

VOLUME 4: APPENDIX V1-4.6: GATE CHECK REPORT – DECEMBER 2024

Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection

Gate Check Report

December 2024



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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Gate Check Report has been prepared by ASH design+assessment Limited ("ASH") on behalf of Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (herein referred to as "SSEN Transmission") operating under licence held by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc (the Applicant), who own, operate, and develop the high voltage electricity transmission system in the north of Scotland and remote islands.
- 1.1.2 The Applicant submits this report in advance of an application to the Scottish Ministers under section 37 of The Electricity Act 1989 ("the 1989 Act") to construct and operate a new double circuit 132 kV overhead line (OHL) to initially connect the consented Strathy South Wind Farm¹ to the electricity transmission network at Connagill 275/132 kV substation. To allow for futureproofing, it is proposed that a section of the new double circuit OHL would be capable of operating at 275 kV in the future, if required.
- 1.1.3 The Applicant is also seeking deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) for certain elements of the project, or ancillary development required to facilitate its construction and operation. These ancillary works would include the installation of a cable sealing end (CSE) compound, underground cables (UGC), temporary and permanent access tracks, tree and vegetation clearance, temporary working measures / areas, and dismantling and removal of redundant parts of the existing 132 kV OHL infrastructure that the Proposed Development would replace.
- 1.1.4 The electricity transmission project is referred to as the "Strathy South Wind Farm Grid Connection" (and hereafter also referred to interchangeably as "the Proposed Development"). An overview of the Proposed Development is shown in **Figure 1**. The Proposed Development comprises a Proposed Alignment, as shown on **Figure 1a**, and as described in Section 1.5, an Alternative Alignment. The Alternative Alignment is shown on **Figure 1b**.
- 1.1.5 The Proposed Alignment would consist of approximately 10.5 km of 132 kV double circuit OHL supported by steel lattice towers from Strathy North 'T' (near Dallangwell) to a new CSE compound, prior to connecting into Connagill 275/132 kV substation via two short sections of single circuit 132 kV UGC. To allow for futureproofing, it is proposed that a section of the Proposed Alignment would be capable of operating at 275 kV in the future, if required.
- 1.1.6 The application for consent for the Proposed Development will be supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report. A Scoping Report setting out the proposed scope of the EIA Report was submitted to the Scottish Ministers in March 2024 with a request for a formal Scoping Opinion². A Scoping Opinion was subsequently issued by the Scottish Ministers in June 2024.
- 1.1.7 The purpose of this Gate Check Report is to ensure that the application is in keeping with the Energy Consent Unit's (ECU's) good practice guidance³, namely to aid in management of the administrative requirements of the submission by outlining consultations with statutory and non-statutory consultees, engagement with the local community and how matters raised during the scoping process have been dealt with in the EIA Report. This allows further dialogue between the ECU, the Applicant and key consultees to seek feedback on departures from methodologies agreed at Scoping stage, the scope of assessment following any changes since Scoping stage, or highlight any other key matters prior to submission of the application.

¹ Received consent from the Scottish Government in November 2021 (Reference ECU00002133).

² Under The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.

³ Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (Energy Consents Unit, February 2022)

1.2 Project Need

- 1.2.1 The Applicant owns and maintains the electricity transmission network across the north of Scotland and holds a transmission licence under the 1989 Act. In terms of section 9(2) of the 1989 Act, the Applicant has a statutory duty 'to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electrical transmission', and a separate duty 'to facilitate competition between current and new generators of electricity'.
- 1.2.2 The consented Strathy South Wind Farm is located approximately 12 km to the south of the village of Strathy at its closest point (see **Figure 1**). It would consist of up to 39 turbines with a maximum height of up to 200 m and an installed capacity of approximately 208 MW⁴. Strathy South Wind Farm was approved by Scottish Ministers in November 2021.
- 1.2.3 The Applicant has identified an opportunity to utilise the Proposed Development as 'shared infrastructure' to facilitate part of the connection requirements for the operational Strathy North and consented Strathy Wood wind farms (see Section 1.4 for further details).

1.3 Project History

- 1.3.1 In 2013, SSEN Transmission sought consent for the construction of two parallel 132 kV trident wood pole OHL's; one to connect the consented Strathy North Wind Farm to the electricity transmission network and the other to provide a connection for the then proposed Strathy South Wind Farm. These connections were collectively referred to as the Strath Halladale to Dallangwell 132 kV Connection.
- 1.3.2 Consent for the Strath Halladale to Dallangwell 132 kV Connection was granted by Scottish Ministers in February 2014⁵ and construction of one of the OHLs (to connect Strathy North Wind Farm to the electricity transmission network) was completed in 2015. The second consented OHL (to provide a connection for the then proposed, but not consented, Strathy South Wind Farm) was not constructed due to delays in consenting of the wind farm. The section 37 consent for the second OHL has now lapsed. Furthermore, the Strathy South Wind Farm developer has sought to change the point of connection from the Strathy North Wind Farm on-site substation, near Dallangwell, to the Strathy South substation. These factors, together with the requirement for the Applicant to consider other connection requirements in the wider area (see Section 1.4), has resulted in a new application for the Proposed Development being brought forward.

1.4 Connagill Cluster Grid Connection Works

- 1.4.1 The Proposed Development forms part of a wider connection strategy for renewable generation in the area referred to as the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections. The developments that make up the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections include the consented Strathy South Wind Farm, the consented Strathy Wood Wind Farm, the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub (comprising 12 turbines with 57.6 MW capacity plus 42 MW of battery storage) and the proposed Kirkton Energy Park (comprising 11 turbines with 52.8 MW capacity plus 20 MW of battery storage). To facilitate the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections, a new switching station, known as Strathy Switching Station, would also be required⁶.
- 1.4.2 In light of these connection requirements, the Applicant has taken a rationalised approach to these connection requests with the aim of utilising shared infrastructure where practicable.
- 1.4.3 Other associated works are required to complete the connection of the Proposed Development. These comprise the construction of a 132 kV single circuit UGC connecting the consented Strathy South Wind Farm

⁴ Details as per the Strathy South Wind Farm Determination letter dated 24 November 2021.

⁵ Received consent from the Scottish Ministers in February 2014 (ECU Reference 99/13-14 and 100/13-14).

⁶ The Proposed Armadale Wind Farm was originally included within the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections project. However, in May 2024 the developer of the proposed Armadale Wind Farm withdrew the section 36 application and consequently no longer require a grid connection. As such, this project has been removed from the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections.

on-site substation ("Strathy South substation") to a CSE compound in the vicinity of the Strathy Wood Wind Farm on-site substation ("Strathy Wood substation"). From the CSE compound at Strathy Wood substation, both Strathy Wood and Strathy South wind farms would share a double circuit 132 kV OHL supported by steel lattice tower to Strathy North 'T' (near Dallangwell), where it would join the Proposed Development for onward transmission to Connagill 275/132 kV substation. These associated works do not form part of the Proposed Development and are subject to separate applications for consent as part of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections.

- 1.4.4 Once the Proposed Development is constructed and commissioned, redundant parts of the existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL, which currently transports electricity generated by the operational Strathy North Wind Farm and is proposed to temporarily transport electricity generated by the consented Strathy Wood Wind Farm⁷, would be dismantled and removed. Thereafter, the Proposed Development would act as 'shared infrastructure' for the Strathy Wood and Strathy North wind farms.
- 1.4.5 Following the construction and commissioning of the proposed Strathy Switching Station, a section of the Proposed Development would be able to operate at 275 kV. The Applicant would seek consent for the switching station under the Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended). In tandem, the Applicant would seek consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 to accommodate the proposed double circuit 132 kV OHL teeing into the switching station.

1.5 Alternative Alignment

- 1.5.1 As referred to in paragraph 1.1.4, the Applicant seeks consent under section 37 of the 1989 Act for an alternative option to circumnavigate the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub, referred to as the "Alternative Alignment". As shown on **Figure 1**, the Alternative Alignment would be consistent with the Proposed Alignment between Towers 19 to 31. From Tower 31, the Alternative Alignment would deviate away from the Proposed Alignment for approximately 8 km, by heading in a north-easterly direction, traversing ground to the east of Cnoc a Bhodaich and Cnoc an Ruffer and once across the Baligill Burn, would pass between Cnoc na Cilliche and Cnoc Eadar Dha Allt. Upon crossing the Allt na Cleite watercourse, the Alternative Alignment would proceed in a southerly direction, passing between local knolls. The Alternative Alignment would rejoin the Proposed Alignment to the north of the Achridigill Burn and would follow the same alignment (between Towers 47 to 64) to the proposed new CSE compound. The Alternative Alignment would connect into Connagill 275/132 kV substation via two short sections of single circuit 132 kV UGC, as per the Proposed Alignment. The total length of the Alternative Alignment would be approximately 13.5 km.
- 1.5.2 The decision taken by the Applicant to include both options within the consent application has been made given the route of the Proposed Alignment passes through the footprint of the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub. The minimum distance required between the proposed wind turbines and an OHL capable of operating at 275 kV could not be maintained along the route of the Proposed Alignment and therefore, should Melvich Wind Energy Hub be granted consent, an alternative OHL alignment would need to be considered.
- 1.5.3 The Applicant intends to undertake an EIA for the Alternative Alignment which will form a separate volume of the EIA Report.

1.6 Routeing Process

- 1.6.1 SSEN Transmission has undertaken studies during the route option and alignment selection stages of the project to consider environmental, technical and cost factors prior to selecting a rationalised proposed route, alignment and design solution for the Proposed Development. Consultation has been undertaken during both the route and alignment selection stages to seek comments from stakeholders, including members of the

⁷ Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection (ECU Reference ECU00005221)

public, on the options put forward prior to identifying the Proposed Development that will be subject to assessment within the EIA Report.

2. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1.1 The Proposed Development would include the following works, for which section 37 consent under the 1989 Act, including deemed planning permission under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, is sought:

Proposed Alignment

- The installation and operation of approximately 10.5 km of double circuit 132 kV OHL supported by steel lattice towers. Approximately 8.3 km of proposed OHL (between Tower 29⁸ and Tower 64) would be constructed so that it would be capable of operating at 275 kV in the future, if required.

Alternative Alignment

- The installation and operation of approximately 13.5 km of double circuit 132 kV OHL supported by steel lattice towers. This is an increase of approximately 3 km of OHL compared to the Proposed Alignment to enable the Alternative Alignment to circumnavigate the wind turbines of the proposed Melvich Wind Energy Hub. Approximately 11 km of proposed OHL (between Tower 29⁸ and Tower 64) would be constructed so that it would be capable of operating at 275 kV in the future, if required.
- The temporary diversion of part of the existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL to facilitate the construction of the new double circuit steel lattice OHL through the installation of four new trident 'H' wood pole terminal structures.

2.1.2 The following works would be required as part of the Proposed Development, or to facilitate its construction and operation:

- The construction of a CSE compound to facilitate the transition between OHL and UGC to be situated at approximate Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference NC 903120, 59541 which is positioned to the south-west of the existing Connagill 275/132 kV substation;
- The construction of two single circuit 275 kV UGC connections, each circuit comprising three cables per phase;
- The formation of access tracks (permanent, temporary and upgrades to existing tracks) and the installation of culverts to facilitate access and ongoing maintenance where required;
- Working areas around infrastructure (i.e. around individual tower foundations) to facilitate construction;
- Tree felling and vegetation clearance to facilitate construction and operation of the Proposed Development, to comply with the Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (ESQCR) 2002⁹;
- Temporary measures to protect water crossings (e.g. scaffolding and temporary bridges); and
- Redundant parts of the existing Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL would be dismantled following completion and commissioning of the Proposed Development.

⁸ Tower 29 is within proximity of the optimal site of the proposed Strathy Switching Station which once built, would allow the OHL to be operated at 275 kV.

⁹ The Electricity Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations (2002), available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/2665/contents/made>

2.1.3 In addition to the above, further ancillary development would be required for the Alternative Alignment, including:

- The construction of temporary UGC between the proposed new trident 'H' wood pole terminal structures to facilitate a temporary diversion of the Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL to facilitate construction of the new double circuit steel lattice OHL

2.1.4 Other associated works are required to facilitate construction of the Proposed Development or would occur as a consequence of its construction and operation. These works, listed below, do not form part of the description of the Proposed Development and are therefore not included in the application for statutory consents. On that basis they will not be assessed in detail within the EIA Report. The associated works are:

- Wider elements associated with the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections and Strathy Switching Station. Separate consents would be sought by the Applicant for these developments. These developments will be considered where relevant in the EIA Report within the cumulative assessments;
- Borrow pits which would be required to source stone for the construction of access tracks. Separate planning applications for these works would be sought by the Principal Contractor;
- Temporary construction compounds which would be required to facilitate construction of the Proposed Development. The final location and design of temporary site compounds would be confirmed by the Principal Contractor and separate planning permissions would be sought as required; and
- Modification of the existing distribution network in some areas to accommodate the new OHL. These works are likely to comprise the diversion of short sections of UGCs within the vicinity of the Proposed Development and would be undertaken by Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution (SHEPD). Consent would be sought by SHEPD as required.

3. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

- 3.1.1 The Proposed Development has been the subject of a routeing process, informed by SSEN Transmission's guidance¹⁰, to establish a proposed route, alignment and design solution that was determined to provide an optimum balance of environmental, technical and economic factors. This process included a programme of consultation at both routeing and alignment stage designed to engage with key stakeholders in order to invite feedback on the rationale for, and approach to, the selection of the proposed route, alignment and design solution for the Proposed Development.
- 3.1.2 As discussed in Section 1, the Proposed Development forms part of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections which, following a review of the various technology options available, resulted in the Applicant identifying a rationalised approach across the grid connections that make up the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections.
- 3.1.3 Consultation on this approach, and the options that have been considered during the route and alignment stages of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections (including in relation to the Proposed Development) are set out in the following documents available via the Applicants webpage:
- SSEN Transmission (December 2023): Connagill Cluster Grid Connections: Consultation Document: (Route Stage).
 - SSEN Transmission (April 2024): Connagill Cluster Grid Connections: Report on Consultation (Route Stage).
 - SSEN Transmission (May 2024): Connagill Cluster Grid Connections: Consultation Document (Alignment Stage)
 - SSEN Transmission (September 2024): Connagill Cluster Grid Connections. Report on Consultation: (Alignment Stage).
- 3.1.4 A summary of the alternatives considered during the route and alignment process, as well as further, more site-specific alternatives considered during the EIA process, will be set out within the EIA Report.

