development (i.e. the River Strathy surface water catchment). The assessment considered that as this development may be constructed in coming years, it would be expected to comply with current industry standard guidelines and be managed in accordance with best practice, industry standards and relevant legalisation, planning policy and guidance regulated by statutory consultees. These standards would ensure, with respect to the soils, geology and the water environment, potential impacts are mitigated and controlled at source. The assessment concluded that the magnitude of cumulative impact is considered negligible and the potential effect on identified receptors is Negligible and not significant.	As per the 2024 EIA Report for Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment.	No additional information required.	No additional information required.

EIA Report Chapter (Volume 1)	Considered in the 2024 EIA Report Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment	Considered in the 2024 EIA Report Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment	Additional Cumulative Information Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment	Additional Cumulative Information Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment
Chapter 10: Cultural Heritage	Paragraphs 10.3.3 – 10.3.4 of Chapter 10 confirmed that as there are no designated heritage sites (i.e. Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings. Designed landscapes) in the near surrounding area, which would have significant visibility of the Proposed Development, with the closest cultural heritage designated site being the Armadale Broch Scheduled Monument, located 3.5 km to the north-west. As such it was not considered that the Proposed Development would give rise to any significant direct or indirect effects on designated heritage sites, and a detailed assessment was scoped out, as agreed with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) during a formal scoping process. Cumulative effects would only be considered in relation to significant visual impacts and impacts on the setting of designated assets. However, as no designated assets would be impacted either directly or indirectly, a cumulative assessment was scoped out of the assessment.	As per the 2024 EIA Report Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment.	No additional information required.	No additional information required.
Chapter 11: Traffic and Transport	Traffic and Transport Cumulative Effects were considered in Section 11.11 of Chapter 11. Only consented schemes were considered as 'committed developments' and included in the assessment of cumulative effects. Nevertheless, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) would be developed to include the wider impacts of any further projects in the area that are eventually consented and have similar construction timescales to this project. This would be agreed with The Highland Council and Transport Scotland. It should be acknowledged that it is proposed that construction of both projects would not run concurrently. It is proposed that the Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection would be completed before construction commences on the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection.	As per the 2024 EIA Report Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment.	No additional information required.	No additional information required.
Chapter 12: Forestry	Forestry Cumulative Effects were considered in Section 12.10 of Chapter 12. The cumulative forestry assessment reported that the area of woodland removal required for other developments (including the consented wind farms (Strathy Wood and Strathy South) and other proposed grid connections that form part of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections) would be mitigated through the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal (CoWRP) objective of no net loss of woodland with compensatory planting. This policy would be applicable to the woodland areas of those developments that are not yet consented. In this way there is considered to be no cumulative effect on forestry.	As per the 2024 EIA Report Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment.	No additional information required.	No additional information required.

EIA Report Chapter (Volume 1)	Considered in the 2024 EIA Report Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment	Considered in the 2024 EIA Report Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment	Additional Cumulative Information Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Proposed Alignment	Additional Cumulative Information Proposed Development and Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection – Alternative Alignment
Chapter 13: Socio-economic, Recreation and Tourism	<u>Socio-economic Cumulative Effects were considered in Paragraphs 13.9.3 to 13.9.5</u> The cumulative effects of the construction phase of the Proposed Development along with those of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections and their associated wind farms that are yet to be constructed, would generate additional construction related spend, employment and Gross Value Added (GVA). There may be an element of displacement where there would be competition for labour at various stages of the Proposed Development. However, this was predicted to be minimal, with most jobs being genuinely new to the area. The addition of the Proposed Development would positively contribute to this and could result in increased beneficial effects in terms of job creation and opportunities for local businesses. As such, construction of the Proposed Development is predicted to result in a **temporary Moderate Beneficial (significant)** cumulative effect on the economy in Highland (regional level), and a Minor Beneficial (not significant) cumulative effect on the economy in Scotland (national level). The cumulative effects of the operational phase of the Proposed Development along with cumulative sites, would generate additional operation related spend, employment and GVA. As such, the operational phase is predicted to result in a Minor Beneficial (not significant) cumulative effect on the economy in Highland (regional level), and a temporary Minor Beneficial (not significant) cumulative effect on the economy in Scotland (national level). <u>Tourism and Recreation Cumulative Effects were considered in Paragraph 13.9.6</u> The cumulative tourism and recreation assessment concluded that both the construction and operational activity of the Proposed Development along with cumulative sites were predicted to result in a Negligible (not significant) cumulative effect on the tourism and recreational sectors in Highland (regional level), and a Negligible (not significant) cumulative effect on the tourism and recreational sectors in Scotland (national level).	As per the 2024 EIA Report Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment.	No additional information required.	No additional information required.

