

## **Beauly-Blackhillock Reinforcement and Blackhillock-Kintore Reinforcement Consultation Document – Additional Information**

### *Introduction*

In response to feedback received during the public consultation period on the above projects, this additional information document is provided by SHE Transmission to provide further clarification of the analysis undertaken to identify the preferred route corridor.

### *Comparative Assessment of the Route Corridor Options*

Section 4.2.8 of the Consultation Document describes the methodology that was adopted for assessing and comparing the route corridor options. This comparative assessment is summarised within Table 5.1 of the Consultation Document, which lists the key high and medium sensitivity environmental factors that were considered and allowed the identification of preferences for each section of the study area.

Based on the feedback received during the consultation process, an updated version of Table 5.1 is provided below. This updated version of Table 5.1 includes an additional column to summarise the preferences that were identified for each environmental topic, on the basis of the sensitivities listed under each route corridor option.

### *Conclusions*

Section 5.3 of the Consultation Document describes the location of the preferred route corridor, identifying how this relates to the northern, central and southern route corridors which were analysed in Table 5.1.

The updated version of the Table 5.1 demonstrates that there are clear preferences relating to each individual environmental topic. However, a balance of factors has had to be considered in order to identify a single continuous and preferred route corridor to allow connection between Beauly, Blackhillock and Kintore. Overall, Table 5.1 demonstrates that the central route corridor represents the option with the least potential for significant adverse impact. However, for topics where a preference for a different route corridor was identified, the key issues associated with the central route corridor are:

- potential for adverse impact on views from Bennachie and surrounding high ground; and
- potential for adverse impact on views from the summit and walking routes in the vicinity of Mither Tap.

For this reason, the southern route corridor was identified as the preference in the part of the study area that includes Bennachie and Mither Tap.

### *Next Steps*

This additional information should be used to inform the responses submitted during the public consultation period, which is extended to 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

**Table 5.1: Comparative Analysis of Potential Route Corridors**

Environmental Topic	Northern Route Corridor	Central Route Corridor	Southern Route Corridor	Summary of Preference
<b>Landscape</b>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors Special Landscape Area (SLA), Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA and Sutors of Cromartie, Rosemarkie and Fort George SLA are located within 5 km.</li> <li>• Pluscarden, Speyside, and River Findhorn Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) are located within the northern route corridor.</li> <li>• The following high sensitivity landscapes lie within the northern route corridor: the River Deveron and Upper Ythan valley; and the area surrounding the Spey Valley.</li> <li>• Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs) surrounding the corridor include the following within 500 m of the boundary: Leys Castle GDL and Brodie Castle GDL, Darnaway Castle GDL; Keith Hall GDL and Culloden House GDL.</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA is located immediately south of the central route corridor, while Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA is located approximately 1.3 km west.</li> <li>• Pluscarden, Speyside, and River Findhorn Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) are located within 2 km of the northern route corridor.</li> <li>• The following high sensitivity landscapes lie within the central route corridor: the area between Farr and Craggie; Strathnairn; upland landscape around Moy; Daviot; the area between Dulsie Wood and River Divie; south of Assich Forest; Findhorn valley; Spey valley; and the open moorland landscape around Riereach Burn.</li> <li>• Views from Bennachie and surrounding high ground.</li> <li>• GDLs surrounding the corridor include the following</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA is located within the corridor and it extends approximately 5 km on either side of the corridor, while Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA is located approximately 1.3 km west.</li> <li>• The following high sensitivity landscapes lie within the southern route corridor: Strathnairn; upland moorland east of Farr, Spey valley; upland landscape around Moy; north of Ben Rinnes; Glen Kyllachy; Dava Moor; Knockando; agricultural landscape east of Alford.</li> <li>• Speyside AGLV is located within and surrounding the route corridor.</li> <li>• Views from Ben Rinnes which lies immediately south of the corridor.</li> <li>• GDLs surrounding the corridor include the following within 500 m: Beaufort Castle GDL, Castle Forbes GDL, Monymusk GDL, Cluny Castle GDL and Castle Fraser GDL.</li> </ul>	<p>The northern route corridor is preferred in terms of potential impacts on landscape, as it crosses the least extent of high sensitivity landscape. In addition, it is located at the greatest distance from surrounding SLAs.</p> <p>The central route corridor is less preferred than the northern route corridor, on the basis that there is potential for adverse impact on views from Bennachie and surrounding high ground. In addition, it crosses a greater extent of high sensitivity landscape areas.</p> <p>The southern route corridor is least preferred in terms of potential impacts on landscape, as it crosses the Drynachan, Lochindorb and Dava Moors SLA, as well as the greatest extent of high sensitivity landscape. In addition, there is potential for adverse impact on views from Ben Rinnes and surrounding high ground.</p> <p>Both the central and southern route corridors have potential</p>

