

Planning Application Report and Report of Handling as required by Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 relative to applications for Planning Permission or Planning Permission in Principle

Reference No: 22/02578/PP
Planning Hierarchy: National
Applicant: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc
Proposal: Erection of high voltage electricity substation and formation of associated access, landscaping, drainage and means of enclosure (Craig Murrail substation)
Site Address: Ach nabreck Forest - Land Approximately 2.5 Km North East Of Lochgilphead And 4 Km South West Of Loch Glashan Lochgilphead.

DECISION ROUTE

- Delegated - Sect 43 (A) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997
- Committee - Local Government Scotland Act 1973
-

(A) THE APPLICATION

(i) Development Requiring Express Planning Permission

- A substation platform approximately 2.93 ha at a height of 115 m AOD;
- Gas insulated Switchgear (GIS) building, maximum height 22 m and single storey control building annex;
- Two 275/33 kV grid transformers (GT), rated at 120 MVA, each located in a ventilated building of maximum height 16 m;
- 33kV Switchroom;
- Two gantries and electrical equipment to connect the OHL and the proposed substation;
- Three temporary work areas, one adjacent to the substation platform and two areas south west of the Proposed Development, adjacent to the existing access track and temporary peat storage;
- Diesel generator;
- Borehole for water;
- Turning and parking areas;
- Use of existing forestry access track with some upgrades, approximately 5 km in length;
- A permanent access track approximately 153m long connecting the proposed substation to the existing forestry track;
- A permanent access track approximately 285m long providing access to the existing track to the north east of the site;

- A 2.4 m high security fence of palisade construction around the substation platform perimeter;
- Designation of the area around the substation site as bog/mire to provide biodiversity enhancement;
- Foul and surface water drainage (Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) pond and outfall pipe).

(ii) Other specified operations

- Tree felling and compensatory planting
- Small scale alterations to the existing FLS access track off the A816 may be required. Subject to survey, and to satisfy the requirements of ABC Roads Department, works may include widening of the existing bellmouth, increasing turning radii and improving visibility splays. Between the access point and the Proposed Development site, works may include widening at bends/road strengthening to accommodate the long and heavy construction vehicles.

(B) RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that Members grant planning permission subject to the conditions and reasons attached.

(C) CONSULTATIONS:

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency [SEPA] (01.03.23) Holding Objection

Holding objection requiring more detail in respect of peat impact, management and mitigation measures.

Transport Scotland:(20.02.23) No objection subject to conditions

1. The proposed route for any abnormal loads on the trunk road network must be approved by Transport Scotland prior to the movement of any abnormal load. Any accommodation measures required including the removal of street furniture, junction widening, traffic management must similarly be approved.

2. Any additional signing or temporary traffic control measures deemed necessary due to the size or length of loads being delivered must be undertaken by a recognised Quality Assured traffic management consultant, to be approved by Transport Scotland before delivery commences.

3. Prior to commencement of the development, a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) shall be submitted to, and approved by, the Planning Authority, after consultation with Transport Scotland. Thereafter, all construction traffic associated with the development shall conform to the requirements of the agreed Plan.

NatureScot : (09.02.23)- confirm the proposal falls outwith their consultation threshold and have no comments.

Historic Environment Scotland (21.02.23) - no objection.

West Loch Fyne Community Council; No response at time of writing.

ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL INTERNAL CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Local Biodiversity Officer: (01.03.23) No Objection

Summary:

I look forward to receiving the latest reports on Pine Marten, Red Squirrel and Wildcat and any updates on bird species.

In relation to Peat, I request further information on the following:

- 1. Were alternative sites considered that would have less of an impact on peat?*
- 2. The treatment of deep peat on the development site and how will this be achieved?*
- 3. An indicative map of the potential restoration areas.*

I welcome the draft CEMP and the employment of an ECoW, however, I ask that the relevant Species Protection Plans and the associated Toolbox talks are included too. I also request that a habitat and species Monitoring Protocol is put in place to so as to record actions and any changes.

Finally in relation to biodiversity enhancement measures, I require further details on enhancements in relation to the species used and the location for screening, treatment of track edges and species rich ground cover.

Area Roads Officer: (23.02.23) No objection subject to condition.

Comment:

As this is a private access, the road marking should be a broken line, not Give Way markings

Condition:

- 1. Existing public road junction to be patched or resurfaced using a hot bituminous material, for a minimum distance of 15.00 metres.*

Environmental Health Officer: (10.02.23) No objection subject to conditions

In view of the size of the scheme and the distance to the nearest dwellings, I do not anticipate that noise would be a significant issue.

The Project Description report states that "construction activities would in general be undertaken during daytime periods. This would involve work between approximately 07:00 to 19:00 on week days and 07:00 to 18:00 on Saturdays. Construction works will only take place during these agreed hours and in planning the works, our contractors will look to minimise the impact of construction noise on neighbours and the public. There may be times that construction works require to take place outwith these agreed hours due to time critical activities, this would only be done with the prior agreement of ABC."

We would agree with the above restriction on permitted hours for operation of machinery (including vehicles to and from the site) and other noise generating work during the construction phase.

Reason: To minimise the impact of noise, generated by construction activities, on occupiers of residential properties.

Any identified measures for noise mitigation for blasting of bedrock should also be included in the Construction Management Plan.

Other matters referenced in relation to lighting and Private water supplies are subject to conditions to ensure these matters are properly addressed.

West of Scotland Archaeological Service: (22.02.23) No Objection subject to condition.

“No development shall take place within the development site as outlined in red on the approved plan until the developer has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant, agreed by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service, and approved by the Planning Authority. Thereafter the developer shall ensure that the programme of archaeological works is fully implemented and that all recording and recovery of archaeological resources within the development site is undertaken to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority in agreement with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service.”

Flood Risk Advisor: (03.03.23) No Objection subject to condition

It is recommended that a planning condition to the effect of the following be attached to any consent granted for this application:

1. No reduction in channel capacity through development of watercourse crossings.

Note recommendation in 1c regarding relocating the platform to the 'Temporary Works Area' with reference to the proposed site plan

In respect of comment 1c of this response on finished floor levels and asset/equipment protection, additional information provided by the applicant on the permeability of the compound area has addressed these matters to the satisfaction of the flooding advisor.

Core Paths Officer: no response at time of writing.

(D) HISTORY:

Specific to the site:

21/01885/PAN – Proposal of Application Notice for the erection of electricity substation Opinion issued on 17.11.21.

21/01888/SCREEN – Screening opinion for the erection of a 275kV gas insulated switchgear substation. Opinion issued on 21.3.22

(E) PUBLICITY:

MREG20- Regulation 20 Major Application Advert – Expired on 10.03.23.

(F) REPRESENTATIONS:

(i) Representations received from:

At the time of writing, one “Objection/Representation” has been received from the following party:

- Raymond Mundie of the Forest Enterprise (2nd March 2023), confirm they are the landowner at present and share the concerns of SEPA over potential impacts on deep Peat. Confirms they are working with SSEN to identify candidate peatland sites for improvement through peat restoration works to re-use peat displaced through construction activities. Details have yet to be confirmed.

Officer Comment: These matters are addressed in the Officer Report.

Representations are published in full on the planning application file and are available to view via the [Public Access](#) section of the Council’s website.

