

VOLUME 4: APPENDIX V1-3.6: OUTLINE SITE RESTORATION PLAN

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1. OUTLINE SITE RESTORATION PLAN

1.1 Introduction

Purpose of the Outline Site Restoration Plan

- 1.1.1 This Outline Site Restoration Plan provides an outline of standards and procedures which would be employed during the pre-construction, construction and reinstatement of the Proposed Development in order to facilitate the restoration of landform, habitats and vegetation which would be disturbed as a result of the works. The aim of the Outline Site Restoration Plan is to ensure the adoption of techniques which, as far as practicable, achieve the following purposes:

- The restoration of landform to reflect the adjacent areas, accommodate new permanent features and minimise the visual appearance of these features where possible;
- The restoration, and where possible, enhancement of pre-construction habitat types with the target of achieving net gain for biodiversity; and
- Across all disturbed areas, the restoration of vegetation types reflective of existing conditions and avoidance of unstable bare ground where erosion could occur.

- 1.1.2 It is intended that the general principles outlined in this document would provide a basis for more detailed plans to be developed during the post-consent, and pre-construction phase of the Proposed Development including site specific restoration plans, and a long-term Habitat Management Plan (HMP).

Associated Documents

- 1.1.3 The Outline Site Restoration Plan should be read in conjunction with the following associated parts of the EIA Report:

- Volume 4: Appendix V1-3.4: General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs);
- Volume 4: Appendix V1-3.5: Species Protection Plans (SPPs);
- Volume 1: Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual (Section 6.12: Mitigation);
- Volume 5: Chapter 4: Landscape and Visual – Alternative Alignment (Section 4.12: Mitigation);
- Volume 4: Appendix V1-7.3: Habitats Technical Report;
- Volume 4: Appendix V1-7.8: Connagill Cluster Outline Habitat Management Plan;
- Volume 1: Chapter 8: Ornithology (Section 8.9: Mitigation by Design and Embedded Mitigation and 8.11: Mitigation, Enhancements and Monitoring);
- Volume 5: Chapter 6: Ornithology – Alternative Alignment (Section 6.9: Mitigation by Design and Embedded Mitigation and 6.11: Mitigation, Enhancements and Monitoring);
- Volume 4: Appendix V1-9.1: Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment (PLHRA);
- Volume 4: Appendix V5-7.1: PLHRA – Alternative Alignment;
- Volume 4: Appendix V1-9.2: Outline Peat Management Plan (PMP); and
- Volume 4: Appendix V5-7.2: Outline PMP – Alternative Alignment.

1.2 General Principles of Site Restoration

- 1.2.1 The restoration of landscape areas and habitats would be considered through four phases as follows:

- Pre-construction phase;
- Construction phase;
- Post-construction reinstatement phase; and
- Post-reinstatement monitoring.

- 1.2.2 The above phases would be applied in a flexible manner across the project depending on the planned construction programme. Reinstatement would occur as soon as possible after excavation in order to minimise the time for which soil, peat or turves are required to be stored and the period of exposed excavations. However, this would be subject to

careful planning to avoid the necessity to track back over areas of previously restored ground or further disturbance of recovering areas.

- 1.2.3 The general principles for each phase identified above are summarised below. It is intended that these general principles would be further developed during the pre-construction phase and would form the basis of site-specific method statements and reinstatement plans.

Pre-construction Phase

- 1.2.4 Prior to construction commencing, planning would occur for each area to be disturbed, giving consideration to the following aspects:

- Identification of any areas to be protected, including important ecological features, water environment features, cultural heritage features or significant landscape features;
- Identification of any notable features which should be restored; and
- Provision of sufficient and suitable space for the separate storage of turves / topsoil, peat and or subsoils.

Construction Phase

- 1.2.5 The key consideration during construction to enable the greatest chance of successful restoration is the careful excavation, separation and storage of the different layers of soils and/or peat and sub-grade material. The protection of these materials during the period of construction is essential to ensure that sufficient materials are retained for reinstatement and that these are in the best condition to enable re-establishment of vegetation. The following general principles would be observed:

- Physical protection of any features identified as important for retention within the vicinity of the works;
- Separation of topsoil / vegetated 'acrotelmic' peat, from subsoil / lower 'catotelmic' peat, and other sub-grade material, and storage in separate stockpiles;
- Excavation of whole, intact turves where possible and storage with the vegetated side uppermost;
- Avoidance of double handling of materials;
- Stockpiles would be no greater than 2 m in height to prevent compaction;
- Protection of stockpiles from construction plant or contaminants, and from runoff;
- Monitoring of stored materials to ensure that they don't dry out and watering where necessary; and
- Avoidance of work during unsuitable weather conditions including heavy rain / very wet ground conditions, strong winds or periods of frozen ground (further details are provided in **Volume 4: Appendix V1-9.2: Outline Peat Management Plan (PMP)** and **Volume 4: Appendix V5-7.2: Outline PMP – Alternative Alignment**).