¹⁰ SSEN Transmission (March 2018), Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines of 132kV and above (updated in September 2020)

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Scoping

- 4.1.1 A Scoping Opinion was sought¹¹ from Scottish Ministers on the environmental information to be provided in the EIA Report. A Scoping Opinion was subsequently issued by the Scottish Ministers in June 2024. The responses, contained within the Scoping Opinion, will be considered in detail during the EIA process.

Appendix 1 of this report includes a matrix detailing the key issues that were raised in the Scoping Opinion and how and where they will be addressed in the EIA Report. The scoping matrix will be included in the EIA Report.

4.2 Key Scoping Issues

- 4.2.1 The Scoping Opinion made reference to site-specific issues of interest to the Scottish Ministers, to be considered and addressed in addition to those laid out in responses from consultees. The issues raised were as follows.

EIA Consultation and Scope

“Scottish Ministers expect the EIA report which will accompany the application for the proposed development to consider in full all consultation responses attached in [to the Scoping Opinion]. Scottish Ministers are satisfied with the scope of the EIA set out in the Scoping Report.”

- 4.2.2 A Scoping Matrix will be appended to the EIA Report summarising all consultation comments received as part of EIA Scoping and where these are addressed within the EIA Report, where relevant.

Drinking Water and Scottish Water Assets

“Scottish Water provided information on whether there are any drinking water protected areas or Scottish Water assets on which the development could have any significant effect. Scottish Ministers request that the company contacts Scottish Water ... and makes further enquires to confirm whether there any Scottish Water assets which may be affected by the development, and includes details in the EIA report of any relevant mitigation measures to be provided.

Scottish Ministers request that the Company investigates the presence of any private water supplies which may be impacted by the development. The EIA report should include details of any supplies identified by this investigation, and if any supplies are identified, the Company should provide an assessment of the potential impacts, risks, and any mitigation which would be provided.”

- 4.2.3 Scottish Water assets have been taken into consideration in the design of the proposed and alternative alignments. These assets will be included in the assessment of potential impacts on the water environment. A combination of desk studies and site survey work has been undertaken to ascertain the presence of any private water supplies which could be impacted by the Proposed Development. The Soils, Geology and Water chapter of the EIA Report will contain details of any assets and / or private water supplies identified, assess likely impacts and set out suitable mitigation measures, where required.

Aquatic Ecology

“In addition to identifying the main watercourses and waterbodies within and downstream of the proposed development area, developers should identify and consider, at this early stage, any areas of Special Areas of Conservation where fish are a qualifying feature and proposed felling operations particularly in acid sensitive areas.”

“[Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital] also provide standing advice for overhead line development ... which outlines what information, relating to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, is

¹¹ In December 2021 under The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

expected in the EIA report. Use of the checklist, provided in ... of the standing advice, should ensure that the EIA report contains the required information; the absence of such information may necessitate requesting additional information which may delay the process. Developers are required to submit the completed checklist in advance of their application submission."

- 4.2.4 Potential effects on fish and aquatic ecology will be considered within the Ecology chapter of the EIA Report. As noted in the Scoping Report, at least a 10 m buffer will be maintained between the construction works and watercourses, including the River Strathy. Additionally, SSEN Transmission's General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) (specifically Working In, or near Watercourses) will be adhered to throughout construction. The checklist referred to will be completed and provided to Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD).

Peat Landslide Risk

"Scottish Ministers consider that where there is a demonstrable requirement for peat landslide hazard and risk assessment (PLHRA), the assessment should be undertaken as part of the EIA process to provide Ministers with a clear understanding of whether the risks are acceptable and capable of being controlled by mitigation measures. The Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessments: Best Practice Guide for Proposed Electricity Generation Developments (Second Edition), ..., should be followed in the preparation of the EIA report, which should contain such an assessment and details of mitigation measures. Where a PLHRA is not required clear justification for not carrying out such a risk assessment is required."

- 4.2.5 A PLHRA will be prepared for the Proposed Development, where required and will form part of the EIA Report.

Visualisation Viewpoints

"The Scoping Report identified viewpoints at ... to be assessed within the landscape and visual impact assessment. Visualisations are proposed to inform and support the LVIA from the following four locations..."

- 4.2.6 Photomontage visualisations will be prepared for both the Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment to inform and support the LVIA within the EIA Report, with viewpoint location (VL) selection based on guidance and, professional judgement. The Highland Council (THC) confirmed in their scoping response that they are satisfied with the VLs selected for both the Proposed and Alternative Alignments, however suggested the consideration of an additional VL from the Strathy Point area (see Section 4.3).

Bird Surveys

"It is recommended by the Scottish Ministers that decisions on bird surveys – species, methodology, vantage points, viewsheds and durations – site specific and cumulative – should be made following discussion between the Company, RSPB and NatureScot"

- 4.2.7 As a statutory consultee, NatureScot have been consulted on the scope of bird surveys. Data has been obtained from RPSB as part of the desk study and will be referred to in the ornithological impact assessment that will form part of the EIA Report.

Appropriate Assessment

"The Proposed and Alternative OHL routes pass through the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar site and the West Halladale Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The routes are also adjacent to the East Halladale SSSI and within connectivity distance to qualifying features of the Caithness Lochs SPA. Therefore, the EIA Report must include sufficient information to inform an Appropriate Assessment, as required by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017"

- 4.2.8 Shadow Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs) for all relevant European sites, including the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar site and SPA, and Caithness Lochs SPA and Ramsar site, will be carried out and included as part of the EIA Report.

Borrow Pits

“The EIA Report should include detailed information [with regard to] location, size and nature [of on-site borrow pits], and also include details of the proposed depth of the excavation compared to the actual topography and water table, proposed drainage and settlement traps, turf and overburden removal and storage for reinstatement, and details of the proposed restoration profile. The impact of such facilities (including dust, blasting and impact on water) should be appraised as part of the overall impact of the working.

The Construction Traffic Management Plan should evaluate and include potential cumulative impacts associated with the Proposed Development and other consented developments in the areas to ensure cumulative impacts and borrow pit use to source local materials are considered, and also that sharing of borrow pit locations are properly considered in order to reduce traffic”.

- 4.2.9 A separate planning application for the requirement of any borrow pits will be sought by the Principal Contractor. They will not form part of the Proposed Development and will therefore not be included in the application for statutory consents.

Further Consultation and Design Alternatives

“Ministers are aware that further engagement is required between parties regarding the refinement of the design of the proposed development regarding, among other things, surveys, management plans, peat, finalisation of viewpoints, cultural heritage, cumulative assessments and request that they are kept informed of relevant discussions.”

- 4.2.10 The EIA Report will set out the alternative options considered and will discuss the reasons for identifying a proposed alignment and design solution. Pre-application consultation has been carried out throughout the project, particularly during the route and alignment selections stages, and continuing through the EIA stage. Details of pre-application consultation will be included in the EIA Report (see also Sections 4.3 to 4.5 below).

Mitigation Measures

“The Scottish Ministers are required to make a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment as identified in the environmental impact assessment. The mitigation measures suggested for any significant environmental impacts identified should be presented as a conclusion to each chapter. Applicants are also asked to provide a consolidated schedule of all mitigation measures proposed in the environmental assessment, provided in tabular form, where that mitigation is relied upon in relation to reported conclusions of likelihood or significance of impacts.”

- 4.2.11 Mitigation measures, where required, will be set out within each technical chapter and summarised in tabular form within a Schedule of Mitigation as part of the EIA Report.

4.3 Further Consultee Engagement

- 4.3.1 Stakeholder consultation has been ongoing since the early design stages of the project and has continued throughout the Scoping and EIA process. A summary of key meetings and engagement that has been undertaken by the Applicant with statutory consultees is detailed below:

- December 2021 – The Applicant consulted with NatureScot to seek views on the acceptability to scope out the need for further bird surveys instead relying on pre-existing baseline data from other developments in the wider area. NatureScot confirmed in January 2022 that there is sufficient existing survey work related to the wind farms and their associated grid connections to give a reliable baseline for completing the

ornithological impact assessment and that no extra field work would be required. *Note further consultation on bird surveys with NatureScot in April 2022.*

- March 2022 - Statutory Consultee Meeting attended by representatives from THC, NatureScot and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to allow SSEN Transmission the opportunity to provide an update on their obligation to provide several wind farm grid connections (all at various stages of development), all converging into Connagill 275/132 kV substation. SSEN Transmission discussed with the statutory consultees the potential for a rationalised approach to development. Feedback received from the statutory consultees was supportive of a rationalised approach.
- April 2022 – Consultation took place with NatureScot to confirm that given the Applicant is considering the rationalisation of grid connections on larger steel lattice structures, a further breeding bird survey will take place during 2022. NatureScot was grateful for the update.
- March 2023 – Consultation with NatureScot on the requirement for further bat surveys given the suite of ecological surveys available for the area that would provide sufficient information to inform a robust impact assessment on the effects of the development to bats without completing additional field surveys. In their response received in April 2023, NatureScot agreed that further field surveys would be unnecessary and that the survey information collected from recently submitted wind farms to the national database could be relied upon to inform an impact assessment. However, where survey data was beginning to ‘get old’, and there is likelihood of bat activity, further work was advised to be undertaken. Further bat surveys were completed in 2022 across the Proposed Development and more widely across the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections.
- May 2023 – Further consultation with NatureScot on the requirement for further terrestrial protected species surveys (for badger, pine marten and wildcat) given the suite of ecological surveys available for the area that would provide sufficient information to inform a robust impact assessment of the effects of the development with regard to these species. The Applicant proposed to update surveys for otter and water vole given these species are likely more sensitive to the scope of the development. In their response received in June 2023, NatureScot agreed the existing data on terrestrial protected species was sufficient to inform an assessment and further surveys for terrestrial protected species were not required.
- August 2023 – Pre-application meeting facilitated by THC and attended by the Applicant and specialist officers from THC. While invited, no external statutory consultees were able to attend the virtual meeting. At this meeting, SSEN Transmission delivered a presentation to provide an update on the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects (including the Proposed Development) and to seek preliminary feedback on route options and design solutions for each connection. This was followed with a round table discussion of comments and suggested actions in relation to the proposals. Following the meeting a Pre-Application Advice Report was issued by THC on 20th September 2023. The Advice Report provided a note of the meeting and feedback on the information to be included in the EIA by key stakeholders.
- April 2024 – Consultation with British Telecom (BT) providing indicative tower locations for the alignment proposed at the time. While it was noted that one tower would be 60 m from a BT fixed link, the link would pass above the ground altitude plus height of the proposed structure, and BT noted no concerns.
- June 2024 – Consultation took place with THC regarding a suggestion in their scoping response that an additional VL from the Strathy Point area be considered for inclusion. Wirelines illustrating the visibility of the Proposed and Alternative alignments were prepared from the viewpoint at Totegan near Strathy Point (VL used for the proposed Kirkton Energy Hub EIA Report) and shared with THC. The wireline showed that both alignments appear very distant and the appearance of the OHL in the landscape would be very similar to the VL already proposed from Strathy Cemetery, but much more distant from either alignment. The Applicant suggested that the photomontage from Strathy Cemetery would show a better representation of a similar view, and while the THC landscape officer agreed, suggested that a wireline from Strathy Point would be useful to aid in correctly locating the development during any site visit. The Applicant intends to

include wirelines from Totegan (near Strathy Point) for both the Proposed and Alternative Alignment in the EIA Report.

- June 2024 – The Applicant consulted with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) following a request in their scoping response that a photomontage be included within the EIA Report from Bighouse, garden pavilion and walled garden listed building (LB7160) to assist the understanding of potential impacts on the setting of the buildings. The Applicant confirmed that they would be happy to produce the visualisation to fulfil this request (applicable to the Alternative Alignment only), which was welcomed by HES. An appropriate location for the photomontage was also agreed.
- June 2024 – The Applicant engaged in pre-application discussions with NatureScot specifically in relation to the likely effect of the Proposed Development on the qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Flow Country World Heritage Site.
- October 2024 – Consultation took place with NatureScot regarding the coverage and suitability of habitat surveys. While the Applicant has sought to, wherever possible, utilise existing access tracks, a degree of upgrade and widening would be required. A review of data coverage showed that habitat survey information is not available in a limited number of these locations. However, field survey information and a review of aerial photography indicates that the areas surrounding these limited number of locations are akin to those captured in field surveys and habitats are likely to be of poor condition. The Applicant sought NatureScot's view on whether due to the poor nature of these habitats, a detailed and conservative review of aerial photography be undertaken to map these habitats to inform the impact assessment for the Proposed Development. NS advised that due to the Site being within the Flow Country World Heritage Site, it was recommended that further field surveys be completed to ensure robust data. The Applicant agreed to complete further field surveys to capture these data gaps.

4.4 Community Engagement

- 4.4.1 In parallel with the statutory consultation process, consultation with the local community has been undertaken to inform and keep the local community up to date with the Proposed Development throughout the evolution of the project. An overview of public engagement during the routeing and alignment selection stages is given below.

Route Selection Stage

- 4.4.2 The Applicant aimed to streamline the pre-application consultation and routeing process of each connection associated with the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection, to allow stakeholders the opportunity to review the Cluster as a whole and consider the consolidation of infrastructure.
- 4.4.3 On 30th November 2023 a public consultation event was held at Strathy Village Hall between 15:00 to 19:00, to present the appraisal of the rationalised route options proposed for the various grid connections, including the Proposed Development. This was followed by the issue of a cluster-wide Consultation Document¹², published in December 2023 which described the project need and described the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections as a whole.
- 4.4.4 Community Councils and councillors were made aware of the consultation event via email and a mail drop was also carried out to approximately 500 households in the local area ahead of the consultation event. The consultation event was also advertised on SSEN Transmission's social media channels and the dedicated project webpage.
- 4.4.5 The event provided an opportunity for members of the public to view information about the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects, ask questions to the project team and provide feedback.

¹² Connagill Cluster Grid Connections Consultation Document (Route Stage) (December 2023), produced by SSEN Transmission

- 4.4.6 A total of 17 visitors attended the consultation event. A feedback form was distributed to visitors at the event to provide comments, and feedback was requested to be returned to SSEN Transmission by 12th January 2024. A total of five feedback forms were received by SSEN Transmission during or following the consultation event. The comments and queries raised during the routeing stage public engagement were detailed in a subsequent Report on Consultation¹³.