(G) SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Has the application been the subject of:

- (i) Environmental Impact Assessment Report:** Yes No
- (ii) An Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994:** Yes No
- (iii) A Design or Design/Access statement:** Yes No – included within the Environmental Appraisal Report.
- (iv) A report on the impact of the proposed development eg. Retail impact, transport impact, noise impact, flood risk, drainage impact etc:** Yes No

Environmental Appraisal Report
Planning Statement (Updated
Pre-application Consultation Report

The Environmental Appraisal Report covers the following matters:

1. Introduction and Scope
2. Project Description
3. Landscape and Visual Appraisal
4. Ecology and Ornithology
5. Forestry
6. Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology
7. Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
8. Noise Assessment
9. Traffic and Transport
10. Mitigation Proposals

The supporting Technical Annexes include:

Annex A: General Environmental Management Plans
Annex B: EIA Screening Opinion
Annex C: Landscape Assessment Methodology
Annex D: Landscape Character Sensitivity Table
Annex E: Photomontages and Landscape Figures
Annex F: Ornithology Consultation
Annex G: Extended Ecology Phase 1 Habitat Survey
Annex H: Species Protection Plans
Annex I: Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
Annex J: Forestry Assessment
Annex K: Drainage Strategy and Drainage Plans
Annex L: Hydrology Methodology
Annex M: Private Water Supply Risk Assessment
Annex N: Water Construction Management Plan
Annex O: Peat Management Plan
Annex P: Peat Slide Risk Assessment
Annex Q: Routeing Report
Annex R: Cultural Heritage Survey Report and Site Gazetteer
Annex S: Noise and Vibration

(H) PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

Is a Section 75 agreement required: Yes No

(I) Has a Direction been issued by Scottish Ministers in terms of Regulation 30, 31 or 32: Yes No

(J) Section 25 of the Act; Development Plan and any other material considerations over and above those listed above which have been taken into account in the assessment of the application

(i) List of all Development Plan Policy considerations taken into account in assessment of the application.

[National Planning Framework 4 \(Adopted 13th February 2023\)](#)

Part 2 – National Planning Policy

NPF4 Policy 1 – Tackling the Climate and Nature Crises
NPF4 Policy 2 – Climate Mitigation and Adaption
NPF4 Policy 3 – Biodiversity
NPF4 Policy 4 – Natural Places
NPF4 Policy 5 – Soils
NPF4 Policy 6 – Forestry, Woodland and Trees
NPF4 Policy 7 – Historic Assets and Places
NPF4 Policy 11 – Energy
NPF4 Policy 14 – Design, Quality and Place

NPF4 Policy 18 – Infrastructure First
NPF4 Policy 22 – Flood Risk and Water Management
NPF4 Policy 23 – Health and Safety
NPF4 Policy 25 – Community Wealth Building

Annex B – National Statements of Need

3. Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure

'Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan' Adopted March 2015

LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development
LDP DM 1 – Development within the Development Management Zones
LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment
LDP 5 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of our Economy
LDP 8 – Supporting the Strength of our Communities
LDP 9 – Development Setting, Layout and Design
LDP 10 – Maximising our Resources and Reducing our Consumption
LDP 11 – Improving our Connectivity and Infrastructure

Local Development Plan Schedules

'Supplementary Guidance to the Argyll and Bute Local Plan 2015' (Adopted March 2016 & December 2016)

SG LDP ENV 1 – Impact on Habitats, Species and our Biodiversity
SG LDP ENV 6 – Impact on Trees / Woodland
SG LDP ENV 7 – Water Quality and the Environment
SG LDP ENV 13 – Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQs)
SG LDP ENV 14 – Landscape
SG LDP ENV 16(a) – Impact on Listed Buildings
SG LDP ENV 19 – Impact on Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs)
SG LDP ENV 20 – Impact on Sites of Archaeological Importance
SG LDP BAD 1 – Bad Neighbour Development
SG LDP Sustainable – Sustainable Siting and Design Principles
SG LDP SERV 1 – Private Sewage Treatment Plants & Wastewater Systems
SG LDP SERV 2 – Incorporation of Natural Features / SuDS
SG LDP SERV 3 – Drainage Impact Assessment
SG LDP SERV 6 – Private Water Supplies and Water Conservation
SG LDP TRAN 4 – New & Existing, Public Roads & Private Access Regimes
SG LDP TRAN 6 – Vehicle Parking Provision

(ii) List of all other material planning considerations taken into account in the assessment of the application, having due regard to Annex A of Circular 3/2013.

- [ABC Technical Note – Biodiversity \(Feb 2017\)](#)
- [Argyll and Bute proposed Local Development Plan 2 \(November 2019\)](#) - The reporters have written to Argyll and Bute Council regarding the Proposed Local Development Plan 2, which is currently at Examination. Due to the status of the revised draft National Planning Framework 4 the reporters are currently determining what, if any, further processes are required as a consequence. Although PLDP2 remains a material consideration it is now subject to this further assessment [against NPF4](#)

policies. Therefore, it considered appropriate **not** to attach significant weight to PLDP2 **policies** during this time, i.e. until the consequences of NPF4 **policies** for the PLDP2 have been assessed by the reporters and the Examination report is issued. **Specific sites in PLDP2 that have not received objections and are not being dealt with at the Examination may continue as strong material considerations, e.g. allocations and potential development areas.**

- Planning Advice Notes & Web based Renewable Guidance
- Renewable energy and climate change framework
- Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019
- The Future of Energy in Scotland: Scottish Energy Strategy, Scottish Government (December, 2017) and position update dated 16.3.21
- The Scottish Government's Policy on 'Control of Woodland Removal' (Forestry Commission Scotland, 2009)
- Views of statutory and other consultees
- Planning history of the site
- Legitimate public concern or support expressed on relevant planning matters

Energy Policy Framework

Statutory and policy requirements at UK and Scottish level to mitigate climate change and increase renewable energy generation are informed by higher level international agreements, primarily the Paris Agreement (2015) which commits United Nations signatory countries to take action to cut carbon emissions and emphasises the aim of restricting temperature rises to below 2°C above preindustrial levels. At the UK level, action to tackle climate change is underpinned by the Climate Change Act 2008 as amended by the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019. A range of policy documents set out the UK Governments binding commitments to cut carbon emissions through the deployment of renewable energy, including the UK Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution (2020), Energy White Paper (2020), Carbon Plan (2011), the UK Renewable Energy Roadmap (2011) (updated 2012 and 2013) and the British Energy Security Strategy.

More recently the publication of Scotland's Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan and the accompanying Ministerial statement (Dated 10.1.23) further reinforces the importance of achieving net zero and addressing the Climate Emergency reinforcing and complimenting the objectives of NPF4 policy 1 in particular.

(K) Is the proposal a Schedule 2 Development not requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment: Yes No

(L) Has the application been the subject of statutory pre-application consultation (PAC): Yes No

The PAC Report submitted with the application confirms the public consultation undertaken in accordance with approved PAN requirements.

(M) Has a Sustainability Checklist been submitted: Yes No

(N) Does the Council have an interest in the site: Yes No

(O) Requirement for a pre-determination hearing: Yes No

The opportunity to attend a pre-determination hearing is required to be offered in relation to applications for planning permission for major developments which are significant departures from the development plan and for all national developments. Their purpose is to allow the views of applicants and those who have made representations to be heard before a planning decision is taken. The Planning Authority has discretion over how hearings will operate in its area. The applicant and consultee(s) have confirmed that they do not wish to be heard, therefore a Hearing will not be required.