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		<p>within 500 m: Beaufort Castle GDL, Castle Forbes GDL, Monymusk GDL, Cluny Castle GDL and Castle Fraser GDL, and Leith Hall GDL.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Cairngorms National Park is located approximately 1.6 km south of the southern route corridor.</li> </ul>	<p>for adverse impact on GDLs at Monymusk, Cluny Castle and Castle Fraser, in the area of overlap between these corridors.</p>
<p><b>Cultural heritage</b></p>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The northern route corridor includes Culloden battlefield and lies immediately south of the Culloden conservation area.</li> <li>Numerous category A listed buildings are located within and immediately surrounding the corridor, particularly around Kirkhill, Inverness and Cawdor</li> <li>Numerous scheduled monuments are located within and immediately surrounding the corridor, particularly near Little Kildrummie, west of Forres, and around Inverurie and Kintore).</li> <li>Auldearn battlefield Harlaw battlefield and Barra battlefield all lie immediately adjacent to the boundary of the northern route corridor.</li> <li>A number of conservation areas (CAs) are located</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The scheduled monument on the summit of Mither Tap is located approximately 2.2 km east of the central route corridor and there is potential for adverse impact on its setting.</li> <li>A number of scheduled monuments are located within and immediately surrounding the corridor, particularly around Kemnay.</li> <li>A number of category A listed buildings are located within and immediately surrounding the corridor, including Glenferness House, Lickleyhead Castle and listed buildings around Kemnay.</li> <li>A number of conservation areas (CAs) are located at least 1.5 km north of the corridor, including Beaully village square CA, Culloden CA, Culloden House CA ,</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numerous category A listed buildings are located in close proximity to the corridor, including: Mill of Towie; Tillycairn Castle; Linton House; Knockando Woolmill; Carron Bridge; and Aulnaslanach viaduct, as well as listed building within Kirkhill, Inverness, Aberlour and Bridge of Avon.</li> <li>Several scheduled monuments are located within the corridor including Ruthven (depopulated township), and Soilsean (deserted township and hut circle), while Auchindoun castle lies within 200 m of the corridor boundary.</li> <li>A number of CAs are located close to the southern route corridor, including Archiestown CA, located within 200 m of the southern route corridor; and Beaully</li> </ul>	<p>The northern route corridor is least preferred in terms of potential impacts on cultural heritage, as it crosses Culloden registered battlefield and lies in close proximity to Culloden conservation area. There are also numerous category A listed buildings and scheduled monuments located within the northern route corridor.</p> <p>The central and southern route corridors are preferred in terms of potential impacts on cultural heritage as there are fewer sensitive features located in close proximity to these corridors.</p> <p>Key issues associated with the central route corridor are potential impacts on the setting of Mither Tap scheduled monument, as well as other scheduled monuments within the corridor.</p>

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	<p>close to the northern route corridor. Within 1 km of the corridor boundary are Huntly CA; Fochabers CA; Culloden House CA, Inverness (Riverside) CA and Beaully village square CA.</p>	<p>Fochabers CA Inverness (Riverside) CA and Cawdor CA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culloden battlefield is located approximately 1.7 km north of the central route corridor, while Alford battlefield Harlaw battlefield and Auldearn battlefield are located at least 4 km north of the central corridor.</li> </ul>	<p>village square CA and Inverness (Riverside) CA, located at least 2 km from the corridor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alford battlefield is located immediately south of the corridor.</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues associated with the southern route corridor are potential impacts on Alford battlefield, Achiestown CA and on scheduled monuments within the corridor.</p>
<p><b>Ecology</b></p>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Inner Moray Firth SPA and Ramsar site is located immediately north of the corridor, designated for breeding common tern and osprey as well as various migratory species.</li> <li>Loch Spynie SPA is located approximately 5.4 km north of the corridor, designated for wintering wildfowl.</li> <li>The Moray and Nairn Coast SPA is located approximately 1.6 km from the corridor, designated for breeding osprey and various other migratory species;</li> <li>The Moray Firth draft marine SPA is located immediately north of the</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Inner Moray Firth SPA and Ramsar site, and the Moray Firth marine draft SPA are located approximately 1 km north of the central route corridor.</li> <li>Darnaway and Lethen Forest SPA is located approximately 4 km north of the corridor.</li> <li>The Moray and Nairn Coast SPA is located approximately 4 km north of the central route corridor.</li> <li>Loch Spynie SPA is located approximately 10 km north of the corridor.</li> <li>Corsemaul and Tom Mor SPA located approximately</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darnaway and Lethen Forest SPA is located approximately 7.2 km north of the corridor</li> <li>Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor SPA lies immediately to the south of the southern route corridor, designated for breeding Common gull.</li> <li>Carn nan Tri-tghearnan SAC, designated for its blanket bog, is located immediately west of the southern corridor.</li> <li>The River Spey SAC is crossed a number of times by the southern route corridor</li> <li>Moidach More SAC, designated for its blanket bog, lies immediately north of the southern route corridor</li> </ul>	<p>All of the route corridors have the potential for adverse impact on SACs, including the need to cross the River Spey SAC, and all of the route corridors lie within the foraging range of bird species associated with the SPAs.</p> <p>Key issues relating to the northern route corridor are associated with its proximity to SPAs located along the Moray coastline, as well as the Darnaway and Lethen Forest SPA.</p> <p>Key issues relating to the central route corridor are associated with its proximity to SACs designated for blanket bog, presenting the potential to affect the integrity (through hydrological connectivity) of</p>