Alignment Selection Stage

- 4.4.7 During the alignment selection stage, a public consultation event was held on 20th May 2024 at Strathy Village Hall between 15:00 to 19:00, to present the appraisal of the rationalised alignment options proposed for the various grid connections, including the Proposed Development, followed by publication of a Consultation Document¹⁴.
- 4.4.8 Community Councils and councillors were made aware of the consultation event via email and a mail drop was also carried out to approximately 500 households in the local area ahead of the consultation event. The consultation event was also advertised on SSEN Transmission's social media channels and the dedicated project webpage.
- 4.4.9 The event once again provided an opportunity for members of the public to view information about the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects, ask questions to the project team and provide feedback.
- 4.4.10 A total of 14 visitors attended the consultation event. As per the routeing stage, a feedback form was distributed to visitors at the event to provide comments however no feedback forms were returned to SSEN Transmission during or following the consultation event by the requested return date (21st June 2024).

4.5 Community Councils

- 4.5.1 Throughout the evolution of the project, SSEN Transmission has maintained dialogue with all community councils in the vicinity of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects and has sought to keep members up to date on project progress, and any upcoming consultation events.

¹³ Connagill Cluster Grid Connections Report on Consultation (Route Stage) (April 2024), produced by SSEN Transmission

¹⁴ Connagill Cluster Grid Connections: Consultation Document (Alignment Stage) (May 2024), produced by SSEN Transmission

5. SUBMISSION INFORMATION

5.1 Submission

5.1.1 It is the intention to submit a section 37 application for the Proposed Development in late January 2024.

5.2 Advertisement

5.2.1 In accordance with the Electricity (Applications for Consent) Regulations 1990, and Regulation 14 of the EIA Regulations, the application will be advertised in the Edinburgh Gazette, a national newspaper and a local newspaper (to be agreed in consultation with ECU).

5.2.2 In agreement with the ECU, the advert will describe the application, state where copies of the EIA Report are located, state a date by which any persons can make representations to the Scottish Ministers in relation to the application, and the address to where representations are to be sent.

5.3 Public Viewing of EIA Report

5.3.1 In accordance with Regulation 18 of the EIA Regulations, copies of the EIA Report will be available to view on the dedicated project website at: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/projects/project-map/Connagill-Cluster/> Hard copies of the EIA Report will also be available to view at locations agreed with the ECU. Additional copies will be made available subject to a reasonable fee when requested.

5.4 Consultee Lists

5.4.1 The list of consultees to be sent a copy of the submitted EIA Report will be agreed with the ECU. It is anticipated to include those consultees consulted during the scoping process, and any other stakeholders the Applicant or ECU are aware of with a potential interest in the project or its potential effects, as noted in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Consultees to be Issued the EIA Report

Statutory Consultees	
Energy Consents Unit	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
The Highland Council	NatureScot
Historic Environment Scotland	Transport Scotland
Scottish Forestry	Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital
Non-Statutory Consultees	
British Telecommunications plc	Joint Radio Company
Civil Aviation Authority - Airspace	National Air Traffic Society (NATS) Safeguarding
Defence Infrastructure Organisation (MoD)	Northern District Salmon Fishery Board
Fisheries Management Scotland	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd	Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (ScotWays)
John Muir Trust	Scottish Water
Community Councils and Local Groups	
Strathly and Armadale Community Council	Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra Community Council
Caithness West Community Council	

5.5 Conclusion

5.5.1 The Applicant welcomes any comments that the ECU or any of the statutory consultees may have in relation to this Gate Check Report.

Appendix 1: Summary of EIA Scoping Responses and Action Taken

Abbreviations

BT	British Telecommunications Plc
ECU	Energy Consents Unit
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
HSE	Nuclear Safety Directorate
JRC	Joint Radio Company Limited
MD-SEDD	Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NATS	National Air Traffic Society
NG	National Gas
NS	NatureScot
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SF	Scottish Forestry
SW	Scottish Water
ScW	Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society
TS	Transport Scotland
THC	The Highland Council

Table 1 – Scoping Matrix

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
001	Scoping Consultations	Scottish Ministers expect the EIA Report which will accompany the application for the Proposed Development to consider, in full, all consultation responses.	ECU-01	6	Throughout the EIA Report	All consultation responses received are summarised within this Scoping Matrix and will be addressed throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.
002	Scoping Consultations	Scottish Ministers are broadly content with the EIA set out in the Scoping Report. In addition to the consultation responses, Ministers wish to provide comments with regards to the scope of the EIA Report. The Applicant should note and address each matter.	ECU- 02	6	Throughout the EIA Report	This has been noted, and all consultation responses received are summarised within this Scoping Matrix and addressed throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.
003	Scoping Consultations	Scottish Ministers request that the company contacts Scottish Water and makes further enquires to confirm whether there any Scottish Water assets which may be affected by the development, and includes details in the EIA Report of any relevant mitigation measures to be provided.	ECU-03	6	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	Scottish Water assets have been taken into consideration in the design of the proposed and alternative alignments. These assets will be included in the assessment of potential impacts on the water environment.
004	Private Water Supplies	Scottish Ministers request that the Company investigates the presence of any private water supplies (PWS) which may be impacted by the development. The EIA Report should include details of any supplies identified by this investigation, and if any supplies are identified, the Company should provide an assessment of the	ECU-04	6	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	The presence of any private water supplies along the route of the Proposed Development have been determined through desk-based and site survey, and likely impacts will be set out in the noted chapter. Mitigation measures will be proposed, where relevant.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		potential impacts, risks, and any mitigation which would be provided.				
005	MD-SEDD EIA Guidance	Scottish Ministers reference Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD), who provide generic scoping guidelines and standing advice for OHL development which outline how fish populations can be impacted during construction, operation and decommissioning. The guidelines inform developers as to what should be considered during the EIA Process. The standing advice outlines what information, relating to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, is expected in the EIA report. A checklist is provided to accompany submission.	ECU-05	7	Ecology Chapter	MD-SEDD standing advice and guidance has been noted and potential effects on fisheries interests will be considered in the noted chapter. The checklist will be completed and included with the application.
006	Impacts on Fish Populations	Scottish Ministers outline that in addition to identifying the main watercourses and waterbodies within and downstream of the proposed development area, developers should identify and consider any areas of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) where fish are a qualifying feature and proposed felling operations particularly in acid sensitive areas.	ECU-06	7	Ecology, Soils, Geology and Water and Forestry Chapters	Potential effects on SACs will be considered primarily in the Ecology, and Soils, Geology and Water chapters. The potential effects of felling will also be considered in these chapters, based on the felling requirements set out within the Forestry chapter.
007	Peat Landslide Hazard Risk	Scottish Ministers demonstrate that the Peat landslide hazard and risk assessment (PLHRA) should be undertaken as part of	ECU-07	7	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	A PLHRA will be carried out as part of the EIA Report and will form an appendix to the noted chapter.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
	Assessment (PLHRA)	the EIA process to provide Ministers with a clear understanding of whether the risks are acceptable and capable of being controlled by mitigation measures.				
008	Bird Surveys	Scottish Ministers recommend that decisions on bird surveys – species, methodology, vantage points, viewsheds & duration - site specific & cumulative – should be made following discussion between the Company, RSPB and NatureScot.	ECU-08	8	Ornithology Chapter	As a statutory consultee, NatureScot have been consulted on the scope of bird surveys. Data has been obtained from RPSB as part of the desk study and will be referred to in the ornithological impact assessment that will form part of the EIA Report.
009	Appropriate Assessment	The Proposed and Alternative OHL routes pass through the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA), SAC and Ramsar site and the West Halladale Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and adjacent to the East Halladale SSSI within connectivity distance to qualifying features of the Caithness Lochs SPA. The EIA Report must include sufficient information to inform an Appropriate Assessment, as required by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.	ECU-09	8	Ecology and Ornithology Chapters	Shadow Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRAs) for all relevant European sites, including the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar site and SPA, and Caithness Lochs SPA and Ramsar site, is being carried out as part of the EIA Report and will form appendices to the noted chapters.
010	Borrow Pits	The EIA Report should include detailed information with regard to location, size and nature of on-site borrow pits, and also	ECU-10	8	N/A	A separate planning application for the requirement of any borrow pits will be sought by the Principal Contractor. They will not form part of the Proposed

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		<p>include details of the proposed depth of the excavation compared to the actual topography and water table, proposed drainage and settlement traps, turf and overburden removal and storage of reinstatement, and details of the proposed restoration profile.</p> <p>The Construction Traffic Management Plan should evaluate and include potential cumulative impacts associate with the Proposed Development and other consented developments in the areas to ensure cumulative impacts and borrow pit use to source local materials are considered, and also that sharing of borrow pit locations are properly considered in order to reduce traffic.</p>				Development and therefore will not be included in the application for statutory consents.
011	Further Consultation	Ministers are aware that further engagement is required between parties regarding the refinement of the design of the proposed development regarding, among other things, surveys, management plans, peat, radio links, finalisation of viewpoints, cultural heritage, cumulative assessments, and requests that they are kept informed of relevant discussions.	ECU-11	8	N/A	This has been noted. The Energy Consents Unit will be kept informed of any further discussions with consultees.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
012	Mitigation	Scottish Ministers outlined that the mitigation measures suggested for any significant environmental impact identified should be presented as a conclusion to each chapter. The Applicant is also asked to provide a consolidated schedule of all mitigation measures presented in the EIA Report in tabular form.	ECU-12	8	Throughout the EIA Report Schedule of Mitigation	Mitigation measures will be included where relevant in each technical chapter. A consolidated Schedule of Mitigation will also be presented as an appendix to the EIA Report.
013	Further Consultation	It is acknowledged by Scottish Ministers that the EIA process is iterative and further engagement between relevant parties may be required to refine the design of the Proposed Development. Scottish Ministers request they are kept informed of on-going discussions in relation to this.	ECU-13	9	N/A	This has been noted. The Energy Consents Unit have been, and will continue to be, kept informed of any further discussions with consultees.
014	Consultation	The Applicant is encouraged to engage with the ECU at the pre-application stage and before proposals reach design freeze.	ECU-14	9	Scope and Consultation	The Applicant has engaged with the ECU during the pre-application stages. Pre-application consultation will be set out within the noted chapter of the EIA Report.
015	Scoping Matrix	When finalising the EIA Report, the Applicant is asked to provide a summary in tabular form of where within the EIA Report each of the specific matters raised in the Scoping Opinion have been addressed.	ECU-15	9	Scoping Matrix	This Scoping Matrix addresses the noted request and will be included as part of the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
016	Description of Development	<p>The description of development for the EIA Report must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A description of the physical characteristics of the whole development and the full land use requirements during the operational and construction phases. b. A description of the main characteristics of the construction processes, for instance nature and quantity of the materials used. c. The risk of accidents, having regard in particular to substances or technologies used. d. An estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (water, air and soil pollution, noise, vibration, heat, radiation) resulting from the operation of the development. e. The estimated cumulative impact of the project with other consented or operation development. f. A detailed mitigation strategy. 	THC-01	Annex A Page 2 - 3	The Proposed Development Chapter and Technical Chapters	<p>The noted chapter will detail the specific elements of the Proposed Development. The following confirms where each point listed in THC's response will be addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proposed Development chapter. b. Proposed Development chapter. c. The potential for accidents and disasters will be discussed in the Scope and Consultation chapter, confirming that crisis management and continuity plans are in place across the SSE Group to respond to such events. d. This will be discussed in relevant chapters of the EIA Report. e. The potential for cumulative impacts will be considered within each technical chapter of the EIA Report, where relevant. f. Mitigation measures will be proposed at the end of each technical chapter. A consolidated Schedule of Mitigation will also be presented in the EIA Report.
017	Alternatives	A statement is required which outlines the main development alternatives and an	THC-02	Annex A Page 3	The Routeing Process and	A description of the route and alignment selection stage of the project, together with other alternatives

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		<p>indication of the main reasons for the final project choice. This is expected to highlight the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of technologies that have been considered. • The locational criteria and economic parameters used in site selection. • Options for access; including construction laydown areas and staff accommodation compounds. • Design and locational options for all elements of the proposed development. • The environmental effects of the different options examined. Such assessment should also highlight sustainable development attributes. 			Alternatives Chapter	considered during the EIA process, will be included in the Routeing Process and Alternatives chapter.
018	Impact Assessment	The EIA Report must provide a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development.	THC-03	Annex A Page 3	Throughout the EIA Report	The assessment of the Proposed Development will be undertaken throughout the EIA Report. The Alternative Alignment will be assessed in a separate volume of the EIA Report.
019	Land Use and Policy	The EIAR should recognise the existing land uses affected by the development with regard to THC's Development Plan (and Supplementary Guidance documents). The purpose of this chapter is to highlight	THC-04	Annex A Page 3	Throughout the EIA Report Planning Statement	These policy documents will be referenced where appropriate throughout the EIA Report and the Planning Statement which will accompany the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		relevant policies not to assess the compatibility of the proposal with policy. It is expected in addition to a Planning Statement in support of the application.				
020	Development Plan	The scope of the EIA should address all the relevant issues covered in NPF4 and the Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP). The Caithness and Sutherland (Cas) Plan has limited relevance to this type of proposal but certain aspects may help to inform plans for community engagement.	THC-05	Annex A Page 4	Throughout the EIA Report Planning Statement	This has been noted. The NPF4 policies will be referenced where appropriate throughout the EIA Report and the Planning Statement which will accompany the EIA Report.
021		The CasPlan establishes boundaries of Special Landscape Areas (SLA) across the plan area. The SLA citations webpage must be used to assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Development.	THC-06	14	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The noted chapter will consider the SLA citations within the CasPlan.
022	Community Benefit	Developer contribution, Community Benefit and Community Wealth Building will all need to be considered as the scheme develops.	THC-07	Annex A Page 4 - 5	Socio-Economic Technical Note	This will be considered in the standalone Socio-Economic Technical Note.
023	Development Plan	The identification of NPF4 as a key planning consideration and outline of policies is welcomed, as is the identification of HwLDP and its policies.	THC-08	Annex A Page 5	Throughout the EIA Report Planning Statement	This has been noted. The NPF4 policies will be referenced where appropriate throughout the EIA Report and the Planning Statement which will accompany the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
024	Sustainable Design Statement	THC outline that a Sustainable Design Statement is required which includes details on design, building materials and minimising environmental impacts of development.	THC-09	Annex A Page 6	Planning Statement	Sustainable design principles will be discussed within a Planning Statement that will accompany the EIA Report.
025	LVIA	THC expect that the EIA considers the landscape and visual context of the development. The two elements require separate assessment. Assessment should cover impacts of all elements of the development.	THC-10	Annex A Page 6	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The LVIA chapter will consider and assess the subjects of landscape and visual amenity separately.
026	Visualisations	<p>The LVIA should provide a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and identify key viewpoints to represent the most sensitive visual receptors.</p> <p>While this development is not a wind farm, THC welcome the Applicant's commitment to producing photomontages to THC standards in addition to those of NatureScot. The photomontages should be provided in hard copy in a A3 leaver arch ring bound folder.</p>	THC-11	Annex A Page 6	Landscape and Visual Chapter	<p>A series of photomontages will be produced to assist with the assessment and determination of the EIA for both the Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment, in accordance with NS guidance and THC guidance. These will be included in separate volumes of the EIA Report, and will be provided in an A3 hard copy.</p> <p>The visual assessment will be receptor-based and will consider all potential receptors within the study area rather than a small number of viewpoints, which will provide a more detailed and robust assessment.</p> <p>The visualisations will be illustrative of the type of view that would be obtained and will be considered fully representative of visual receptors using the study area.</p>