(P)(i) Key Constraints/Designations Affected by the Development:

- Peat
- Forestry
- Archaeology

(P)(ii) Soils

Agricultural Land Classification:

Class 6.3

Peatland/Carbon Rich Soils Classification:

- Class 1
- Class 2
- Class 3
- N/A

Class 4 indicated on Council Maps but peat survey information submitted with application CH 6 EA Report which comprises a site specific survey identifying peat and Annex O Peat Management Plan.

Peat Depth Classification:

N/A – See CH 6 EA Report

Does the development relate to croft land? Yes No

Would the development restrict access to croft or better quality agricultural land? Yes No

Would the development result in fragmentation of croft / better quality agricultural land? Yes No

(P)(iii) Woodland

Will the proposal result in loss of trees/woodland? Yes

(If yes, detail in summary assessment)

No

Refer CH 5 of EA

Does the proposal include any replacement or compensatory planting? Yes

No details to be secured by condition

Not applicable

(P)(iv) Land Status / LDP Settlement Strategy

Status of Land within the Application
(tick all relevant boxes)

- Brownfield
- Brownfield Reclaimed
- Greenfield

ABC LDP 2015 Settlement Strategy
LDP DM 1 (tick all relevant boxes)

- Main Town Settlement Area
- Key Rural Settlement Area
- Village/Minor Settlement Area
- Rural Opportunity Area
- Countryside Zone
- Very Sensitive Countryside Zone
- Greenbelt

ABC LDP 2015 Allocations/PDAs/AFAs etc: N/A

(P)(v) Summary assessment and summary of determining issues and material considerations

The proposal is for the erection of a 275kV substation as part of a number of infrastructure proposals to “*maintain an efficient, coordinate and economical electrical transmission system*” and is required to allow connection for renewable energy generation in the area across the wider electricity network.

The Proposed Development is identified in NPF4 as a National Development under NAD3 “Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure” which recognises that “*the electricity transmission grid will need substantial reinforcement including the addition of new infrastructure to connect and transmit the output from new on and offshore capacity.*” The designation of classes of development that qualify as ND3 includes “*(b) new and/or replacement upgraded on and offshore high voltage electricity transmission lines, cables and interconnectors of 132 kV or more.*”

The Proposed Development will contribute to security of supply and provide increased and more resilient infrastructure capacity to facilitate renewable energy connections in the wider area – all of which forms vital elements to deliver reinforced network and grid infrastructure required to deliver the Government’s legally binding targets for net zero emissions and renewable energy electricity generation objectives and address the climate change emergency as defined in NPF 4.

The Proposed Development consists of the substation buildings and electrical infrastructure, and associated works required to accommodate construction and access. The development footprint for the proposed substation site once completed, includes the substation platform, cut/fill embankments, access road, associated culverts, Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) and OHL connecting down-leads and towers.

Statutory and other consultees responding to this application are supportive with the exception of SEPA who have maintained a holding objection based upon more detail being required in respect of offsite peat restoration proposals. Officers are of the opinion that these matters can be properly addressed through the use of a condition.

A comprehensive Environmental Assessment has been submitted with proposed mitigation set out in detail at Chapter 10 of this document. The approach taken to site identification and the mitigation proposed is considered to be acceptable.

All matters are therefore considered to have been properly addressed. Taking account of the above, it is recommended that planning permission be approved subject to conditions. A full report is included in the appendix of this report.

(Q) Is the proposal consistent with the Development Plan: Yes No

(R) Reasons why Planning Permission or Planning Permission in Principle Should be Granted:

The Scottish Government and the Council each have policies in support of projects which increase the capacity of the grid network to serve the community and in particular the significant level of investment in renewable energy. NPF4 policy 11 justifies the need for such investment highlighting such development as of national importance. The electricity grid infrastructure is identified as essential to transporting renewable energy from point of generation and a vital element of the Scottish Governments goal of achieving net zero,

Argyll and Bute has been successful in attracting inward investment in renewables, enabled in part by a significant level of investment in the improvement of the electricity transmission network. This success has led to the area having a good understanding of this type of development and this Council having appropriate policies and guidance to assist in its assessment, and to effectively manage their implementation on the ground. For example, the use of Construction Environmental Management plan [CEMP], a particular approach to assist with the implementation/management of such large-scale projects with a focus on environmental protection. There are investment benefits too that favour these projects, not just the short term from construction but a continued stream of investment assisting with partnership networks with local companies.

Statutory and other consultees responding to this application are supportive with the exception of SEPA who have maintained a holding objection based upon more detail being required in respect of offsite peat restoration proposals. Officers are of the opinion that these matters can be properly addressed through the use of a condition.

Other impacts during construction can be managed through best practice construction management techniques to ensure surrounding interests, particularly road access and the amenity of local housing is safeguarded from the key impacts of the development; by planning conditions to strengthen and clarify plans and supporting environmental information provided by the applicant. The proposal will also be overseen by an appointed Ecological Clerk of Works, with any permission requiring regular compliance monitoring and ongoing engagement.

The application can be supported in the context of the Council's Development Plan relating to renewable energy grid infrastructure and the underlying support for renewable energy development which is consented in this area. The application falls within the category of National Development under NPF4 which establishes the need for such development and accords with the principles established under Policy 11: Energy of NPF4.

All relevant matters have been taken into account when appraising this application. It is considered that the proposal accords with the principles and policies contained within the Local Development Plan and National Planning Framework 4 and is acceptable in terms of all other applicable material considerations.

(S) Reasoned justification for a departure to the provisions of the Development Plan

N/A

(T) Need for notification to Scottish Ministers or Historic Environment Scotland:
 Yes No

Author of Report: David Moore **Date:** 25/05/2023

Reviewing Officer: Sandra Davies **Date:** 08/06/2023

Fergus Murray
Head of Development & Economic Growth

CONDITIONS AND REASONS RELATIVE TO APPLICATION REF. NO. 22/02578/PP

Standard Time Limit Condition (as defined by Regulation)

Additional Conditions

- The development shall be implemented in accordance with the details specified on the application form dated 14.12.22; the Environmental Appraisal (December 2022), supporting information and, the approved drawings listed in the table below unless the prior written approval of the planning authority is obtained for an amendment to the approved details under Section 64 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.

Plan Title.	Plan Ref. No.	Version	Date Received
Site Location Plan 1:75000	A01	A01	19.12.22
Site Location Plan 1:25000	A01	A01	19.12.22
Site Layout Plan	4534b-DR-P-0017	Rev.7	26.05.23
Substation Compound Layout and Electrical Section Locations	4534b-DR-P-0004	Rev.3	16.01.23
Proposed Site Access Profiles	4534b-DR-P-0021	-	19.12.22
Proposed Site Profiles	4534b-DR-P-0018	Rev.2	19.12.22
Site Access Details	4534b-DR-P-0008	Rev.1	19.12.22
Typical Access Track Sections – Sheet 1	4534b-DR-P-0007	Rev.2	19.12.22
Typical Access Track Sections – Sheet 2	4534b-DR-P-0012	Rev.2	19.12.22
2.5m High Security Palisade Fencing Details	CE/34/2015	Rev. E	19.12.22
Electrical Layout Elevations 01	4534b-DR-P-0011	Rev.1	19.12.22
Electrical layout Elevations 02	4534b-DR-P-0014	Rev.2	19.12.22
Electrical Layout Elevations 03	4534b-DR-P-0015	Rev.1	19.12.22
Generator Building Elevations	4534b-DR-P-0009	Rev.2	19.12.22
Substation Building Elevations	4534b-DR-P-0006	Rev.2	19.12.22
Substation Building Layout	4534b-DR-P-0005	Rev.1	19.12.22

Transformer Building Elevations	4534b-DR-P-0019	-	19.12.22
Transformer Building Layout	4534b-DR-P-0020	-	19.12.22
Switch Room Elevations	4534b-DR-P-0013		19.12.22
Switch Room Floor Plans	4534b-DR-P-0010	Rev.1	19.12.22
Septic Tank and Private Water Supply Location (15.12.22)	A01	A01	08.02.23

Reason: For the purpose of clarity, to ensure that the development is implemented in accordance with the approved details.