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	<p>northern route corridor in Beaully Firth and is designated for breeding great northern diver; red-throated diver and Slavonian grebe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Darnaway and Lethen Forest SPA, located approximately 500 m south of the corridor, is designated for breeding capercaillie.</li> <li>• The River Spey SAC is crossed by the northern route corridor.</li> </ul>	<p>1.2 km south of the central route corridor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moidach More SAC lies immediately south of the central route corridor and is designated for blanket bog. An OHL within this corridor may impact on the integrity of this habitat type.</li> <li>• Carn nan Tri-tghearnan SAC, designated for its blanket bog, is located immediately south of the central corridor.</li> <li>• The River Spey SAC is crossed by the central route corridor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hill of Towanreef SAC, designated for its blanket bog, as well as a range of other habitat types, is located immediately south of the corridor.</li> </ul>	<p>these habitats, as well its proximity to coastal SPAs and Darnaway and Lethen Forest SPA.</p> <p>Key issues relating to the southern route corridor are associated with its crossing the River Spey SAC more than once, and with its proximity to Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor SPA and to sites designated for blanket bog, presenting the potential to affect the integrity (through hydrological connectivity) of these habitats.</p> <p>No preference in terms of ecology is identified.</p>
<b>Residential amenity</b>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of residential dwellings lie within and immediately adjacent to the northern route corridor, with particular concentrations at Easter Moniac, Inverness, Balloch, Culloden, Forres, Keith, Inverurie and Kintore.</li> <li>• There are also a number of larger settlements in close proximity to the corridor including: Kintore; Fochabers; Huntly, Oldmeldrum; Nairn, Forres</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of residential dwellings lie within and immediately adjacent to the central route corridor, with particular concentrations at Easter Moniac, Daviot, Keith, Rothes and Huntly.</li> <li>• A number of settlements lie further from the corridor including: Beaully, Muir of Ord, Inverness and Balloch; Elgin; Fochabers, and Kintore.</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of residential dwellings lie within and immediately adjacent to the southern route corridor, with particular concentrations at Easter Moniac, Tomatin, Upper Knockando, Knockando, Aberlour, Keith.</li> <li>• A number of settlements lie further from the corridor including: Beaully, Muir of Ord, Inverness and Balloch; Elgin; Fochabers, and Kintore.</li> </ul>	<p>The northern route corridor is least preferred in terms of potential impacts on residential amenity, due to its proximity to concentrated areas of settlement, including Inverness, Nairn, Elgin, Forres, Keith, Inverurie and Kintore. In addition, to avoid crossing areas of settlement, the northern route corridor includes acute corners, to the west of Forres, to the north of Keith and between Inverurie and Kintore, which would</p>

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	<p>and Inverurie; Elgin; Beauly; Muir of Ord; Inverness; and Balloch.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To the north of Keith, at Newmill, the corridor turns an acute corner on the approach to Blackhillock substation, which would require the use of larger angle towers and may have the effect of 'ring-fencing' this settlement.</li> </ul>			<p>require the use of larger angle towers for an OHL.</p> <p>The central and southern route corridors are identified as being of equal preference, as it is acknowledged that there are residential dwellings and smaller settlements both within and adjacent to these corridors.</p>
<p><b>Tourism and recreation</b></p>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Within the northern route corridor are a number of core paths, the Highland tourist route and NCN Route 1.</li> <li>The Keith-Huntly railway line runs through the northern route corridor, and an OHL within this corridor would have potential for visual impact on railway users.</li> <li>The A96 and the Inverness-Aberdeen railway line lie in close proximity to the northern route corridor and visual impacts may be possible from these locations.</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Within the central route corridor are a number of core paths, the Highland tourist route and NCN Route 1.</li> <li>The summit of Mither Tap is located approximately 2.2 km east of the central route corridor. This is a popular walking destination, and there is potential for adverse impact on views from this viewpoint.</li> </ul>	<p>Key issues and sensitivities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Within the southern route corridor are a number of core paths, the Highland tourist route and NCN Route 1.</li> </ul>	<p>The southern route corridor is preferred in terms of potential impacts on tourism and recreation, as it has least potential for impact on such features.</p> <p>The northern and central route corridors are less preferred. Key issues associated with the northern route corridor are views from railways and roads, in addition to views from tourist destinations such as Culloden battlefield, core paths and cycle routes. Key issues associated with the central route corridor are views from the summit of Mither Tap and surrounding walking routes, from core paths and from cycle routes.</p>