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
027	Viewpoints	The Scoping Report includes four VPs for the Proposed Development and five for the Alternative Development; these are generally considered appropriate. Further consideration should be given to providing a VP from the path to the lighthouse at Strathy Point. THC would be happy to review wireframes in the first instance to confirm whether this would be beneficial for inclusion in the EIA Report.	THC-12	Annex A Page 6 - 7	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The Applicant has conducted further consultation with THC regarding the inclusion of a viewpoint from Totegan near Strathy Point. It has been agreed that the inclusion of wireline for the Proposed Alignment and Alternative Alignment will be sufficient from this viewpoint.
028		The purpose of the selected and agreed viewpoints should be clearly identified and stated in the supporting information.	THC-13	Annex A Page 7	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The LVIA chapter will identify and describe the viewpoints used for production of the photomontages to support and inform the LVIA.
029	Recreational Receptors	When assessing recreational routes, THC require all core paths, the national cycle network, long distance trails are assessed.	THC-14	Annex A Page 7	Landscape and Visual and Traffic and Transport Chapters	The noted chapters will consider impacts on recreational routes.
030	Landscaping	A landscaping, management and maintenance scheme for the site is required.	THC-15	Annex A Page 7	Landscape and Visual Chapter	The reinstatement of areas disturbed during construction would be fundamental to ensuring that the Proposed Development would be successfully accommodated into the existing landscape in the longer term. Further details on these measures will be included in a Site Restoration Plan, an outline of which will form part of the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
031	WLA	While NPF4 does not require a Wild Land Assessment to be carried out if a proposal sites outwith a WLA, THC recommend that regard still be given to Wild Land considerations.	THC-16	Annex A Page 7	Landscape and Visual Chapter	WLA 39: East Halladale Flows lies 270 m from the Proposed Development to the south-east and would be considered in the noted chapter.
032	Ecology and Ornithology Assessment	An EIA Report chapter covering ecology, habitats and ornithology will be required. This must provide a baseline survey of the bird and animals interest on site. It needs to establish which species are present on the site, and where, before a future application is submitted. It should identify rare and threatened habitats and those protected by legislation or identified in national or local BAPs. Habitat enhancement and mitigation measures should be detailed. The EIA Report should address whether the development could assist or impede delivery of elements of relevance to BAPs.	THC-17	Annex A Page 7 - 8	Ecology and Ornithology Chapters	The noted chapters will consider ecology, habitats and ornithology. They will include an assessment of the Proposed Development on ecology and ornithology and will suggest appropriate mitigation measures to avoid or reduce adverse effects, where required.
033		The presence of protected species such as Schedule 1 or European Protected Species must be included and considered as part of the application.	THC-18	Annex A Page 8	Ecology and Ornithology Chapter	The noted chapters will consider protected species of natural heritage designations of relevance. They will include an assessment of the Proposed Development on the protected species and will suggest appropriate mitigation measures to avoid or reduce adverse effects, where required.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
034	Conservation Interests	THC advise that the EIA Report should address the likely impacts on nature conservation interests in the vicinity of the development and provide proposals for mitigation to avoid or reduce to a level where they are not significant.	THC-19	Annex A Page 8	Ecology and Ornithology Chapters	The noted chapters will include an assessment of the Proposed Development on nature conservation interests and will suggest appropriate mitigation measures to avoid or reduce adverse effects, where required.
035	HRA and AA	If an Appropriate Assessment is required (based on NatureScot's advice), THC would encourage the Applicant to provide a Shadow Habitats Regulation Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment with their application.	THC-20	Annex A Page 8	Ecology and Ornithology Chapters	Shadow HRAs for the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar and SPA will be carried out as part of the EIA Report and will form appendices to the noted chapters.
036	Peatland Restoration	THC noted that NatureScot will lead on priority peatland and protected species. They advise that on peatland carbon rich soils and priority peatland habitats, the restoration of peatland should be a 1:10 restoration level with an additional 10% to provide enhancement measures.	THC-21	Annex A Page 8	Ecology Chapter Outline HMP Landscape Strategy	Compensation and enhancement for loss of peatland habitat will be presented in an overarching Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement to meet the requirements of NPF4, Policy 3. The Applicant is committed to incorporating Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) into their projects. The BNG associated with the Proposed Development following the proposed implementation of the Connagill Cluster HMP, will be detailed in the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
037	HMP, SPP and BNG	A draft or outline Habitat Management Plan and Species Protection Plan should be produced as part of the EIA, including proposals for mitigation and enhancement in relation to important habitats and species. Any compensatory planting plans should be carefully considered and included in the HMP. THC welcome that the application will be supported by a BNG Metric.	THC-22	Annex A Page 9	Ecology Chapter Outline HMP Landscape Strategy	<p>The Applicant is committed to delivering a HMP for the Proposed Development in combination with other projects that make up the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections. An Outline HMP will be provided in the EIA Report.</p> <p>The Applicant is committed to incorporating BNG into their projects. The BNG associated with the Proposed Development following the proposed implementation of the Connagill Cluster HMP, will be detailed in the EIA Report.</p>
038	Aquatic Interests	The EIA Report needs to address the aquatic interests within local watercourses, including downstream interests that may be affected by the development.	THC-23	Annex A Page 9	Ecology Chapter	Aquatic species will be considered in the noted chapter.
039	Water Environment	The EIA Report needs to address the nature of the hydrology and hydrogeology of the site, and the potential impacts on watercourses, water supplies (including PWS), water quality and quantity, aquatic flora and fauna, groundwater and other water features and sensitive receptors. Measures to prevent erosion, sedimentation or discolouration will be required, along with monitoring proposals and contingency plans. Assessment will need to recognise periods of high rainfall.	THC-24	Annex A Page 9	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	This information will be provided in the noted chapter.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
040	Watercourse Crossings	Schemes should be designed to avoid crossing watercourses, and bridge (rather than culvert) watercourses where this cannot be avoided.	THC-25	Annex A Page 9	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	A schedule of proposed watercourse crossings will be provided in the noted chapter.
041		The EIA Report should identify all water crossings and include a systematic table of watercourse crossings with detailed justification for any such elements and design to minimise impact. The table should be accompanied by photography of each watercourse and dimensions of the watercourse.	THC-26	Annex A Page 9		
042	Watercourses and Waterbodies	<p>The following should apply to all watercourses and waterbodies on site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A minimum of a 50 m buffer of all watercourses / bodies and [turbine/crane hardstanding's] which should be shown on a suitably scaled drawing. All tracks kept a minimum of 10 m from any waterbody (except water crossings). Effort to retain existing natural drainage at access tracks, where possible. 	THC-27	Annex A Page 9 - 10	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	<p>Figures will be produced to accompany the noted chapter to show all proposed temporary and permanent infrastructure overlain with all lochs and watercourses.</p> <p>The potential effects on watercourses and waterbodies, and suitable buffers to be maintained, will be discussed within the noted chapter. Locations where this is not possible will be set out in the noted chapter and required safeguards will be detailed. Appropriate mitigation will be discussed within the noted chapter.</p>

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural flood management techniques should be applied to reduce rate of runoff where possible; and use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to achieve pre-development runoff rates and to minimise erosion on existing watercourses. Water crossings must be designed to accommodate 1 in 200-year flood events, plus climate change. Land rising within any floodplain to be avoided, otherwise compensatory storage must be provided. 				
043	Flood Risk and Drainage	The EIA Report should be informed by THC's Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment Supplementary Guidance.	THC-28	Annex A Page 10	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	This has been noted.
044	Drainage Strategy	<p>The drainage strategy should divide the site into different catchments depending on risks identified. Drainage of highest risk will be considered trade effluent and will need to be contained, treated and disposed of appropriately. Areas of less risk should be provided with SuDS.</p> <p>A site plan showing the proposed SuDS treatment train should be submitted. The</p>	THC-29	Annex A Page 10	N/A	A drainage strategy will be prepared as part of the detailed design stage of the Proposed Development by the Principal Contractor. Like other sites, it is expected that this would be secured by a planning condition.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		Simple Index Approach calculation must be submitted in support of the site plan.				
045	Water Supplies	Should abstractions of water supplies be required for concrete works or other operations, the EIA Report should identify whether a public or private source is to be utilised. If private, full details on the source and details of the abstraction need to be provided.	THC-30	Annex A Page 10	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	No water abstraction has been identified. However, best practice regarding abstraction of water will be presented in the noted chapter.
046	Private Water Supplies	The Applicant should identify any private water supplies, including pipework, which may be adversely affected by the development. Measures proposed to prevent contamination, or physical disruption should be submitted. THC has some information on known supplies, but an on-site survey will be required.	THC-31	Annex A Page 10	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	The presence of any private water supplies along the route of the Proposed Development will be determined through consultation with The Highland Council and site survey, and the likely impacts will be set out in the noted chapter.
047	Construction Noise Mitigation	THC Environmental Health Team (EHT) will make comment on the construction noise mitigation when the noise management plan is submitted as part of the CEMP.	THC-32	Annex A Page 11	N/A	This has been noted.
048	Operational Noise	THC EHT are not content to scope out an assessment of operational noise until the Applicant confirms whether consideration has been given to Document 5.3.14H ES	THC-33	Annex A Page 11	Scope and Consultation Chapter	The Applicant has given consideration to the National Grid Technical Guidance Note TGN (E) 322 (2021) and a detailed assessment of operational noise is not

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		Chapter 14 Appendix 14H – National Grid Technical Guidance Note TGN(E)322 (2021) during their determination of operational noise.				considered necessary and will not be included as part of the EIA.
049	Cultural Heritage	THC's Historic Environment Team have confirmed that they are satisfied with the process and the study area detailed in the Scoping Report and are content that this will adequately address the required impact assessment for this proposal.	THC-34	Annex A Page 11	Cultural Heritage Chapter	This has been noted.
050	Traffic and Transport – Operational Phase	THC's Transport Planning Team are content that the operational phase can be scoped out of the [Transport Assessment] of the EIA Report.	THC-35	Annex A Page 11	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted.
051	Traffic and Transport – Decommissioning Phase	THC Transport Planning Team agree that the impact of decommissioning, although not 'scoped out', will be less than for construction.	THC-36	Annex A Page 11	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted.
052	Transport Assessment	In addition to the EIA, THC consider a standalone Transport Assessment will be required. Prior to its preparation, it is recommended that the Applicant undertake a detailed scoping exercise in consultation with the THC Transport Planning Team.	THC-37	Annex A Page 11	Traffic and Transport Chapter	A Transport Assessment will form a supporting appendix to the noted chapter.

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053		Where the public road affected is considered 'vulnerable' the threshold value will be 10% for impacts relating to infrastructure rather than environment.	THC-38	Annex A Page 12	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted.
054		There are a large number of significant developments proposed in this area. The Transport Assessment will need to propose a method for assessing or controlling the impacts of these developments wishing to proceed construction phase at the same time. The cumulative schemes should be agreed in advance with THC.	THC-39	Annex A Page 12	Traffic and Transport Chapter	Committed developments will be accounted for in the cumulative assessment of the noted chapter.
055	Abnormal Loads	THC Transport Planning Team consider crane movements are likely required for OHL projects and that these vehicles are usually abnormal. Before Abnormal Loads can be scoped out, the Applicant is advised to contact THC to discuss further.	THC-40	Annex A Page 12	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted. Discussions with the North Area Transport Officer have been held.
056	Travel Plan	The inclusion of a framework Travel Plan is recommended to encourage more sustainable travel modes.	THC-41	Annex A Page 12	Traffic and Transport Chapter	A Framework Site Travel Plan will be provided in the noted Chapter.
057	Construction Traffic Management Plan	A Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) shall be submitted. It shall include measures to	THC-42	Annex A Page 12	Traffic and Transport Chapter	A Framework CTMP will be provided in the noted chapter.

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		ensure that construction traffic adheres to approved routes and proposed measures to mitigate the impact of such traffic.				
058	Section 96	To protect the interest of THC from the risk of damage to Council maintained roads from development related traffic, a suitable agreement relating to Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act may be required.	THC-43	Annex A Page 13	Traffic and Transport Chapter Schedule of Mitigation	Details on a Wear & Tear agreement will be included in the noted chapter and within a Schedule of Mitigation.
059	Access to Site Compounds	The intended location of site compounds / offices, material stores, loading and unloading areas, workforce parking areas and the routes to connect them to the public road network should be clearly identified.	THC-44	Annex A Page 13	N/A	These details will be decided by the Principal Contractor and will be subject to separate planning applications. They do not form part of the Proposed Development and are therefore not included in the application for statutory consents.
060	New Access Tracks	Off-road access routes that will be used to access the site should be clearly defined including which will be left in place and which will be removed when no longer required. The finished form of routes being left in place should be clarified with justification as to why they will be needed in that form going forward.	THC-45	Annex A Page 13	The Proposed Development Chapter	Details of proposed new permanent and temporary access tracks will be described in the noted chapter.
061	Waste Management	Details of arrangements for the storage and collection of waste and recyclable material shall be provided.	THC-46	Annex A Page 13	CEMP	This would be set out within the site-specific Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP).