2. No construction works shall be commenced until a Finalised Construction Environmental Management Plan [CEMP] has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with SEPA and other consultees, as appropriate. The development shall then proceed in accordance with the approved CEMP unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. The CEMP shall include:
- a) An updated Schedule of Mitigation (SM) highlighting mitigation set out within each chapter of the Environmental Appraisal (EA), and the conditions of this consent;
 - b) Processes to control/ action changes from the agreed SM;
 - c) Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs) for the construction phase covering:
 - i) Habitat and species protection, including ECoW Details, surveys and species protection plans;
 - ii) Landscape and Mitigation Restoration Plan including compensatory planting (refer to Condition 9);
 - iii) Pollution prevention and control;
 - iv) Dust management, including construction activity and vehicle movements;
 - v) Construction noise and vibration
 - vi) Temporary site lighting;
 - vii) Watercourse crossings;
 - viii) Site waste management
 - ix) Surface and ground water management, including: drainage and sediment management measures from all construction areas including access tracks, mechanisms to ensure that construction will not take place during periods of high flow or high rainfall; and a programme of water quality monitoring;
 - x) Mapping of borrow pits and associated habitats identified for restoration;
 - xi) Invasive Non-Native Species Management Plan
 - xii) Emergency Response Plans;
 - xiii) Timetable for post construction restoration/ reinstatement of the temporary working areas and construction compound; and
 - xiv) Other relevant environmental management as may be relevant to the development

- d) A statement of responsibility to 'stop the job/ activity' if a breach or potential breach of mitigation or legislation occurs; and
- e) Methods of monitoring, auditing, reporting and the communication of environmental management on site and with client, Planning Authority, and other relevant parties.

Reason: To ensure protection of surrounding environmental interests and general amenity.

3. No development shall commence until a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) and Phased Delivery Plan have been prepared and approved in writing by the Planning Authority and Transport Scotland as the trunk roads Authority. The Plan shall include details of:
- a) Approved access routes,
 - b) Agreed operational practises (including avoidance of convoy movements, specifying conduct in use of passing places, identification of turning areas, information of wheel cleansing facilities, signage to be installed on the A83 warning of construction traffic, signage or temporary traffic control measures to include for larger or abnormal loads, reporting of verge damage);
 - c) The provision of an appropriate Code of Practice to drivers of construction and delivery vehicles.
 - d) Abnormal load route surveys and finalised plan (including any accommodation measures required including the removal of street furniture, junction widening, traffic management).

The development shall be implemented in accordance with the duly approved Traffic Management Plan

Reason: To minimise the interference with the safety and free flow of traffic on the trunk road and to ensure that the transportation of abnormal loads will not have any detrimental effect on the trunk road network.

4. No development or ground breaking works shall commence until a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service. The scheme shall be prepared by a suitably qualified person and shall provide for the recording, recovery and reporting of items of interest or finds within the application site. Thereafter the development shall be implemented in accordance with the duly approved details with the suitably qualified person being afforded access at all reasonable times during ground disturbance works.

Reason: In order to protect archaeological resources

5. No development shall commence, until a strategy for housing incoming construction workers shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to ensure that any potential adverse impacts on the functioning of the local housing market and tourist accommodation to the detriment of the interests of the local community are identified and mitigated in accordance with the requirements of NPF4, and in particular Policy 11C and Policy 25 Objectives.

6. No development shall commence until an appraisal of the wholesomeness and sufficiency of the intended private water supply and the system required to serve the development has been submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority.

The appraisal shall be carried out by a qualified hydrologist/ hydrogeologist or other suitably competent person and shall include a risk assessment having regard to the requirements of Schedule 4 of the Private Water Supplies (Scotland) Regulations 2006 or Part 3 of the Water Intended for Human Consumption (Private Supplies) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as appropriate) which shall inform the design of the system by which a wholesome and sufficient water supply shall be provided and maintained. The appraisal shall also demonstrate that the wholesomeness and sufficiency of any other supply in the vicinity of the development, or any other person utilising the same source or supply, shall not be compromised by the proposed development.

The development shall not be brought into use or occupied until the required water supply system has been installed in accordance with the agreed specification and is operational.

Reason: In the interests of public health and in order to ensure that an adequate private water supply in terms of both wholesomeness and sufficiency can be provided to meet the requirements of the proposed development and without compromising the interests of other users of the same or nearby private water supplies.

7. No development shall commence until a detailed peat management and reinstatement plan has been submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA.

This shall include details of :

- Methodology and volume of extraction,
- Phasing/timing of any works impacting peat
- Quality/classification of Peat to be extracted
- Details of any onsite peat re-instatement and /or enhancement
- Details of storage and transportation
- Details of the location, area and condition of onsite or offsite peatland to be improved
- Details of peat enhancement measures on this land
- Details of peatland restoration outcomes to be achieved
- Details of ongoing management arrangements of the restored peatland

The restored peatland shall thereafter be maintained in accordance with the terms of approved peatland management plan, and retained in perpetuity unless with the written agreement of the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA. The restored area shall not be subject to any works or operations in the future to undermine the objectives of the restoration objectives contained in the approved Peat Management Plan.

The peat improvement works shall also be undertaken in accordance with the objectives of the necessary habitat and management plan set out at condition 08 below.

Reason: In order to minimise disturbance of peat and ensure the appropriate reinstatement, reuse and management of peat in accordance with NPF 4 Policy 5 (c) objectives.

8. No works to excavate any peat on the site shall be undertaken until a Habitat Management and Enhancement Plan has been submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority in consultation with its biodiversity advisor.

Reason: To ensure that works result in habitat enhancement works being undertaken in accordance with NPF 4 and LDP Objectives.

9. No development shall commence until a detailed Compensatory Planting Plan (CPP) and Long Term Forestry Management Plan (LTFMP) are submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with Scottish Forestry. The approved CPP and LTFMP shall be implemented in full and in accordance with the approved timing, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To enable appropriate woodland removal to proceed, without incurring a net loss in woodland related public benefit, in accordance with the Scottish Government's policy on the Control of Woodland Removal.

10. No development shall commence, until a revised Landscape Planting Plan and Maintenance Plan in accordance with BS EN ISO 11091:1999 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The revised plans must include:
- A plan showing numbers and locations of each tree and shrub species;
 - Planting schedule to show for each species, the total number, type and size at planting;
 - Specification for planting to include ground preparation, planting operations and protection from herbivores;
 - Compensatory planting scheme for tree loss
 - Schedule of implementation and phasing;

The approved Landscape Planting Plan and Maintenance Plan shall thereafter be implemented in full in accordance with the implementation schedule and maintained in accordance with the approved details. Any plant losses within the first five years will be replaced at the next planting season.

Reason: To ensure the development conserves and enhances the landscape character and biodiversity interests of the area.

11. Any watercourse crossings, hereby permitted, shall be designed to at least the capacity of the existing channel and to the 1 in 200 year plus climate change flow and an allowance for freeboard, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that new watercourse crossings do not affect the existing flows in the interests of flood risk.