Reinstatement Phase

- 1.2.6 The general principles for reinstatement involve the replacement of the excavated soils in the correct order in which they were excavated, ideally with the re-placement of fully intact turves on the surface. The following measures would be observed during this phase of the works:

- Reinstatement would occur as soon as possible after excavation works, to minimise the period of soil / peat storage;
- Reforming of the sub-grade material to reflect landform and patterns of adjacent areas, prior to the replacement of peat or topsoil (see **Volume 1: Chapter 6 - Landscape and Visual** (Section 6.12: Mitigation));
- As far as possible, creation of slopes at gradients suitable for the placement of soils / peat and where necessary, suitable slope stabilisation measures to assist revegetation and prevent erosion;
- Replacement of soils / peat in the correct horizons, as close as possible to the area of excavation;
- Avoidance of compaction of soil or peat;
- Replacement of peat, limited to areas disturbed during the works;
- Adoption of a phased approach to avoid tracking back or disturbing areas previously reinstated; and

- A preference for natural regeneration of vegetation wherever possible (areas would be seeded only after prior agreement between SSEN Transmission and relevant stakeholders).

Post-reinstatement Monitoring Phase

- 1.2.7 To ensure success of vegetation restoration and to monitor the effectiveness of habitat reinstatement or enhancement measures, monitoring would occur over an agreed timeframe, particularly focussed within sensitive or protected areas. A programme for monitoring visits would be agreed between the Applicant, Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW) and NatureScot.

Tree works and planting

- 1.2.8 Any felling works within commercial forest areas would be carried out by an appropriately qualified and experienced woodland consultant and future replacement or compensatory replanting would be undertaken separately to the Proposed Development.
- 1.2.9 Any planting outwith forest areas for habitat or landscape mitigation purposes, if agreed, would be undertaken subsequent to ground vegetation restoration. Protection from grazing animals would be installed where necessary to aid establishment. There would be a preference towards the use of local provenance stock as far as possible.

Restoration of Key Features of the Development

- 1.2.10 The following provides a summary of how the techniques outlined above would be applied to the main features of the Proposed Development:

Permanent Access Tracks

- 1.2.11 Access tracks to be permanently retained are generally anticipated to be narrowed to around 3.5 m (plus 1.5 m for drainage and pollution measures) in width. Narrowing of access tracks would involve the replacement of excavated peat / soil along the edge of the access track to reduce the running width. Track drainage features would remain in place, or would be modified if necessary. Where possible, intact, vegetated turves would be used to form the verge of the track, bedded down to ensure that the exposed edges were not vulnerable to wind erosion. Cuttings and embankments would, where possible, be created at a gradient suitable for the replacement of soils / peat to allow revegetation. However, where this would not be possible, appropriate bio-engineering techniques would be used to assist the re-establishment of vegetation, with the exception of solid rock cuttings. These may include products such as jute matting.

Floating tracks

- 1.2.12 Floating track construction would be used where existing ground conditions were suitable, as agreed with the project geotechnical advisor, in preference to cut and fill track construction. This involves the construction of the track on top of the intact vegetated ground, using a supportive geogrid. Where materials were available, turves or soils may be used to help repair, and vegetate and integrate the verges of floating tracks with the adjacent landscape. However, this would be limited to situations where there was not a risk of wind erosion or drying of turves. No peat would be spread over adjacent vegetated landscape areas.

Temporary Access Tracks and Working Areas

- 1.2.13 The reinstatement of temporary tracks and working areas would be undertaken in accordance with the phases and general principles outlined above. The separation and storage of soils during construction would be key to ensuring the re-establishment of vegetation and habitats following reinstatement.
- 1.2.14 Once construction works were complete, excavated subgrade material would be used to reform any notable landscape features such as ridges or hummocks cut through by the works, and otherwise to reflect the adjacent landform. Where permanent, above ground features of the Proposed Development would be present, the landform would be placed to smoothly integrate these features into the adjacent landscape, and reduce the visual appearance where possible.
- 1.2.15 The area would then be reinstated with the appropriate layers of soils / peat and turves. Where a shortage of turves exist, these would be placed in a chequerboard pattern, set flush to adjacent ground to prevent wind erosion and drying out.