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062	Socio-economic	Whilst THC accept that a socio-economic assessment can be scoped out of the EIA, a technical note in support of the application will still be required. This is expected to include relevant economic information connected with the project.	THC-47	Annex A Page 13	Socio-Economic Technical Note	This has been noted and a Socio-Economic Technical Note will be prepared in support of the application.
063	Tourism and Recreation	THC support that the LVIA will assess the potential for effects on visual amenity of the recreational and tourist receptors as a result of the proposed and alternative development.	THC-48	Annex A Page 13	Landscape and Visual Chapter	This has been noted.
064	Access Management Plan	An Access Management Plan is required which comprehensively assesses the impact of the proposed development on outdoor access and identifies adequate mitigation measures. It should seek to minimise any negative impacts on outdoor access and maximise any benefits. The assessment should include an investigation into the proposals effects on the quality of the settings where recreation takes place with safeguards and enhancements to long distance routes and their settings.	THC-49	23- Annex A Page 13 - 14	Draft Outdoor Access Management Plan	A draft Outdoor Access Plan will be provided.
065	Construction Environmental	THC would request that an Outline Construction Environmental Management	THC-50	Annex A Page 14	Outline CEMP	An outline CEMP will be included in the EIA Report

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	Management Plan	Plan (CEMP) is included with the EIA Report.				
066	Forestry	THC note that a specific chapter on Forestry would not be required but this may change if the layout alters going forward. However, information in support of the application will be required. This should outline areas of woodland / forestry plantation which may be felled to accommodate new development.	THC-51	Annex A Page 14	Forestry Chapter	A specific assessment on forestry interests will be completed and included in the EIA Report. This will also set out compensatory planting requirements, where relevant.
067	Compensatory Planting	Compensatory planting of new woodland is expected for any proposals for felling and such mitigation should be considered within any assessment. If trees are removed, compliance with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy must be demonstrated.	THC-52	Annex A Page 14		
068	Significant Effects on the Environment	THC require the EIA to describe the likely significant effects of the development on the environment which should cover direct, indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development.	THC-53	Annex A Page 14	Throughout the EIA Report	The assessment of likely significant environmental effects will be undertaken within each of the technical chapters of the EIA Report.

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069		THC request that when measuring the positive and negative effects of the development a four point scale is used advising any effect to be either strong positive, positive, negative or strong negative.	THC-54	Annex A Page 15	EIA Methodology Chapter	The approach to the assessment of effects will be set out in the noted chapter and defined within each of the technical chapters within the EIA Report. Effects will be assessed in accordance with best practice and industry standards across the technical topics. As such, the request for consideration of effects across a four point scale is not considered appropriate.
070		The Applicant should provide a description of the forecasting methods used to assess the effects on the environment.	THC-55	Annex A Page 15		
071	Mitigation	<p>A description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reducing and where possible offsetting any significant adverse effects on the environment must be set out within the EIA Report.</p> <p>A clear summary table of all mitigation measures associated with the development proposal should be provided and titled draft 'Schedule of Mitigation'.</p>	THC-56	Annex A Page 15	Throughout EIA Report	Mitigation measures will be proposed at the end of each technical chapter. A consolidated Schedule of Mitigation will also be presented in the EIA Report.
072	Potential for direct impacts on designated heritage sites	HES can confirm there are no World Heritage Sites, scheduled monuments, category A listed buildings or gardens and designed landscapes within the Proposed Development site boundary. There is no potential for significant direct impacts on assets within HES' remit.	HES-01	Annex A Page 16	Cultural Heritage Chapter	This has been noted.

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073	Potential impacts on the setting of designated heritage sites	<p>There is potential for adverse impacts to a number of nationally important historic environment assets within the vicinity of the development.</p> <p>The Alternative Route would have different impacts on the setting of assets in comparison to the Proposed Route. The Alternative Route has the potential to impact on the east-west axial view from the garden pavilion of 'Bighouse, garden pavilion and walled garden' (LB7160). There may also be potential for cumulative effects alongside the Melvich wind farm which should be taken into consideration. A photomontage showing the view from the garden pavilion looking west along the axial view towards the proposed OHL will be required to assist with the understanding of potential impacts on the setting of the buildings. It would be helpful if visualisations could also include the proposed Melvich wind farm to demonstrate potential cumulative impacts.</p>	HES-02	Annex A Page 16 - 17	Cultural Heritage Chapter	The Applicant has consulted with HES and agreed that a photomontage from Bighouse Garden Pavilion will be produced for the Alternative Alignment and will be included in the EIA Report. The photomontage will include the proposed Melvich wind turbines.
074	Scope and Guidance	HES welcome that cultural heritage effects are scoped into the assessment. HES strongly recommend that 'Managing Change Guidance Note on Setting' is used	HES-03	Annex A Page	Cultural Heritage Chapter	This has been noted. Reference to these documents will be made in the noted chapter.

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		to inform setting assessments. HES would welcome that the proposed methodology will reference the EIA Handbook.				
075	Historic Assessment Study Area	HES are content with the 3 km study area to identify assets which may receive impacts to their setting and the list of assets to be scoped in and scoped out of further detailed assessment.	HES-04	Annex A Page 19	Cultural Heritage Chapter	This has been noted.
076	Historic Assessment Mitigation	HES welcome that the [scoping] report indicates that recommendations for mitigation measures to prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects will be provided where necessary. HES would be happy to discuss further.	HES-05	Annex A Page 19	Cultural Heritage Chapter	This has been noted.
077	SEPA Consultation	SEPA would welcome further pre-application with the developer once the layout is developed in relation to the location of towers and supporting infrastructure.	SEPA-01	Annex A Page 21	N/A	This has been noted.
078	Location of Infrastructure in relation to peat	The proposal should demonstrate it can meet the requirements of Policy 5 of NPF4. Peat probing information should be provided so that it is ensured that there is depth information available for all locations where infrastructure (including all	SEPA-02	Annex A Page 22	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	A peat probing campaign has been carried out across the project to establish peat depths and appropriate mitigation will be set out in the noted chapter and in a Peat Management Plan that will be included as part of the EIA Report.

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		temporary construction infrastructure and any borrow pits) are proposed. It should be clearly demonstrated that the location of individual tower hardstanding's and supporting infrastructure avoid areas of deepest peat and any near natural condition habitat.				
079	Peatland Compensation	Proposals for peatland compensation / offsetting should be outlined, and in addition proposals for biodiversity gain.	SEPA-03	Annex A Page 22	Outline HMP	<p>Compensation and enhancement for loss of peatland habitat will be presented in an overarching Habitat Management Plan for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement to meet the requirements of NPF4, Policy 3.</p> <p>The Applicant is committed to incorporating BNG into their projects. The BNG associated with the Proposed Development following the proposed implementation of the Connagill Cluster HMP, will be detailed in the EIA Report.</p>
080	Presentation of information	Ensure drawings are submitted at a scale that allows the relationship between baseline information and infrastructure to be clearly understood.	SEPA-04	Annex A Page 22	Throughout the EIA Report	This has been noted.
081	Groundwater Dependent Habitats	The submitted habitat survey indicates that the development will have an impact on habitats that are potentially groundwater dependent. The final submission should	SEPA-05	Annex A Page 22	Ecology and Soils, Geology and Water Chapters	Details of the UKHab and National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey will be presented in the Ecology chapter, whilst an assessment on potential groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems

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		provide an assessment of whether the habitats are actually groundwater dependent in the area, and mitigation measures to maintain local hydrology, where necessary.				(GWDTEs) will be included in Soils, Geology and Water chapter.
082	Access Track Design	Ensure that clear information is provided on the type of access proposed to be used in each area (e.g. boards, temporary floating tracks, temporary cut tracks, permanent floating tracks, permanent cut tracks). Where there is doubt, the impact should be assessed based on the poorest environmentally option. Proposals to use existing tracks, or previously disturbed routes is welcome and should be marked on plans.	SEPA-06	Annex A Page 22	The Proposed Development Chapter	Details of proposed new permanent and temporary access tracks will be described in the noted chapter. For the purposes of this EIA, it will be assumed for worst case, that all new access tracks would be constructed on formation.
083	Development Design and Infrastructure	All maps must be based on an adequate scale with which to assesses the information. Each of the maps must detail all proposed upgraded, temporary and permanent infrastructure. Existing built infrastructure must be re-used or upgraded where possible. The design should minimise the extent of new works on previously undisturbed ground.	SEPA-07	Annex A Page 24	The Proposed Development Chapter	The noted chapter will include all of the salient development information, and will be supported by plans indicating layout of infrastructure required for the Proposed Development.

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084	Site Layout and Engineering Activities on the Water Environment	<p>The site layout should be designed to minimise watercourse crossings and avoid other direct impacts on water features. The submission must include a map showing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All proposed temporary and permanent infrastructure overlain with all lochs and watercourses. A minimum buffer of 50 m around each loch or watercourse. If this minimum cannot be achieved, each breach must be numbered on a plan with an associated photograph of the locations, dimensions of the loch / watercourse and drawings of what's proposed. Measures should be put in place to protect any downstream sensitive receptors. 	SEPA-08	Annex A Page 24	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	The noted chapter will assess the likely effects of the Proposed Development on the water environment and will propose mitigation measures to minimise effects, where relevant.
085	Site Layout and Engineering Activities on the Water Environment	Watercourse crossings must be designed to accommodate the 0.5% Annual Exceedance Probability flows (with an appropriate allowance for climate change), or information provided to justify smaller structures. If it is considered the development could result in an increased	SEPA-09	Annex A Page 25	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	The noted chapter will include information on watercourse crossings and flood risk.

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		risk of flooding to a nearby receptor then a Flood Risk Assessment must be submitted.				
086	Disturbance and Re-use of excavated peat and other carbon rich soils	<p>Where proposals are on peatland or carbon rich soils, the following should be submitted to address the requirements of NPF4 Policy 5:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Layout plan showing all permanent and temporary infrastructure, with the extent of excavation required. This should be overlain on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peat depth survey (showing peat probe locations and interpolated peat depths). Peatland condition mapping. National Vegetation Classification survey. Outline Peat Management Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peatland condition. Demonstrate avoidance and minimisation of peat disturbance. Excavation volumes of acrotelmic, catotelmic and amorphous peat. 	SEPA-10	Annex A Page 26 - 27	Soils, Geology and Water and Ecology Chapters	<p>The Soils, Geology and Water chapter will contain information on peat soils and depths present along the Proposed Development and an overview of peat management measures during construction.</p> <p>Detailed results from UKHab and NVC surveys and associated target notes (including for notable species) will be summarised in the Ecology chapter.</p> <p>Compensation and enhancement for loss of peatland habitat will be presented in an overarching Habitat Management Plan for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement to meet the requirements of NPF4, Policy 3.</p> <p>The Applicant is committed to incorporating BNG into their projects. The BNG associated with the Proposed Development following the proposed implementation of the Connagill Cluster HMP, will be detailed in the EIA Report.</p>

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proposals for temporary storage and handling. ○ Reuse volumes in different elements of site reinstatement and restoration. • Outline Habitat Management Plan. • Proposals for reuse of disturbed peat in habitat restoration. • Details of restoration to compensate for the area of peatland habitat directly and indirectly impacted by the development. • Outline proposals for peatland enhancement in other areas of the site. • Monitoring proposals. 				
087		<p>The submission should demonstrate that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal avoids peatland in near natural condition. • Minimise the total area and volume of peat disturbance and clearly demonstrate how the infrastructure layout has targeted where carbon rich soils are absent or the shallowest peat reasonably practicable (avoid peat >1m). 	SEPA-11	Annex A Page 26	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	A peat probing campaign has been carried out across the project to establish peat depths and has been taken into consideration during the project design. The noted chapter will contain information on peat soils and depths present along the Proposed Development and an overview of peat management measures during construction.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise impact on local hydrology. Include adequate peat probing information to inform the site layout and demonstrate that the above has been achieved. 				
088		Plans to restore and / or enhance the site into a functioning peatland system capable of achieving carbon sequestration should be included.	SEPA-12	Annex A Page 26	Outline HMP	<p>Compensation and enhancement for loss of peatland habitat will be presented in an overarching Habitat Management Plan for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement to meet the requirements of NPF4, Policy 3.</p> <p>The Applicant is committed to incorporating BNG into their projects. The BNG associated with the Proposed Development following the proposed implementation of the Connagill Cluster HMP, will be detailed in the EIA Report.</p>
089		It should be demonstrated that all peat disturbed can be used in site reinstatement or peatland restoration.	SEPA-13	Annex A Page 26	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	A Peat Management Plan (PMP) will be provided as an appendix to the noted chapter.
090		To support the principle of peat reuse in restoration the applicant should demonstrate that locations where the addition of excavated peat will enhance the wider site into a functional peatland system capable of achieving carbon sequestration.	SEPA-14	Annex A Page 27	Outline HMP	Compensation and enhancement for loss of peatland habitat will be presented in an overarching Habitat Management Plan for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement to meet the requirements of NPF4, Policy 3.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		<p>The following information is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location plan of proposed peatland re-use restoration area showing size of individual areas and total area to be restored. Photographs, aerial imagery or surveys to demonstrate that the area identified is appropriate for peat re-use and consideration of appropriate hydrological setting and baseline peatland condition. 				
091		<p>If any proposed re-use restoration areas are outwith the ownership of the applicant, information should be provided to demonstrate agreement in principle with the landowner, including agreed timescales for commencement of the works and proposed management measures to ensure restored areas can be safeguarded in perpetuity as a peatland.</p>	SEPA-15	Annex A Page 27	HMP	Potential wider peatland restoration areas that could be taken forwards across the wider landscape are currently under consideration but require landowner agreement before these can be progressed for inclusion in the HMP.
092	Disruption to GWDTE and existing groundwater abstractions	<p>The layout and design of the development must avoid impacts on groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTE). An NVC which includes the following information must be submitted:</p>	SEPA-16	Annex A Page 28	Ecology and Soils, Geology and Water Chapters	Information relating to GWDTEs within the vicinity of the Proposed Development and assessment of likely impact on these will be included in the noted chapters.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A map demonstrating all GWDTE and existing groundwater abstractions are outwith a 100 m radius of all excavations shallower than 1 m and outwith 250 m of all excavations deeper than 1 m and proposed groundwater abstractions. If the minimum buffers cannot be achieved, a detailed site specific qualitative and/or quantitative risk assessment will be required. 				
093	Forest removal and forest waste	The submission must include a map with boundaries of where felling will take place and a description of what is proposed for this timber.	SEPA-17	Annex A Page 28	Forestry Chapter	A forestry chapter will be included as part of the EIA Report, providing a specific assessment on forestry interests.
094	Borrow Pits	<p>The following information should be submitted for each borrow pit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A map showing the location, size, depths and dimensions. A map showing any stocks of rock, overburden, soils and temporary and permanent infrastructure overlain with all lochs and watercourses to a distance of 250m. On this map, a site-specific buffer must be drawn around each loch or watercourse proportionate 	SEPA-18	Annex A Page 28 - 29	N/A	A separate planning application for the requirement of any borrow pits will be sought by the Principal Contractor. They do not form part of the Proposed Development and are therefore not included in the application for statutory consents.