12. No external lighting shall be installed on the site other than with the prior written approval of the planning authority. In that event the location, type and luminance of the lighting units to be installed shall be specified, and any duly approved lighting shall be installed in a manner which minimises illumination and glare outwith the boundary of the application site. The completed site shall not be illuminated other than in the event of staff being present on site.

Reason: In order to avoid unnecessary visual intrusion in the interests of the visual amenity of an area otherwise unaffected by the presence of light sources.

13. No development shall take place outside the following hours:

07.00hrs and 19.00hrs Mon to Friday (inclusive)
07.00hrs and 18.00hrs Saturday

And not at all on Sundays or Scottish Bank Holidays unless as otherwise may be agreed with Environmental Protection Officers in advance of the operations.

Reason: To safeguard residential amenity

NOTE TO APPLICANT

- Guidance on the submission of a request for a Non Material Amendment [NMA] is available online: [Guidance Note](#)
- Details of regulatory requirements and good practice advice can be found on the [regulations](#) section of our website. Any works within the water environment will require authorisation under The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (As Amended) (CAR) and contact should be made with the SEPA Water Permitting Team at waterpermitting@sepa.org.uk.
- Regulatory requirements for private water supplies should be discussed with the Council's Environmental Health Officers in the first instance.
- A Road Opening Permit under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 must be obtained from the Council's Roads Engineers prior to the formation/ alteration of a junction with the public road.
- The access shall be constructed and drained to ensure that no surface water is discharged onto the public road.

COMMITTEE REPORT	
APPENDIX A – RELATIVE TO APPLICATION NUMBER:	22/02578/PP
PLANNING LAND USE AND POLICY ASSESSMENT	

1. Settlement Strategy

- 1.1. The Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4 [NPF4] and the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015 [LDP], for Argyll and Bute development management purposes. By way of background, in the event of any incompatibility between a provision of NPF4 and a provision of the LDP, NPF4 will take precedence.
- 1.2. The proposal is for the erection of a 275kV substation. The proposal is part of a number of infrastructure proposals to *“maintain an efficient, coordinate and economical electrical transmission system”* and is required to allow connection for renewable energy generation in the area across the wider electricity network. The Applicant has a statutory duty under Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989 to develop and maintain an efficient co-ordinated and economical electrical transmission system in its licence area.
- 1.3. NPF4 includes plans for infrastructural investment including a high voltage electricity transmission network deemed vital for meeting national targets for electricity generation, statutory climate change targets and security of energy supplies. The current application falls into the category of National Development, as detailed within NPF4 as forming part of National Grid Infrastructure associated with the transmission of electricity. Whilst this establishes a need for the project, all necessary assessments and consents are still required for such development. Appropriate levels of mitigation would still be expected to help avoid and if necessary reduce environmental effects.
- 1.4. Policy 11 of NPF4 provides an overriding support for enabling works, including grid transmission and distribution infrastructure, where the development maximises net economic impact, together with ensuring the development does not have an unacceptable significant impact on the environment, local communities, historic environment, landscape character, and visual amenity. The proposal must therefore be assessed against the other NPF4 and LDP policies referenced in this report.
- 1.5. It is recognised by the Council that an important infrastructure related issue is renewable energy, where Argyll and Bute’s considerable potential to contribute to national targets is currently being constrained by insufficient grid capacity. The principle of development is therefore consistent with the broad principles of NPF4 Policy 11 having regard to its strategic significance in transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption by aiding to the improved grid network.
- 1.6. The site for the Project is located approximately 2.5 kilometres (km) north east of Lochgilphead and 2.9 km southwest of Loch Glashan, and would be accessed from the A816 using an existing Forestry Land Scotland (FLS) track.
- 1.7. In terms of the Local Development Plan Settlement Strategy, the application lies within the ‘Countryside’ development management zone, as defined by Policy LDP DM1 of the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015. Policy LDP DM1 supports the development of renewable energy related development within the ‘Countryside’ development management zone, providing they are consistent with other Local Development Plan policies. As a required infrastructure project, to meet the demands

required by renewable energy developments within the wider area, the principle of development is considered acceptable under the terms of policies LDP DM1 (Development Within the Development Management Zones) of the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015; and Policy 11 (Energy) of NPF4.

2. Background to the Proposal

2.1. This application forms part of Scottish & Southern Electric Networks 'Argyll and Kintyre 275kV Strategy'. The project looks to upgrade the original transmission network within Argyll and Bute which was constructed over 60 years ago and designed to transmit electricity to consumers in rural areas of low-density population, to a transmission network which meets modern transmission demands, predominantly from renewable generation. Requests from renewable generation developers to connect to the network in this area exceed current capacity of the existing transmission network, meaning a new transmission circuit is required to meet demand from energy developers and ensure security of supply. SSEN therefore look to increase the network capability in Argyll and Kintyre to enable connection of further renewable generation and to export to the wider GB network. The 275kV Strategy consists of 3 projects as outlined below:

2.1.1. Argyll and Kintyre 275kV Substations – Existing connected substations to the south of Inveraray require upgrading to 275kV capability, and as a result SSEN are proposing a new project involving the construction and operation of new 275kV substations in the vicinity of the existing An Suidhe, Crarae and Crossaig substations, and in the vicinity of Craig Murrail, north of Lochgilphead.

2.1.2. Creg Dhubh – Dalmally 275kV Connection – This project involves establishing a new substation (permitted under permission 22/00782/PP) and a new switching gear station at Glen Lochy, connected by approximately 14km of new overhead line. (This proposal is currently subject to a PLI and is with the DPEA for determination)

2.1.3. Creg Dhubh – Inveraray 275kV Overhead Line - This project involves 8-12km of new overhead 275kV line constructed between the permitted new substation at Creg Dhubh and a connection point on the Inveraray to Crossaig overhead line. It will initially operate at 132kV, but will be capable of 275kV operation, once associated transmission network connected substations to the south have been upgraded to 275kV capacity. The existing 132kV overhead line between Inveraray and the Creg Dhubh substation will be removed.

2.2. The substation will also connect into the recently completed overhead line between Inveraray and Crossaig which is capable of operation at 275kV and the project will support the export of renewable energy from the Argyll area

2.3. The site for the Project is located approximately 2.5 kilometres (km) north east of Lochgilphead and 2.9 km south west of Loch Glashan, at National Grid Reference (NGR) 187708, 691000. The Project is located wholly within the Argyll and Bute Council Local Authority and would be accessed from the A816 using an existing Forestry Land Scotland (FLS) track.

2.4. The Project's topography is relatively flat, approximately 110 m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to the south of the Project site, sloping upwards to the highest point of 120 m AOD at the centre and gently returning to 130 m AOD towards the north. The surrounding land comprises mixed and coniferous woodland plantations, with some areas also having been recently felled. The Project is underlain by class 5 peat and does not support peatland habitats. The Project is approximately 200 metres south east of a tributary river and approximately 2.9 km south west of Loch Glashan. Ancient woodland is located along the access to the south of the Project, however there are no other statutory or non-statutory

ecology or landscape designations are located within the Project. The nearest designations are Moine Mhor Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), located 4 km to the east of the Proposed Development. Lochgilphead LNCS is 3.5 km to the south. Knapdale National Scenic Area (NSA) is approximately 1.8 km to the north west. The nearest residential receptor to the Project is Auchoish, located approximately 1.27 km southwest of proposed substation platform.