1.4

1.5 Summary of Cumulative Effects of the Proposed Development in combination with the proposed Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection

Landscape and Visual Cumulative Effects

1.5.1 The assessment set out in Chapter 6 of the 2024 EIA Report concluded that significant cumulative effects would be limited to one route receptor; R1: Scottish Hill Track 344 – Strath Halladale (Trantlebeg) to Strathy, which was assessed as having a **Moderate adverse (and significant) effect** in both directions during construction and operation. This applies to the Proposed Development in combination with both the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection - Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment. This would be no higher than the effect assessed for the Proposed Development in isolation.

1.5.2 No other significant cumulative effects were assessed for the Proposed Development in combination with Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment or Alternative Alignment).

Ecology Cumulative Effects

1.5.3 The assessment set out in Chapter 7 of the 2024 EIA Report concluded that no significant cumulative effects to Important Ecological Features (IEF) with any of the other wind farms and grid connections (consented and proposed) that form part of the Connagill Cluster have been identified. However, at the time of the cumulative assessment, the final design of the (at the time, scoping stage) Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment or Alternative Alignment) was not confirmed, which meant there was insufficient information to complete a detailed cumulative assessment of habitat loss.

1.5.4 As the design of the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment) is now confirmed (as set out in the February 2025 EIA Report), a review of the cumulative assessment of the Proposed Development and the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment) has been undertaken. This has confirmed that there would be no significant effects on the qualifying interests of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatland SAC/Ramsar sites, or to IEF, as a result of the Proposed Development in combination with Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment or Alternative Alignment).

1.5.5 Nevertheless, a landscape scale Habitat Management Plan (HMP), is being developed to address cumulative peatland habitat losses arising from the construction and operation of the wider Connagill Cluster Grid Connections and to deliver habitat enhancements that complement the conservation objectives for habitats and protected species within the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar.

Ornithology Cumulative Effects

1.5.6 As an impact assessment had not been completed for the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection at the time of compilation of the 2024 EIA Report for the Proposed Development, this development was scoped out of the cumulative impact assessment, as the level of detail required was not available.

1.5.7 The cumulative assessment completed for Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection (Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment), as set out in the February 2025 EIA Report, allowed for the consideration of the confirmed design of the OHL in combination with other developments, including the proposed Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection. The assessment concluded that following implementation of embedded mitigation measures (i.e. a Bird Protection Plan) and targeted mitigation for diver species (i.e. line marking of key sections of the OHL and installation of artificial nest rafts), there is not considered to be any potential for in-combination effects with other developments, which would undermine any of the conservation objectives of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA or North Caithness Cliffs SPA. Consequently, it was concluded that there would be no adverse effect on integrity (AESI) on either SPA.

Soils, Geology and Water Cumulative Effects

1.5.8 The assessment set out in Chapter 9 of the 2024 EIA Report concluded that there would be no cumulative effects, nor any requirements for additional mitigation or enhancements identified.

Cultural Heritage Cumulative Effects

1.5.9 As no designated heritage assets would be impacted either directly or indirectly by the Proposed Development in isolation, a cumulative assessment was scoped out of the assessment of the 2024 EIA Report.

Traffic and Transport Cumulative Effects

1.5.10 The cumulative traffic assessment only considered 'committed developments' and therefore did not consider the Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection. The development continues not to be a 'committed development'. The Applicant commits to producing a CTMP which would be developed to include the wider impacts of any further projects in the area that are eventually consented and have similar construction timescales to the Proposed Development. This would be agreed with The Highland Council and Transport Scotland.

Forestry Cumulative Effects

1.5.11 No significant cumulative effects on forestry were assessed in Chapter 12 of the 2024 EIA Report, assuming woodland removal for other developments would be mitigated through the Scottish Government's CoWRP objective of no net loss of woodland. The Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection 2025 EIA Report reported a predicted permanent loss of 5.25 ha (for both the Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment) with the Applicant committed to making compensatory planting arrangements to meet the CoWRP objectives.

Socio-economic, Tourism and Recreation Cumulative Effects

1.5.12 The assessment set out in Chapter 13 of the 2024 EIA Report concluded that there are potential beneficial effects in relation to the construction and operation phases of the Proposed Development, both in employment and GVA terms in the context of local and national economies, in the context of the cumulative sites.

1.5.13 In terms of socio-economic effects, the predicted residual cumulative effect in relation to socio-economic activities during construction are deemed to be temporary **Moderate Beneficial (significant)** on the economy in Highland (regional level), and a temporary Minor Beneficial (not significant) cumulative effect on the economy in Scotland (national level). The operational phase it is predicted to result in Minor Beneficial (not significant) cumulative effect on the economy in Highland (regional) and on the economy in Scotland (national).

1.5.14 The predicted cumulative residual effect in relation to construction and operational activities on tourism and recreational receptors are deemed to be Negligible (not significant).