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		<p>to the depth of excavations and at least 10 m from access tracks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sections and plans detailing how restoration will be progressed including the phasing, profiles, depths and types of material to be used. 				
095	Pollution prevention and environmental management	<p>A schedule of mitigation supported by site-specific maps and plans must be submitted. These must include reference to best practice pollution prevention and construction techniques and regulatory requirements.</p>	SEPA-19	Annex A Page 29	Schedule of Mitigation	A Schedule of Mitigation will be included with the EIA Report.
096	Pre-Application Consultation	<p>NS are not aware that this development was presented or discussed at Highland Council Major Pre-apps, in advance of formal scoping.</p>	NS-01	Annex A Page 35	N/A	This is noted. The development was presented at a formal pre-application meeting facilitated by The Highland Council in August 2023.
097	Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA and Ramsar	<p>NS recommend that barrier and displacement effects are scoped in for assessment, in addition to an assessment of collision potential. A bespoke appraisal for diver risk could be conducted to inform a shadow Habitat Regulation Appraisal (HRA). This may show that the Alternative Route would avoid potential risk to SPA</p>	NS-02	Annex A Page 31	Ornithology Chapter	<p>Potential impacts on important ornithological features, including qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, will be discussed in the noted chapter, and where relevant, mitigation will be presented.</p> <p>Potential effects on designated ornithological features of these sites will also be considered in a Shadow HRA, which will include the Caithness and</p>

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		species. NS can provide more advice on this.				Sutherland Peatlands SPA, that will form an appendix to the noted chapter.
098		The Proposed Development has potential to cause barrier and displacement effects to species within the SPA (c. <750 m distance); this involves four lochans between Loch Baligill and Lochan Coulbackie. This involves more SPA species from added knowledge from other wind farms nearby than indicated in the Scoping Report.	NS-03	Annex A Page 31	Ornithology Chapter	<p>Potential impacts (including barrier and displacement effects where relevant) on important ornithological features, including qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA will be discussed in the noted chapter, and where relevant, mitigation will be presented.</p> <p>Potential effects on designated ornithological features of these sites will also be considered in a Shadow HRA, which will include the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, that will form an appendix to the noted chapter.</p> <p>Data has been requested from wind farm developers connected to the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects. The datasets that have been shared will be reviewed as part of the desk study and relevant data used to inform the assessment will be detailed in the noted chapter.</p>
099		The maximum potential height of the proposed OHL pylon towers will create a new infrastructure feature close to SPA lochs which some species may not be able to cope with, compared to the existing low scale 132 kV trident line. Therefore, due to the closeness of SPA lochs, there is	NS-04	Annex A Page 31	Ornithology Chapter	This has been noted. Potential impacts on important ornithological features, including qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, will be discussed in the noted chapter, and where relevant, mitigation will be presented.

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		uncertainty whether they can gain enough height quick enough (in varying weather conditions) to clear the lines. This has the potential to make breeding lochs less favoured or just unsuitable for future use as a result of the Proposed Development.				
100		NS recommend greater clarity within the EIA Report of pylon towers to be used for this proposal including any range variability with maximum height provided as part of the SPA appraisals.	NS-05	Annex A Page 31	Tower Schedule	A tower schedule will be included in the EIA Report which will set out the heights of each individual tower.
101		It is not clear if vantage point surveys have been undertaken as part of survey work. Clarity on this issue will be important during the pre-application stage.	NS-06	Annex A Page 31	Ornithology Chapter	Vantage Point (VP) surveys of the Proposed Alignment were completed through the 2022 breeding season (May to August) capturing a minimum of 24 hours of survey effort from each of the five VP locations. VP surveys of the Alternative Alignment were completed between March and October 2023, capturing 48 hours of survey effort (6 hours per month) from each of the three VP locations, Details of VP survey methods will be included in a Technical Appendix to the noted chapter.
102		NS note that no/little survey information has been provided for the Alternative Development. Its assumed ecological	NS-07	Annex A Page 31	Ecology and Ornithology Chapters	Results of habitat surveys and assessment of likely impacts on ecological receptors along the route of the Alternative Alignment will be set out in a separate volume of the EIA Report.

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		information will underpin an assessment for both routes within the EIA Report.				Ornithology surveys targeting the Alternative Alignment, comprising VP surveys, a moorland breeding bird survey (MBBS), breeding raptor surveys and a breeding diver survey, were completed between March and October 2023. Details of all survey methods will be included in a Technical Appendix to the Ornithology chapter.
103	Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA and Ramsar – Common scoter	NS recommend that common scoters and their lochans are thoroughly assessed through the HRA process for this development. This should include collision potential, potential barrier effects, displacement effects and disturbance in context to the new OHL.	NS-08	Annex A Page 32	Ornithology Chapter	<p>Potential impacts on important ornithological features, including qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA will be discussed in the noted chapter, and where relevant, mitigation will be presented.</p> <p>Potential effects on designated ornithological features of European sites, including the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, will also be considered in a Shadow HRA that will form an appendix to the noted chapter.</p>
104	Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC - Otter	Assessments should be carried out to inform the level of impacts to otters, ensuring works do not undermine the potential for SAC otter restoration. Holts and lie up sites close to the OHL should be protected within the concept of a Species Protection Plan (SPP).	NS-09	Annex A Page 32	Ecology Chapter	<p>Protected species survey results with respect to otter and the potential effects of the Proposed Development (and Alternative Alignment), together with appropriate mitigation will be included in the noted chapter.</p> <p>If specific impacts were noted during assessment SPPs would be provided during condition discharge as part of the CEMP.</p>

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
105	Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC – Peatland Habitats	Deer should be taken into consideration in context to any potential increase in trampling effects to peatland SAC habitats because of construction works. This should feature within the shadow HRA.	NS-10	Annex A Page 32	Ecology Chapter	No specific field work has been completed to ascertain the Effective Deer Utilisation (EDU) figures for the area of the Proposed Development. It is considered that the period of construction will be relatively short in duration and the potential long-term nature of the development would not affect the use of the area of the Proposed Development by deer. Whilst there may be some dispersal in the short term from the area of the Proposed Development to the SAC, this will be insufficient to affect the qualifying interests or site integrity. Whilst these effects can be documented in the Shadow HRA it is anticipated that the process would conclude no likely significant effect (LSE).
106	Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC – Clear-water lakes or lochs	NS welcome that this SAC feature is scoped in, due to the proximity of qualifying lochs relatively close to the Proposed Development. This SAC feature has potential to be scoped-out if the Alternative Development is progressed.	NS-11	Annex A Page 32	Ecology Chapter	This has been noted. Potential impacts on important ecological features, including qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC will be discussed in the noted chapter, and where relevant, mitigation will be presented. Potential effects on designated ecological features of these sites will also be considered in a Shadow HRA for the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC that will form an appendix to the noted chapter.
107	Flow Country World Heritage Site (proposed)	We note that many of the wind farm developments which have generated the need for this proposal fall firmly within the	NS-12	Annex A Page 33	N/A	The Proposed Development is required to facilitate the grid connection for Strathy South Wind Farm and Strathy Wood Wind Farm (as shared infrastructure), both of which are consented schemes.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		World Heritage Site (WHS) too, which may potentially negate the need for this project if they are refused planning permission.				
108	West Halladale SSSI	Any potential impacts to the SSSI bog habitat, black throated diver, common scoter and breeding bird assemblages should be assessed and presented within the EIA Report, indicating potential impacts and likely duration of these. The breeding bird assemblage species list to be considered is 'Upland moorland within water bodies'.	NS-13	Annex A Page 33	Ecology and Ornithology Chapter	Potential impacts on qualifying features of the West Halladale SSSI will be discussed in the noted chapters, and where relevant, mitigation will be presented. The breeding bird assemblage that should be considered is noted.
109	Peatland and Priority Peatland Habitats – Wider Countryside	In the context of NPF4 (Policy 3), it will be important to clearly distinguish between those actions mitigating / compensating for adverse impacts (i.e. within an HMP) and actions proposed to enhance (i.e. within an EMP). Annex 1 of NS's 'Peatland Guidance' (updated November 2023) provides a template for inclusion within the EIA Report to produce an understanding on peatland quality that may be impacted by development. We recommended this is completed and included.	NS-14	Annex A Page 33	Outline HMP	Compensation and enhancement for loss of peatland habitat will be presented in an overarching Habitat Management Plan for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement to meet the requirements of NPF4, Policy 3. The Applicant is committed to incorporating BNG into their projects. The BNG associated with the Proposed Development following the proposed implementation of the Connagill Cluster HMP, will be detailed in the EIA Report.
110		NS welcome SSEN's biodiversity commitment to protect and enhance the	NS-15	Annex A Page 33	BNG Report	The Applicant is committed to incorporating BNG into their projects. The BNG associated with the

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		environment and look forward to seeing enhancement measures in due course. Any enhancement plan should be presented in full within the EIA, allowing complete assessments to be undertaken in context to the HRAs.				Proposed Development following the proposed implementation of the Connagill Cluster HMP, will be detailed in the EIA Report.
111	Enhancement/ Biodiversity Net Gain	Latest published research (December 2023) on breeding common scoter (SPA/SSSI) identifies 'lowering predation risk' to nesting females as being an important factor to help healthy scoter populations. Other ground nesting peatland birds may also benefit from similar outcomes, such as divers, hen harrier, golden plover and curlew.	NS-16			This has been noted.
112	Landscape	NS welcome exploration of the Alternative Development. At this stage, NS consider the Alternative Development may result in adverse landscape and visual effects on the north coast between Melvich and Strathy, in particular where the OHL is situated in close proximity to the A836, Melvich and Far Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA, however NS do not consider the effects would be of a magnitude to significant erode the distinctive character of the north coast.	NS-17	Annex A Page 33 - 34	The Routeing Process and Alternatives & LVIA Chapters	The noted chapter will set out the alternative options considered and discuss the reasons for identifying the proposed and alternative alignment and design solution. The LVIA will consider potential effects, including cumulative effects, of the Proposed Development on landscape receptors and visual amenity during construction and operation.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		Careful siting and design is required due to the sensitivity of this landscape. NS would like to be notified of further changes / options should Melvich Wind Energy Hub not be granted consent.				
113		The Proposed Development is sited further inland than the Alternative Development and would not encroach on the narrow band of transition between intimate settled coast and sweeping moorland, which NS consider to be of high sensitivity to development of this type. Though the ZTV shows some visibility for Melvich and the A836, this would be viewed at distances of 1.5 km and above and thus landscape and visual effects on the distinctive coastline are not expected to be significant.	NS-18	Annex A Page 34	LVIA Chapter	The LVIA will consider potential effects, including cumulative effects, of the Proposed Development on landscape receptors and visual amenity during construction and operation.
114		The Alternative Development is expected to be visible from the A836 due to the open landscape, impacting on views along the coast and the experience of the popular NC500. NS consider the Alternative OHL would intensify the influence of energy infrastructure where it is sited within proximity to the A836; Melvich and the Farr Bay, Strathy and Portskerra SLA. Furthermore, the routing of the Alternative	NS-19	Annex A Page 34	The Routeing Process and Alternatives & LVIA Chapters	The LVIA will consider potential effects, including cumulative effects, of the Alternative Alignment on landscape receptors and visual amenity during construction and operation.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		Development would likely result in more visual complexity where it 'turns' at Alltan Domhaich and may appear to overlap (from the A836), eroding the simplicity of the moorland backdrop. NS therefore consider that the Alternative Development would likely result in significant landscape and visual effects though these would not be of a degree to erode the distinctive character of the north coast.				
115	Guidance	Although produced mainly for wind farm developments, NS recommend that updated Pre-application Advice (February 2024) can usefully inform this proposal.	NS-20	Annex A Page 35	LVIA Chapter	The LVIA will consider this guidance.
116	Access	It is not clear if the development will result in an access track being formed around the top edge of the West Halladale SSSI which may have potential to cause residual disturbance issues and may even inadvertently provide an 'easy' access route to SPA lochs by ground predators (e.g. pine marten). NS would welcome clarity on this.	NS-21	Annex A Page 38	The Proposed Development Chapter	Details of proposed new permanent and temporary access tracks will be described in the noted chapter.
117	Scope	NS agree that North Caithness Cliffs SPA (for peregrine) is scoped in for assessment of the Alternative Development.	NS-22	Annex A Page 38	Ornithology Chapter	This has been noted.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
118	BT	Studies with respect to the proposed development with respect to EMC and related problems to BT point-to-point microwave links have concluded that the 'proposed' development should not cause any interference to BT's current and planned radio network. The proposed 'alternative' development could cause interference and grid references of all proposed structures will be required to reassess.	BT-01	Annex A Page 39	Scope and Consultation Chapter	Indicative tower locations of the Alternative Alignment were shared with BT in April 2024. White it was noted that one tower would be approximately 60 m from a BT fixed link, the link would pass above the ground altitude plus height of the proposed structure, and BT noted no concerns.
119	MOD	The development falls within Low Flying Area 14 (LFA 14), an area within which military aircraft may conduct low level flight training. The addition of a development featuring tall or narrow profile structures such as electricity towers in this locality has the potential to introduce physical obstruction to low flying aircraft operating in the area. The MOD will require that a condition is added to any consent issued requiring that sufficient data is submitted to ensure that structures can be accurately chartered to allow deconfliction. The MOD should be consulted at all future stages for this proposed development to complete a full detailed safeguarding assessment.	MOD-01	Annex A Page 46	N/A	This has been noted. The relevant information will be provided to the MoD on submission of the application.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
120	Radio Network	No concerns noted.	JRC-01	Annex A Page 48	N/A	This has been noted.
121	Gas Networks	There are no National Gas assets affected in this area.	NG-01	Annex A Page 49	N/A	This has been noted.
122	Aircraft	The proposed development does not conflict with NATS' safeguarding criteria and have no safeguarding objection.	NATS-01	Annex A Page 50	N/A	This has been noted.
123	Nuclear Safety	The development does not present a significant external hazard to the safety of the nuclear site.	ONR-01	Annex A Page 51	N/A	This has been noted.
124	Appropriate Assessment	<p>Due to likely significant effects on European designated sites, the EIA Report must include sufficient information to inform an Appropriate Assessment by the competent authority, as required by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.</p> <p>Given the Proposed Development has the potential to impact on a number of qualifying features of [the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA, SAC and Ramsar] designated sites, RSPB welcome the commitment [in the scoping report] that a shadow HRA will be provided in the EIA Report</p>	RSPB-01	Annex A Page 52	Ecology and Ornithology Chapters	<p>The potential effects on designated sites will be discussed within the Ecology and Ornithology chapters.</p> <p>Shadow Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRAs) for relevant European sites, including the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC / Ramsar site and SPA, is being carried out as part of the EIA Report and will form appendices to the noted chapters</p>