- 2.5. The Proposal comprises the creation of a substation platform in the region of 2.93ha to accommodate the Gas-Insulated Switchgear [GIS]. This would be created using cut and fill to create a level platform at 115 AOD. All buildings as shown in Chapter 2 (fig 2.4) of the EA are proposed to be painted in a recessive colour of Olive brown Ral: 8008.
- 2.6. Buildings will comprise steel portal frames with metal cladding and roof. There would be some un-housed electrical switchgear and plant located within the platform area. The substation would not be illuminated at night during normal operational activities. Conditions will be imposed to ensure that appropriate materials and colouring are used in respect of these buildings and other infrastructure. Flood lights would be installed but would only be used in the event of a fault during the hours of darkness; or during the over-run of planning works; or when sensor activated as security lighting for night-time access. Details of any proposed floodlighting are subject to a condition.
- 2.7. The use of GIS instead of Air-Insulated switchgear [AIS] is a welcomed design approach as GIS requires a smaller footprint than AIS, and the majority of its electrical infrastructure is housed within a building which aids mitigation of visual and noise impacts arising from the proposal.
- 2.8. A noise assessment has been carried out to estimate the noise levels emitted from the Proposed Development and to understand the future operational impacts at noise sensitive receptors (NSRs). Environmental Protection Officers are content with the information submitted and raise no objection.
- 2.9. A private water supply will be provided by a borehole and foul and surface water drainage is provided by a SUDs pond, outfall pipe and septic tank. These are required to serve the development with toilet and wash facilities for maintenance staff. Regarding lighting, the proposal will use sensor activated security lighting for night time access.
- 2.10. It is considered that the setting and design of the development would be sensitive to the site and would accord with the principles set out in the Council's Sustainable Siting and Design Principles contained within the LDP Supplementary Guidance. No widespread views of the site will be available, and although the overall site extent and structures would be of considerable scale, officers are of the opinion that both the landscape setting and the localised characteristics and screening would allow the proposals to successfully integrate into the landscape in accordance with Policy LDP ENV 14 and NPF 4 Policy 4 Objectives.

3. Natural Environment

- 3.1. The intention of NPF4 Policy 4, is to protect, restore and enhance natural assets, making the best use of natural-based solutions. Policy 4(a) which sets out that development which by virtue of type, location or scale will have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, will not be supported. Policy 3 of NPF4 seeks to ensure that biodiversity is enhanced through the creation of strengthened nature networks. Policy 11(E-ix) of NPF4 requires developments to demonstrate how any impacts on biodiversity, including impacts on birds are mitigated. At LDP level, Policy LDP 3 requires the protection, conservation

and enhancement of our environment. Supplementary guidance policy LDP ENV1 provides additional detail in relation to development impact on habitats, species and our biodiversity.

- 3.2. No sites designated for their nature conservation importance lie within the Project Site. Four areas of Ancient Woodlands lie adjacent to the existing access track. A further Ancient Woodland (Coille Mhor) lies approximately 1.5 km north west of the Project. Details of the habitats identified during the Ecological surveys are detailed in Annex G.
- 3.3. The only field signs of protected species recorded within the Project footprint were suspected pine marten (*Martes martes*) scats identified on a single bridge located along the existing access track, approximately 1 km west of the substation platform. The findings of the EP1HS mirror the findings from the OHL EIA which also found no evidence of protected species within the area of the Project Site that they surveyed.
- 3.4. There are no waterbodies in the Project Site to support breeding amphibian species, and no field signs of amphibians were identified during the EP1HS. No field signs of reptiles were identified during the EP1HS, however, the areas of continuous bracken and felled coniferous woodland on the higher ground west of the proposed substation footprint where the dry shrub heath could offer good foraging and basking habitat for reptile species. Full details of the protected species findings from the EP1HS are provided in Annex G.
- 3.5. The EA confirms that no field signs of protected species were identified within the habitat to be lost under the footprint of the proposed substation, however, the coniferous plantation to be felled to accommodate to the project has the potential to support pine marten, red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and possibly wildcat (*Felis silvestris*). The underlying boggy ground conditions in the areas likely to be directly affected by the project and in the immediate surrounds, suggest it is unlikely that they will be used by badgers (*Meles meles*) or otters to build setts/holts. Due to the young age and uniformity of the coniferous plantation trees to be lost, there is considered to be negligible potential to support roosting bats.
- 3.6. The EA states that ;

*The Proposed Development will not result in any impact on designated sites. There is a potential for minor impacts to occur on Ancient Woodland adjacent to the existing access track associated with vehicle movement. However, following the implementation of the embedded mitigation discussed above and additional mitigation detailed in **Section 4.6, no significant effects** are predicted. The Associated Development will not result in any impact on designated sites, therefore, **no effects** on designated sites are predicted.*

- 3.7. Table 4.1 sets out an assessment of the scale and type of habitat impact associated with the permanent and temporary habitat impacts associated with the proposals in some detail with specific area measurements provided. Temporary loss habitats will be restored to wet meadow which will consist of a 'Wet Meadow Mix' by Scotia Seeds or similar (20% wildflower, 80% grass mix, of Scottish provenance). The planting scheme surrounding the Project will consist of native wet woodland and native scrub which is considered a more appropriate biodiversity and peat habitat related approach than replanting with conifers.
- 3.8. In respect of protected species the EA confirms that embedded mitigation measures will be implemented during the construction work, including the timing of installation and careful siting of permanent and temporary structures to avoid or minimise interaction with

sensitive receptors and that further surveys and ECoW supervision of construction will occur in accordance with best practice.

3.9. The applicants have confirmed that embedded measures to protect biodiversity will also include a pre-construction site walkover survey of the project by a suitably qualified ECoW, focussing on habitats to be directly and indirectly impacted by the Project. The purpose of the survey would be to confirm any changes in use of the site by protected species, as many of the species are highly mobile. Should a species be identified, the appropriate Species Protection Plans (SPPs) (included within the CEMP) would be followed during construction of the project.

3.10. The applicants conclude at 4.3.9 that:

Given the generally low ecological value of the habitats that will be permanently lost, the relatively small footprint of the Project and abundance of similar habitat in the surrounding area, as well as the embedded and additional mitigation that will be implemented, the magnitude of the effect is predicted to be negligible. As such, significant effects on protected species due to the Project are predicted to be negligible and no significant effects are predicted.

3.11. Officers are in agreement with this conclusion. Importantly the Council's biodiversity advisor has raised no objection to the proposals and considers that the proposed mitigation set out in Chapter 10 of the EA, and through the use of conditions biodiversity and nature interests can be properly safeguarded. No cumulative impacts of significance have been identified and the proposed mitigation Set out at Section 1.3 and Para 4.5.1 of the EA. A summary of both habitat and protected species evaluations is contained at Table 4.4. The overall conclusion being that;

*Following the implementation of the proposed embedded and additional mitigation measures outlined throughout this chapter, there are **no significant** residual impacts on sensitive receptors predicted as a result of the Project.*

3.12. The Council's Biodiversity Officer has raised no objections to the proposals and is content with the approach being promoted to address habitat and protected species matters. Nature Scot determined that the proposal did not meet their response threshold for providing comment on planning applications, and therefore no comments were received from them.

3.13. Having due regard to the above it is concluded that the proposal will not have any adverse impacts on the natural heritage including birds and is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG LDP ENV 1 – Development Impact on Habitats, Species and Our Biodiversity (i.e. biological diversity) and LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan; and Policy 3- Biodiversity of NPF4.