- 1.2.16 If necessary, rocks would be replaced across the area to be reinstated to reflect adjacent patterns in the landscape. Rocks would be placed in sequence with soils / peat or turves.
- 1.2.17 Where permanent, above ground features would be retained within the area to be reinstated, additional rocks or turves would be placed to help reduce their visibility, if materials were available.
- 1.2.18 Where a floating construction is used for temporary access tracks, the rock and geogrid materials would be carefully pulled back to avoid damage to the supporting peat layer underneath. The excavator would work backwards from the track, and tracking over the vegetated peat would be avoided as far as possible.

1.3 Monitoring during Construction and Reinstatement

- 1.3.1 Monitoring by environmental professionals would occur throughout the site restoration phases to assist in the application of the site restoration plan and method statements. This would include input by the following professionals:

Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW)

- The team of ECoWs would provide ecological advice on the planning of working areas, and would monitor site stripping, material storage, and habitat restoration works throughout the Proposed Development, providing advice where necessary.

Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW)

- To ensure all reasonable precautions are taken to avoid negative effects on the environment, a suitably qualified EnvCoW would be appointed prior to the commencement of construction to advise the Applicant and the Principal Contractor, with support from other environmental professionals as required. The EnvCoW would be required to be present on-site during the construction phase and would carry out monitoring of works and briefings with regards to relevant environmental matters and sensitivities on the site to on-site staff of the Principal Contractor and subcontractors.

Appointment of a Professional Ornithologist

- A suitably experienced and licensed ornithologist would be appointed throughout the construction period where there is overlap with the breeding bird season (defined as March to August inclusive). The ornithologist would attend areas where works are planned on a regular basis and would have responsibility for implementing the measures included in the Bird Protection Plan and advising the ECoW on all ornithological matters (e.g. pre-commencement surveys, appropriate exclusion zones around any nest sites and any additional mitigation required to protect Schedule 1, 1A and Annex I species from disturbance or harassment).

- 1.3.2 Further advice and monitoring would be sought from other technical specialists, such as water environment, cultural heritage and geotechnical specialists, if required.

1.4 Schedule of Site Restoration Requirements

- 1.4.1 **Table 1** provides a high-level description of reinstatement requirements anticipated to be required for the Proposed Development.

Table 1: Schedule of Site Restoration Requirements

Restoration Required	Key Issues to be Addressed in Method Statements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restoration of landform and vegetation around towers. Integration and narrowing of permanent access tracks. Full restoration of temporary access tracks. Full restoration of temporary working areas. Restoration of landform and vegetation around sealing end compound. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring by ECoW / EnvCoW. Special consideration of the qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC, SPA and Ramsar designated sites. Presence of sensitive habitats (including blanket bog) and potential areas of deeper peat.

Restoration Required	Key Issues to be Addressed in Method Statements
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steep slopes - Consideration of stability of soil / peat storage and potential for erosion. Restoration of landform, reusing materials excavated during construction to reflect the existing terrain within adjacent areas as far as practicable.

1.5 Associated Best Practice Guidance

1.5.1 The following list identifies (but is not limited to) guidance documents which would be referenced in the preparation of site-specific method statements for site restoration, as appropriate:

- *Good practice during Wind Farm construction*, NatureScot (July 2024);
- *Constructed Tracks in the Scottish Uplands* (SNH, 2015);
- *Floating Roads on Peat - Report into Good Practice in Design, Construction and Use of Floating Roads on Peat with reference to Wind Farm Developments in Scotland* (Forestry Commission Scotland & Scottish Natural Heritage, 2010);
- *Conserving Bogs (The Management Handbook)* (2019) Tim Thom, Astrid Hanlon, Richard Lindsay, Joanna Richards, Rob Stoneman & Stuart Brooks;
- *Engineering in the Water Environment – Good Practice Guide: River Crossings*. Second Edition. SEPA, November 2010;
- *Engineering in the Water Environment – Good Practice Guide: Temporary Construction Methods*. First Edition. SEPA and Scottish Government, March 2009;
- *Developments on Peatland: Guidance on the Assessment of Peat Volumes, Reuse of Excavated Peat and the Minimisation of Waste*. Version .1, Scottish Renewables and SEPA, January 2012;
- *SEPA Regulatory Position Statement - Developments on Peat* (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, 2010).

ANNEX A: PHOTOGRAPHIC EXAMPLES OF REINSTATEMENT TECHNIQUES



Photo 1:
Reinstatement of
temporary track
using turves.



Photo 2:
Example of
reinstatement
around tower
foundations.



Photo 3:
Example of
chequerboard
technique where
turves are limited.



Photo 4:
Formation of an
access track verge
using whole turves.



Photo 5:

Reinstatement of temporary access track to tower and narrowing and reinstatement around permanent access track.



Photo 6:

Example of ongoing narrowing works to access track using stored turves.