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
125	Common Scoter	RSPB have particular and significant concerns regarding the uncertainty around the effects on Common Scoter from this proposal. RSPB would recommend that appropriate surveys are conducted at this site by the developer to inform assessments.	RSPB-02	Annex A Page 53	Ornithology Chapter	<p>Details of the ornithology surveys, including survey areas and key results, will be included in a Technical Appendix to the noted chapter of the EIA Report.</p> <p>Potential impacts on important ornithological features, including common scoter, will be considered in the noted chapter.</p>
126	Red-throated and Black-throated Divers	RSPB believe this OHL could create a barrier and/or risk of collision to both Red-throated and Black-throated Divers. Risk of collision and barrier effects should be assessed and data should be requested from the Melvich Wind Energy Hub developer.	RSPB-03	Annex A Page 53	Ornithology Chapter	<p>An assessment of the Proposed Development on ornithology will be set out in the EIA Report and appropriate mitigation to avoid or reduce adverse effects will be identified, where required.</p> <p>Data has been requested from wind farm developers connected to the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects. The datasets that have been shared will be reviewed as part of the desk study and relevant data used to inform the assessment to be detailed in the noted chapter.</p>
127	OHL Infrastructure	The creation of towers, working areas and tracks could lead to significant peatland loss, habitat loss and disturbance to qualifying species of designated sites. This needs to be surveyed and assessed before any route decisions are finalised.	RSPB-04	Annex A Page 53	The Routeing Process and Alternatives Chapter	The routeing process and alternatives considered including the design solution will be set out in the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
128	Bird Survey and Assessment Requirements	Due to lack of clarity [in the scoping report] of surveys conducted and the areas and buffers covered, RSPB cannot confirm whether the current surveys [set out in the scoping report] are sufficient for determining impact.	RSPB-05	Annex A Page 53-54	Ornithology Chapter	Details of the survey methods and datasets used to inform the ornithological impact assessment will be set out in the Technical Appendix to the noted chapter.
129		The potential impact of the moorland fire that occurred in the Strathy area in 2019 on ornithology surveys and data should be included in the EIA Report.	RSPB-06	Annex A Page 54	Ornithology Chapter	This will be considered in the noted chapter.
130		RSPB are pleased that data from other existing, consented and proposed developments in the area are being used but cannot comment on the sufficiency of these as the extent of the developments consulted or surveys used are not provided [in the scoping report]. RSPB suggest that data sharing is extended to other developments in the area, especially Melvich Wind Energy Hub, as it significantly overlaps the proposed line.	RSPB-07	Annex A Page 54		Data has been requested from wind farm developers connected to the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects. The datasets that have been shared will be reviewed as part of the desk study and relevant data used to inform the assessment to be detailed in the noted chapter.
131		RSPB recommend either undertaking two years of field surveys for all the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA qualifying species, in line with NS guidance. Alternatively, RSPB would suggest one full	RSPB-08	Annex A Page 54	Ornithology Chapter	Details of the survey methods and datasets used to inform the ornithological impact assessment will be set out in the Technical Appendix to the noted chapter.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		<p>year of surveys in line with guidance, plus the use of other available data from surrounding wind farms.</p> <p>RSPB recommend that surveys consider particular breeding patterns of qualifying species, as standard surveys may not be adequate in determining impact, this includes Common scoter.</p>				
132	Common Scoter	It is RSPB's opinion that a minimum of three surveys between 23rd April and 3rd June would be needed to confirm presence and numbers of Common Scoter.	RSPB-09	Annex A Page 54	Ornithology Chapter	Details of the survey methods and datasets used to inform the ornithological impact assessment will be set out in the Technical Appendix to the noted chapter.
133	Raptors	RSPB recommend that eagle data for both species within 6 km and other raptor data within 2 km of the OHL is requested from the Highland Raptor Study Group (HRSG). Specific raptor surveys should also be undertaken to identify breeding territories.	RSPB-10	Annex A Page 54	Ornithology Chapter	<p>Records of raptor species obtained from HRSG will be reviewed and used to inform the assessment included in the noted chapter.</p> <p>Details of the survey methods and datasets used to inform the ornithological impact assessment will be set out in the Technical Appendix to the noted chapter.</p>
134	Further Required Bird Surveys	RSPB consider that wintering bird surveys are required. Caithness Lochs SPA is in connectivity distance of the development, as Greylag Geese have a core range of 15 - 20 km. Although wintering birds are not qualifying species of the Caithness and	RSPB-11	Annex A Page 55	Ornithology Chapter	Details of the survey methods and datasets used to inform the ornithological impact assessment will be set out in the Technical Appendix to the noted chapter.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		Sutherland Peatlands SPA, RSPB consider undertaking these surveys best practice. The site may be important for wintering species such as Schedule 1 protected Hen Harrier.				
135		As well as SPA species, RSPB have records of Red and Amber listed bird of concern Curlew, Lapwing, Common Sandpiper, Oystercatcher and Snipe in the vicinity of the proposed development, and should be included in any surveys.	RSPB-12	Annex A Page 55	Ornithology Chapter	A data request obtained from the RSPB will be reviewed and used to inform the assessment included in the noted chapter.
136		<p>RSPB recommend the following information is provided within the EIA Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full information on the VP work undertaken including dates, times and weather conditions for each. • Maps showing VP locations that also denote viewsheds and OHL locations, including steel towers and ancillary development. • Maps showing survey areas for breeding bird and wintering bird surveys • Maps showing diver, wader, Common scoter and raptor breeding, foraging 	RSPB-13	Annex A Page 55	Ornithology Chapter	Details of the ornithology surveys, including survey areas and key results, will be included in the noted chapter of the EIA Report and associated appendices.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		and roosting areas, commuting routes and wintering geese flight routes,				
137	Potential Effects	RSPB would recommend that disturbance, displacement (Including barrier effects), loss of suitable habitat (breeding, wintering and foraging) electrocution and collision risk are assessed for all scoped in species. This should include all elements of the proposed development.	RSPB-14	Annex A Page 55	Ornithology Chapter	An assessment of the Proposed Development on ornithology will be set out in the EIA Report and appropriate mitigation to avoid or reduce adverse effects will be identified, where required.
138		The potential barrier impact for Red-throated and Black-throated divers should be assessed for the proposed and alternative OHL alone and as part of the cumulative assessment.	RSPB-15	Annex A Page 55		
139		The height of the towers should consider barrier and collision effects.	RSPB-16	Annex A Page 56		
140	Developments to be included in the cumulative assessment	RSPB consider the developments included in Table 3.3 [of the scoping report] to be insufficient in scope. It only contains those wind farm developments and grid connections in the Connagill cluster and does not include all relevant developments at the appropriate SPA or NHZ level.	RSPB-17	Annex A Page 56	Ornithology Chapter	Details of the developments included in the assessment of cumulative effects will be set out in the noted chapter of the EIA Report.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
141	Cumulative Impacts on SPA and NHZ species	Due to the likely significant effect of this development on the SPA, impacts should be assessed for the SPA populations as well as at the NHZ level. A robust cumulative assessment of collision risk, disturbance, displacement and barrier effects should take account of all operational, consented and proposed wind energy schemes, OHLs and their associated infrastructure that could impact on bird populations of both the relevant NHZ5 and Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA.	RSPB-18	Annex A Page 56	Ornithology Chapter	<p>Potential effects, including cumulative effects, on important ornithological features (IOF) will be considered in the noted chapter of the EIA Report.</p> <p>Where an IOF is a designated feature of an SPA with potential connectivity to the Proposed Development footprint, the assessment will be made at against the SPA population. This is considered to be the most appropriate scale for the relevant IOFs. NHZ populations will be larger than those of SPAs, and hence potential effects would affect a smaller proportion of the NHZ population compared with the SPA population. This is considered to be a suitable approach.</p> <p>Where an IOF is not a designated feature of an SPA with potential connectivity to the Proposed Development footprint, the assessment will be made against the NHZ population.</p>
142	Cumulative Displacement Impacts	The cumulative disturbance and displacement impact on birds from the increase in traffic and noise from the additional use of existing wind farm and OHL access tracks during construction and maintenance of this OHL should be included. Any identified impacts should be assessed against the relevant SPAs and NHZ populations.	RSPB-19	Annex A Page 56	Ornithology Chapter	Potential cumulative effects on IOF's will be considered in the noted chapter of the EIA Report.

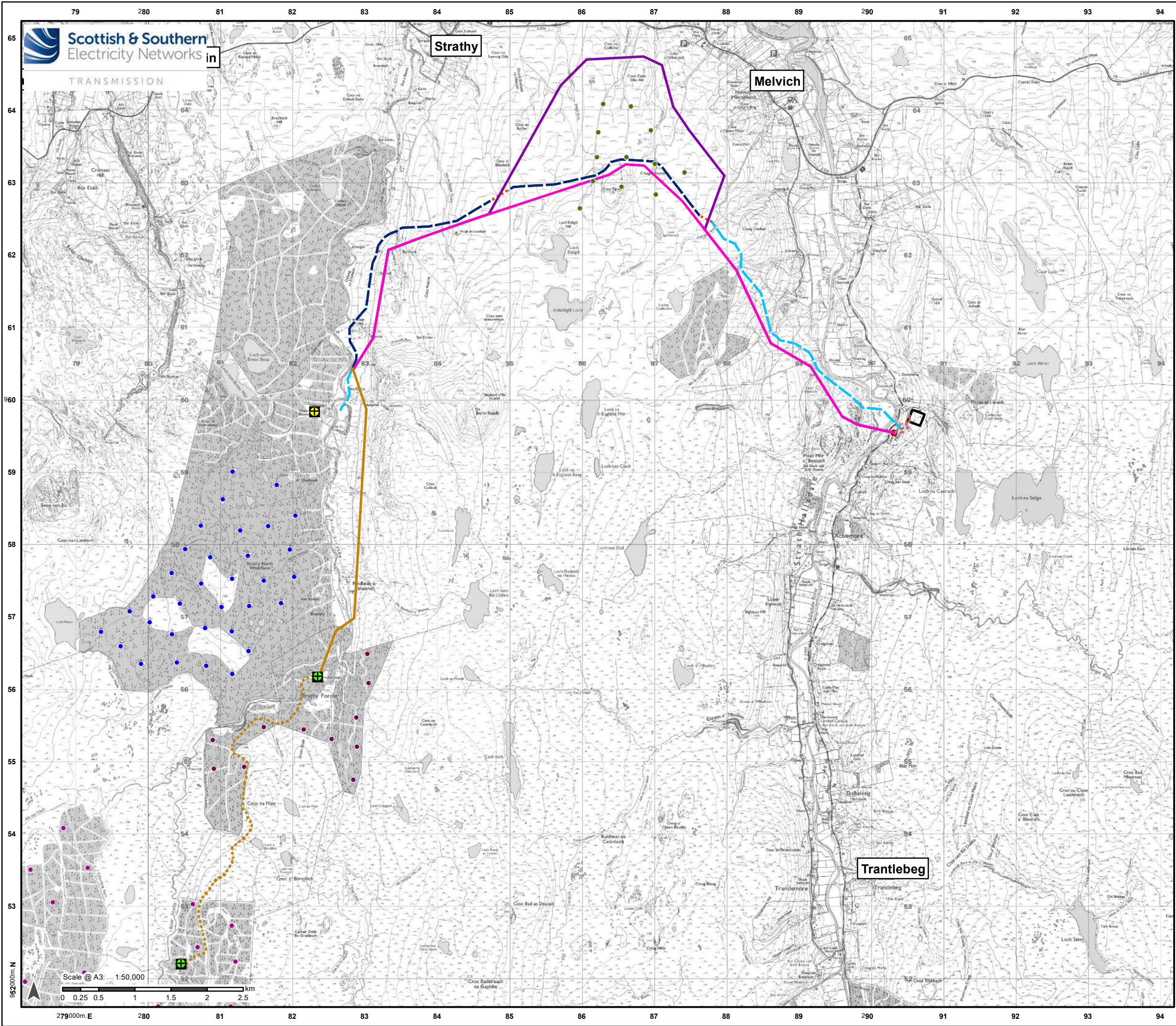
No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
143	In-combination effect of other projects	The in-combination effects of other relevant plans or projects within the wider NHZ5 area should be considered.	RSPB-20	Annex A Page 56	Ornithology Chapter	<p>Details of the developments included in the assessment of cumulative effects will be set out in the noted chapter of the EIA Report. Where an IOF is a designated feature of an SPA with potential connectivity to the Proposed Development footprint, the assessment will be made against the SPA population. Where this is not the case, the assessment will be against the NHZ population.</p> <p>In-combination effects on relevant European sites will also be considered in a Shadow HRA that will form an appendix to the noted chapter.</p>
144	Peat Survey	<p>Data from peat depth survey should be used to inform siting in order to minimise impacts on peat by helping to avoid areas deeper than 0.5m.</p> <p>Horizontal directional drilling through bedrock should be considered for sensitive peatland habitats that cannot be avoided.</p>	RSPB-21	Annex A Page 56	Soils, Geology and Water Chapter	A peat probing campaign has been carried out across the project to establish peat depths and appropriate mitigation will be set out in the noted chapter and in a Peat Management Plan that will be included as part of the EIA Report.
145	Limits of Deviation	Proposed limit of deviations should be considered in assessments.	RSPB-22	Annex A Page 57	Throughout the EIA	The proposed horizontal and vertical LoD will be considered throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.
146	Climate Change	RSPB consider that a detailed site-specific assessment to identify 'the likely net effects of the development on climate emissions	RSPB-23	Annex A Page 57	Throughout the EIA	Climate change will be considered throughout the EIA Report, where relevant.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		and loss of carbon' should be included in the EIA Report.				
147	WHS	The site overlaps with the candidate Flow Country World Heritage Site ^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} . RSPB recommend that an assessment utilising the UNESCO Impact Assessment Guidance Toolkit is undertaken alongside the EIA.	RSPB-24	Annex A Page 57	Ecology Chapter	A World Heritage Site (WHS) assessment will be undertaken for the Flow Country WHS. The assessment will use the THC toolkit.
148	Mitigation	The EIA should fully discuss mitigation measures required to reduce predicted impacts during both construction and ongoing future maintenance. Evidence should be provided for the assumed effectiveness of the proposed mitigation measures based on experience from other projects.	RSPB-25	Annex A Page 57	Ornithology Chapter	The noted chapter will include an assessment of the Proposed Development on ornithology and will suggest appropriate mitigation to avoid or reduce adverse effects, where required.
149		Flight activity data from VP surveys should be used in conjunction with NS guidance on powerline developments to best minimise impacts on birds through design. RSPB is concerned that there is insufficient evidence that powerline bird diverters are effective in protecting rare and protected species such as raptors, divers and Common scoter from collisions. Where high risk of collision is predicted, RSPB request	RSPB-26	Annex A Page 57 - 58	Ornithology Chapter	The noted chapter will include an assessment of the Proposed Development on ornithology carried out in accordance with relevant guidance and will suggest appropriate mitigation to avoid or reduce adverse effects, where required.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		that undergrounding or HDD (depending on the extent and quality of peatland habitats present) is considered over line marking, to reduce impacts to these species.				
150	BNG, Biodiversity Enhancement and HMP	<p>RSPB support the aim of the Applicant of enhancing biodiversity and achieving BNG and the preparation of an HMP.</p> <p>RSPB suggest the HMP contains detailed ecological justification for any habitat management proposals and seek to enhance key habitats such as blanket bog, occurring within the area.</p>	RPSB-27	Annex A Page 58	N/A	<p>The Applicant is committed to incorporating BNG into their projects. The BNG associated with the Proposed Development following the proposed implementation of the Connagill Cluster HMP, will be detailed in the EIA Report.</p> <p>An overarching Habitat Management Plan for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections is being developed in consultation with NatureScot to deliver landscape-scale habitat enhancement. An Outline HMP will be included within the EIA Report.</p>
151	Public Access	ScotWays are pleased to note that the Applicant is aware of Scottish Hill Track 344 Strath Halladale (Trantlebeg) to Strathy, which runs along an existing track that will be affected by the proposed development and part of which used to access the site, and that an Outdoor Access Plan is proposed, a draft of which would be included within the EIA.	ScW-01	Annex A Page 59	LVIA and Traffic and Transport Chapters	<p>The referenced recreational route will be considered within the noted chapters of the EIA Report.</p> <p>A draft Outdoor Access Plan will also be included within the EIA Report.</p>
152	Asset Impact Assessment	SW records indicate there is live infrastructure in the proximity of the development that may impact on existing	SW-02	Annex A Page 65		Scottish Water assets have been taken into consideration in the design of the proposed and alternative alignments. These assets will be included