4. Historic Environment

4.1. Policy 11 (E-vii) of NPF4 requires development proposals to demonstrate how they have mitigated against potential impacts on the historic environment and Local Development Plan Policies LDP 3 and SG LDP ENV 16 accord with this provision seeking developments to be assessed against any impact they may have on the historic environment, including scheduled monuments, listed buildings and their settings.

4.2. There are no designated assets within the Proposed Development area. There are no World Heritage Sites, Inventoried Historic Battlefields, Inventoried Gardens and Designed

Landscapes, or Conservation Areas located within 2 km of the Proposed Development. There are no Listed buildings within 2km of the proposed development. There is one Category C Listed Building (Firgrove Lodge) just outside 2 km of the Proposed Development area.

- 4.3. There are five Scheduled Monuments within or immediately adjacent to 2km of the Proposed Development area. The location of these assets is set out at Figure 7.1 of the EA. The EA accepts that there is potential for temporary minor direct impacts to cup marked stone (CM_013), which lies alongside the access track, during access track improvements. Avoidance mitigations through ensuring a demarcation of 20 m from works activity is maintained and a watching brief during ground-breaking activity is considered satisfactory to provide safeguarding.
- 4.4. The archaeological character of the area primarily dates to the Prehistoric through the 19th centuries. It is acknowledged by the applicants that there is potential for unknown buried Archaeology. This is reinforced by the views of WOSAS which require further investigative works to be undertaken prior to works commencing. Officers are in agreement that this is necessary and the EA also fairly acknowledges this is a requirement of any permission. In accordance with the views of WOSAS a suspensive condition to address this matter is proposed.
- 4.5. Table 7.1 of the EA provides a summary of the evaluation undertaken in respect to potential impacts upon Cultural Heritage. Officers are in agreement with its conclusions.
- 4.6. Having due regard to the above and subject to the condition recommended by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service, it is concluded that the proposal will not have any adverse impacts on the historic environment, including listed buildings and their settings, and is therefore consistent with the provisions of Policy 11 of NPF4, together with LDP Policies LDP 3 and SG LDP ENV 16.

5. Hydrology, Flood Risk, Drainage

- 5.1. Policy 11 (E-viii) and Policy 5 of NPF4 requires development proposals to demonstrate how they have mitigated against potential impacts on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk. In respect of potential impacts upon peat. These matters are addressed at Chapter 6 of the EA (and also at Annexes, K , L, M & N) of the submissions.
- 5.2. As the potential impact upon peat and the requirement for detailed management and mitigation details to be provided by SEPA, this has been given its own section within this report although clearly flooding/hydrology/drainage all have potential interactions with peat on and surrounding the site. Further detailed evaluation of potential impacts on peat are set out at Section 6 of this report.
- 5.3. Chapter 6 of the EA relates to surveys and evaluations of surface water features that have been undertaken to assess the potential effects of the proposed development on water quality within burns and rivers, water abstractions (drinking water) and habitats dependent on the groundwater at the site to ensure no unacceptable impacts occur due to the development.
- 5.4. The EA at Para 6.4 confirms that :

The Project has been designed to reduce potential impacts as far as reasonably practicable. This includes mitigation that is embedded into the design of the project in accordance with industry standard methods and procedures, which will reduce impacts from construction and operation. The following mitigation measures relating to the

hydrological environment are embedded into the design and construction of the Proposed Development:....A Water Construction Environmental Management Plan (WCEMP) accompanies this EA Report (**Annex N**) and will form part of the embedded development design. Relevant sections of the SSEN General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) will inform a CEMP to be implemented by the Project's selected contractor post submission. GEMPS are included as **Annex A** to this report and relevant GEMPS include the following.

- Private water supplies;
- Working in or near Water;
- Soil Management;
- Contaminated Land;
- Oil Storage and Refuelling;
- Bad Weather; and
- Working with concrete.

The construction phase of the works will be undertaken in accordance with good practice guidance within the following documents.

- Control of Water Pollution from Construction Sites - Guide to Good Practice, CIRIA 2002;
- Environmental Good Practice on Site C650, CIRIA 2005;
- The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (as amended) – A Practical Guide (Version 8.4), SEPA, October 2019; and
- Regulatory Method (WAT-RM-04) Indirect Sewage Discharges to Groundwater (Version 8.0), SEPA, April 2022.

- 5.5. To protect the water environment from potential construction pollution, the application includes mitigation measures including 50m watercourse buffers for construction works with the exception of watercourse crossings; and the implementation of a Water Construction Environmental Management Plan.
- 5.6. Tables 6.5, 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8 provide an evaluation of the potential impacts upon the water environment associated with construction works. Although control of such matters is primarily the responsibility of SEPA, Officers are content that through embedded design and stated construction practice these matters have been satisfactorily addressed by the applicants. Member will note the Council's Flooding advisor has requested a condition to ensure that the flow capacity of any watercourses is maintained both during and after any construction activity which may impact upon it.
- 5.7. An evaluation of potential cumulative impacts is set out at table 6.9. Officers are in agreement that subject to best practice and proposed mitigation being implemented, particularly at construction phase, that no significant residual cumulative effects on the water environment are likely.
- 5.8. In respect of private water supplies, a condition be placed upon any grant of consent to safeguard any, as yet unidentified private supplies in consultation with Environmental Protection to ensure that this matter is addressed prior to construction works commencing.
- 5.9. In summary, the applicants have confirmed in submission that all surface water drainage will be designed to ensure that there are no adverse effects on water quality, or the rate and volume of surface runoff. Based on the proposed design and the standard good practice construction stage mitigation, no significant adverse effects are predicted for the water environment.

- 5.10. Neither the Council's Environmental Protection Officer or Flooding and drainage advisor raises objection to the proposals subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions in respect of flooding, drainage and private water supply matters.
- 5.11. Having due regard to the above it is concluded that effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk have been considered and subject to the inclusion of the planning conditions, the proposal is therefore consistent with the provisions Policy 5 and Policy 11 of NPF4.

6. Impact on Peat

- 6.1. Policy 5 (c) of NPF4 confirms that developments that would potentially have an effect on soil resources and functions or peat structure and function in terms of disturbance, degradation or erosion would not be supported unless it is demonstrated that such adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of community wide importance arising from the development proposal; and a soil or peatland management plan is submitted and demonstrates the mitigation measures to limit impact.
- 6.2. Members will note that this has proved to be one of the main considerations in respect of the current proposals where SEPA in their initial response raised a holding objection to the proposals, requiring that additional information in respect of the proposed management of extracted peat and details of the areas of land where peat enhancement work would be undertaken to compensate for impacts caused by construction activities be provided. This is notwithstanding the information submitted at time of application including the proposed peat management plan set out at Appendix O of the EA.
- 6.3. In response to the holding objection the applicant provided updated information in respect of the proposed extraction and management of peat on 16.5.23 to SEPA. This was forwarded to the Planning Authority on 05.06.23. No further response has been received from SEPA and therefore their holding objection remains the position at time of writing.
- 6.4. The need for this additional information stems from the requirement of NPF 4 for such matter to be addressed in as a material planning issue in balancing whether permission can be granted.
- 6.5. The applicants and SEPA have been in lengthy and detailed discussions in respect of providing additional information in respect of the extraction of peat, its management and storage, and its transportation off site to an areas of degraded peatland which will be improved as a consequence of these works. It has not at time of writing proved possible to agree all details with SEPA to allow them to formally withdraw their holding objection. Progress is actively being made and Officers are reassured through current endeavours and discussions between SEPA and the applicant, that SSEN will provide the details required and properly address this matter.
- 6.6. SEPA have clarified to Officers that they have evaluated the proposal against NPF Policy 5 in respect of potential impact on peat and not the wider objectives and policies of NPF 4. The Planning Authority is however required to consider the proposal against NPF 4 as a whole and come to a balanced and informed judgement in forming a recommendation and in making a determination.
- 6.7. In this instance substantial progress has been made by the applicants to seek to satisfy the detailed requirements of SEPA and secure the removal of the holding Objection, and although constructive discussions are ongoing it has not proved possible to agree all matters in advance of the PPSL.