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
		SW assets. The Applicant must identify any potential conflicts with SW assets and contact the Asset Impact Team for an appraisal of the proposal. Any assets identified will be subject to restrictions on proximity of construction.				in the assessment of potential impacts on the water environment.
153	DWPA	There are no Scottish Water drinking water catchments or water abstraction sources which are designated as DWPA under the Water Framework Directive in the area affected by the proposed activity.	SW-03	Annex A Page 66	N/A	This has been noted.
154	Transport Assessment	TS consider the assessment approach and study area, as set out in the Scoping Report, are appropriate. TS confirmed that traffic data is available for the trunk road network via Transport Scotland's database	TS-01	Annex A Page 67 - 68	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted.
155		TS request a threshold assessment at the A9 to determine if there will be any need for further assessment of potential environmental effects associated with both the dismantling of the Strathly North OHL and construction of the new OHL. In the event that the IEMA thresholds are not exceeded, no further trunk road assessment is required.	TS-02	Annex A Page 68	Traffic and Transport Chapter	This has been noted. A traffic and transport assessment will be carried out and included in the EIA Report. It should be noted that dismantling of the existing wood pole OHL would only take place once the proposed double circuit OHL supported by steel lattice towers is constructed and commissioned. The works would not take place in tandem.

No.	Subject	Task	Consultee	Scoping Opinion Page Ref.	EIA Report Reference	Comments
156	Abnormal Load Assessment	TS consider it acceptable that no AIL assessment is included in the assessment.	TS-03	Annex A Page 68	N/A	This has been noted and will be scoped out of the EIA Report.
157	Woodland Removal	Any additional felling which is not part of the planning application will require permission from Scottish Forestry under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 (the Act).	SF-01	Annex A Page 71	N/A	This is noted.
158	Conclusion	The applicant should note that any compensatory planting required as a result of the proposed development, may also need to be considered under The Forestry (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017.	SF-02	Annex A Page 71	N/A	This is noted.
159		It is a concern that the developer has not committed to assess the impacts on forestry and woodlands. In addition the developer has not committed to the control of woodland removal policies set out in this letter.	SF-03	Annex A Page 70	Forestry Chapter	A specific assessment on forestry interests will be completed and included in the EIA Report. This will also set out compensatory planting requirements, where relevant.



Legend

Overhead Line (OHL) Works for which consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act is sought

- Proposed OHL Alignment
- Alternative OHL Alignment

Ancillary Development for which Deemed Planning Consent (Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 is sought)

- Proposed Underground Cable (UGC)
- Proposed Cable Sealing End (CSE) Compound
- Proposed Temporary UGC (Alternative Alignment only)
- Existing Wood Pole 132 kV OHL (to be dismantled)

Other Infrastructure

- Connagill 275/132 kV Substation
- Existing 132kV OHL (to be retained)
- Strathy North Wind Turbines (Operational)
- Strathy South Wind Turbines (Consented)
- Strathy Wood Wind Turbines (Consented)
- Melvich Wind Turbines (Proposed)
- Strathy North Substation (Existing)
- Strathy Wood Substation (Consented)
- Strathy South Substation (Consented)

Other Associated Works

- Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection
- Strathy South Wind Farm UGC



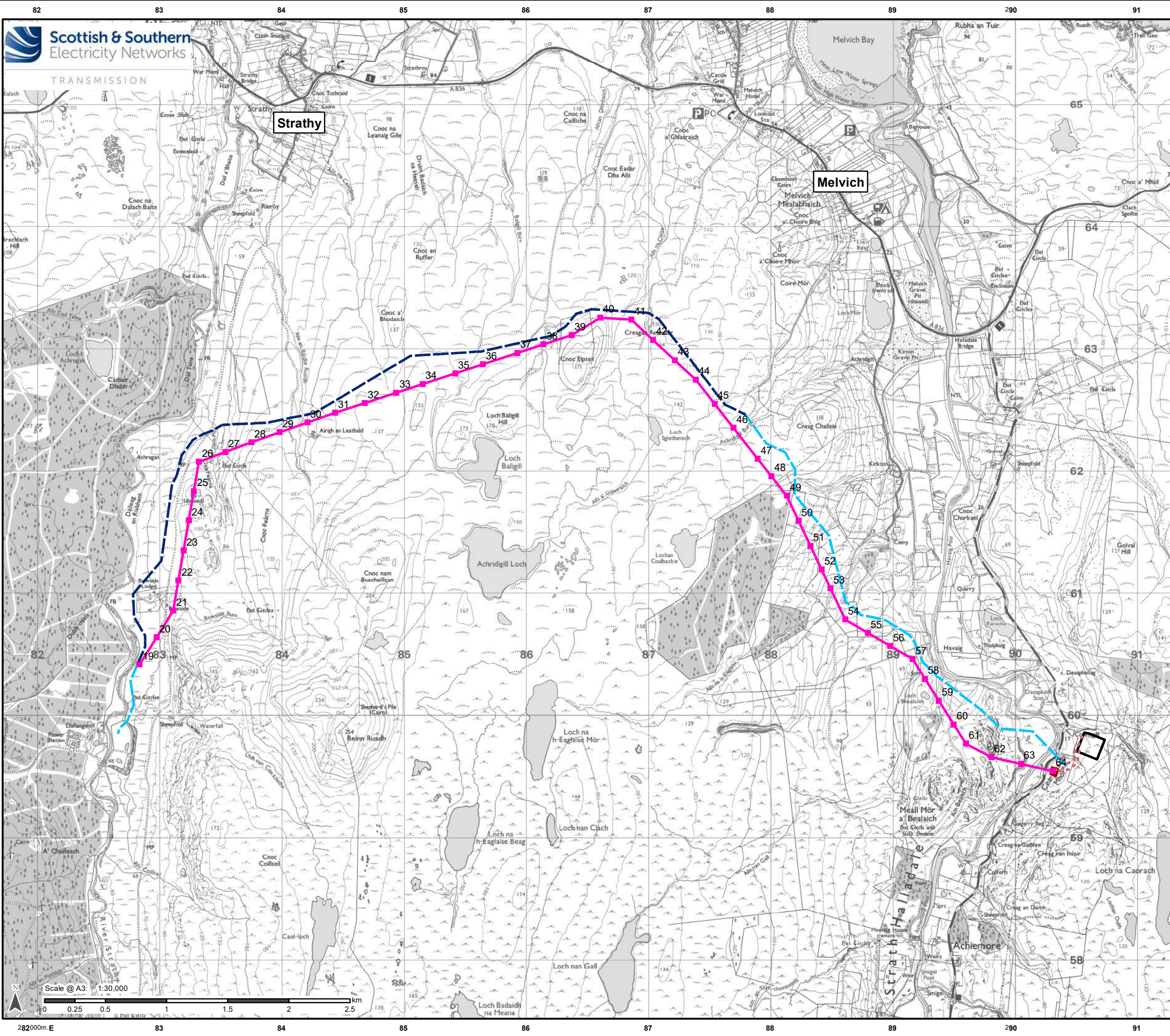
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Project No: LT560
Project: Strathy SouthWind Farm Grid Connection - Gate Check Report

Title: Figure 1: Location Plan and Overview

Drawn by: MT Date: 03/12/2024

Drawing: 121008-GCR-D1-1.0.0



Legend

Overhead Line (OHL) Works for which consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act is sought

- Proposed Steel Lattice Tower
- Proposed OHL Alignment

Ancillary Development for which Deemed Planning Consent (Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 is sought)

- Proposed Underground Cable (UGC)
- Proposed Cable Sealing End (CSE) Compound
- Existing 132kV OHL (to be dismantled)

Existing and Consented Infrastructure

- Connagill 275/132 kV Substation
- Existing 132kV OHL (to be retained)

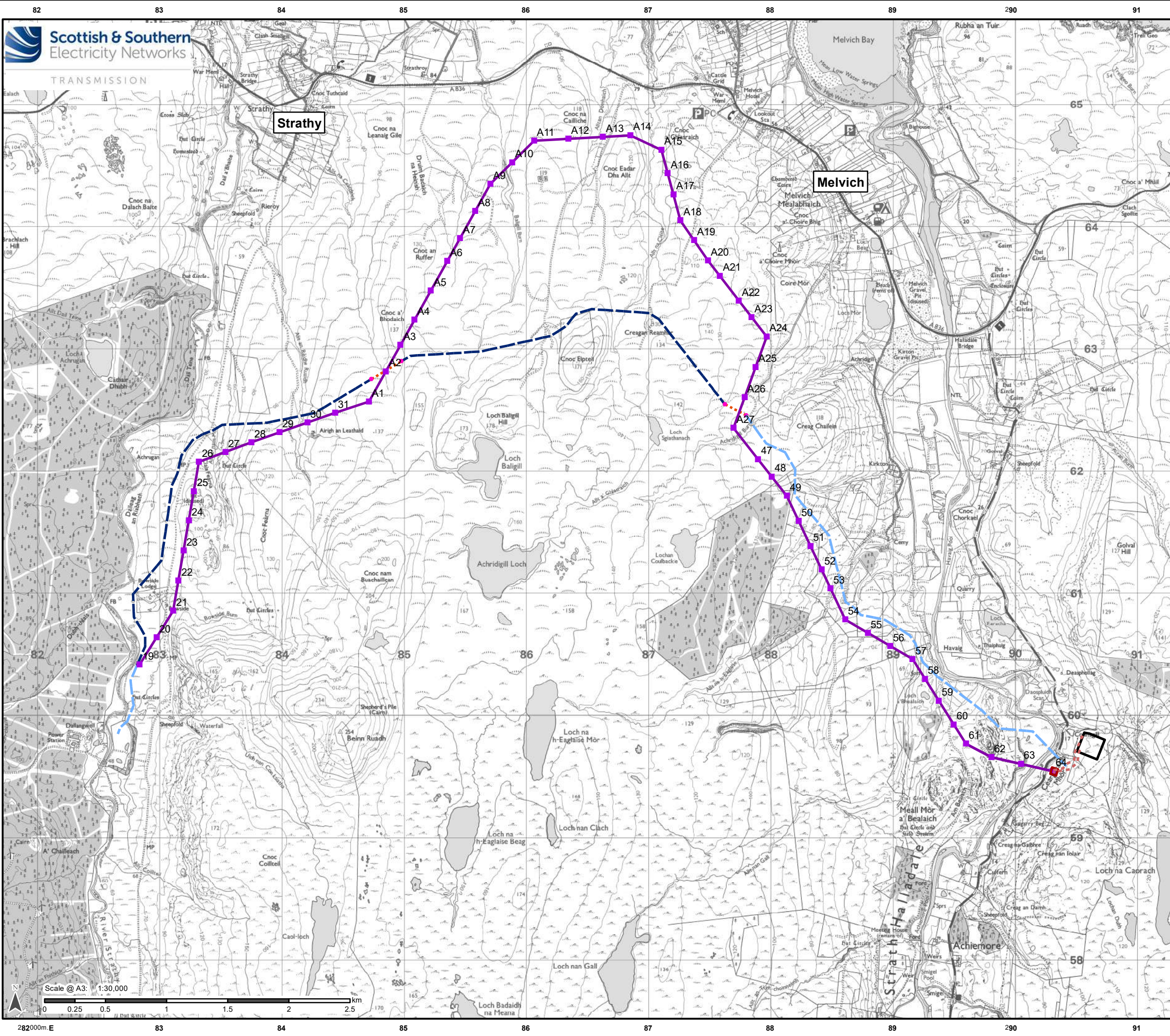
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Project No: LT560
Project: Strathy SouthWind Farm Grid Connection - Gate Check Report

Title: Figure 1a: Proposed Alignment Overview

Drawn by: MT Date: 03/12/2024

Drawing: 121008-GCR-D1a-1.0.0



Legend

Overhead Line (OHL) Works for which consent under Section 37 of the Electricity Act is sought

- Alternative Steel Lattice Tower
- Alternative OHL Alignment
- Proposed Temporary Wood Pole (H pole)

Ancillary Development for which Deemed Planning Consent (Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 is sought)

- Proposed Underground Cable (UGC)
- Proposed Cable Sealing End (CSE) Compound
- Proposed Temporary UGC
- Existing Wood Pole (H pole) (to be dismantled)

Existing and Consented Infrastructure

- Connagill 275/132 kV Substation
- Existing OHL (to be retained)

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Project No: LT560
Project: Strathy SouthWind Farm Grid Connection - Gate Check Report

Title: Figure 1b: Alternative Alignment Overview

Drawn by: MT Date: 03/12/2024

Drawing: 121008-GCR-D1b-1.0.0