6.8. Officers consider that in coming to a decision in respect of impact on peat in this instance that the following matters are material considerations:

- The proposals relate to essential grid infrastructure of national importance as set out (NPF 4 National Priorities Appendix B Part 3)
- The Proposal supports the delivery of the Regional Spatial Strategy for The North and West coast and the Islands as set out at Part 1: P24 of NPF 4 to provide Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure for the area.
- The proposal is supported by Policy 1 which seeks to “*encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis*”.
- The proposal is supported by Policy 11 (Energy) relating to the delivery of essential grid infrastructure improvements related to renewable energy transmission
- The proposals meet the requirements of Policy 5 (c)(i) to be regarded as essential infrastructure

6.9. Officers are of the opinion in this instance permission can be granted subject to a suspensive condition which will fully address the concerns of SEPA, address the matters required under policy 5 (c) of NPF4 ,yet not delay the determination of this Nationally important and essential grid improvement where timescales for delivery are important.

6.10. In respect of timescales Officers note that it has been clarified by SSEN that;

Last year we submitted our Initial Needs Case (INC) to Ofgem, and this was approved in December 2022. The initial Needs Case was around the need for robust proposals to reinforce the Argyll transmission network from 132kV to 275kV operation. At an estimated cost of around £400m, this investment is being taken forward as part of the SSE Group's Net Zero Acceleration Programme, which will see £12.5bn invested in the five years to 2026, or £7m every day. SSEN Transmission alone expects to invest around £4bn over this period as it delivers a network for net zero emissions. On the back of the INC being approved in December 2022, we submitted our Final Needs Case to Ofgem in May 2023. The Argyll 275kV strategy is required to support the connection of several new renewable electricity generation schemes across Argyll and to transport that power to areas of demand across Scotland and beyond. It will support the connection of at least 560MW of new renewable electricity generation, enough to power more than 500,000 homes.

.... In terms of the need to get the projects (that is Craig Murrail, Crarae and Crossaig North substations) to June PPSL, this comes down to the need to secure the substation consents enabling Ofgem to finalise, approve and issue their Final Needs Case decision in August. Any delay to the issuing of the Final Needs Case will have a knock-on effect to SSENT internal governance to release funding which will delay the start on site in late 2023 which is critical in ensuring we are able to meet our obligations to provide connected generation.

6.11. Officers consider that timescales associated with achieving NPF 4 Policy 1 Climate change objectives can also be considered a material consideration in determining the current proposals.

7. Impact on Woodland

- 7.1. Policy 11 (e-x) of NPF4 requires development proposals to demonstrate how they have mitigated against potential impacts on the trees, wood and forests. Policy 6 of NPF4 and Argyll and Bute's Supplementary Guidance LDP ENV 6 (Development Impact on Trees/ Woodlands) confirms that developments likely to have an adverse impact on trees will be resisted. Where it is demonstrated that tree removal is required, the guidance requires planting of new woodland/ trees, including compensatory planting and management agreements. The Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy (2009) confirms that woodland removal should be allowed only where it would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits and a proposal for compensatory planting may form part of this balance. Policy 6(d) of NPF4 states that development proposals on site which include an area of existing woodland or land identified in the Forestry and Woodland Strategy as being suitable for woodland creation will only be supported where the enhancement and improvement of woodlands and the planting of new trees on the site are integrated into the design.
- 7.2. The submission clarifies that the proposed development is located within a commercial conifer plantation with a red line boundary (RLB) area of 26.8 ha of mainly conifer thicket and recent restock with integrated open ground. The EA at Chapter 5 and Appendix J provides information in respect forestry matters.
- 7.3. In total 10.23 ha of the RLB is classified as woodland, which requires clear-felling to facilitate the construction of the proposed substation and associated development. If broadleaf felling of 0.48ha is not required then the felling figure is 9.75ha and this will be the necessary replanting amount.
- 7.4. The site has 0.48 ha of self-seeded native broadleaves of varying age classes mainly adjacent to the existing access track which will be retained if possible. The remaining 0.09 ha of broadleaved woodland (adjacent to the bellmouth) and all other loss of woodland should be fully compensated through a Compensatory Planting Scheme.
- 7.5. In order to address the potential significant effect on forest land-use management, the Applicant has produced a Woodland Report (Craig Murrail Woodland Report, see **Annex J**) which identifies all areas of felling required for the Proposed and Associated Developments. The application submissions confirm that:

The Applicant is fully committed to meeting the Control of Woodland Removal Policy (CoWRP) objectives set out by the Scottish Government. The primary objective of this is no net loss of woodland resulting from the development. This will be achieved through a Compensatory Planting Scheme which will involve agreements with landowners within the Argyll and Bute local authority area. Similarly, the Applicant is prepared to work with landowners as set out in the Woodland Report for the property, to address the potential effect on LMPs or management systems.

- 7.6. The felling areas and compensatory planting to be provided through a Woodland Planting Management Scheme achieved through condition are considered to adequately mitigate the potential impacts of woodland removal by achieving a no net loss of woodland area. The compensatory planting to be undertaken would replace the total area quantity of woodland removed for the development. This accords with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy, to achieve no net loss of woodland.
- 7.7. The compensatory planting would include native planting in place of non-native species in accordance with NPF4 Policy 6(d). NPF4 Policy 6 maintains a strong presumption in favour of protecting woodland resources. The creation of the substation will however give

rise to clear public benefits as the proposal is to facilitate the long term security of energy supplies as well as enable more renewable energy connections. Regarding existing trees adjacent to the development area, it is confirmed within the GEMP that tree protection measures will be installed for those trees which do not require to be felled to undertake construction work.

- 7.8. Subject to the inclusion of planning conditions to ensure that the compensatory planting scheme is implemented together, the proposal is considered to accord with NPF4 Policies 6 and 11, together with Local Development Plan SG LDP ENV 6 – Development Impact on Trees /Woodland; and The Scottish Government’s Policy on ‘Control of Woodland Removal’ (Forestry Commission Scotland 2009).

8. Impact on Access to the Countryside

- 8.1. Policy 11(E-iii) of NPF4 requires developments for renewable energy related developments to be assessed against any impact they may have on public access, including impact on long distance walking, cycling routes and scenic routes.
- 8.2. The Craig Murrail Woodland Report (Annex J) identifies a core path network situated 500m south of the proposed development, which for 3 km follows the main access road which would also be utilised by construction traffic. Timber extraction and haulage will be required and the applicant, and/or construction contractor will need a traffic management plan which effectively mitigates interface between core path users and construction traffic. This is a matter that can be adequately addressed through the CEMP as the use of these haul roads by HGV traffic is already being undertaken as part of normal felling operations in the area.
- 8.3. Officers consider that that the proposal will not have any adverse physical impacts on public access, including impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and those scenic routes identified in the NPF and is therefore consistent with the provisions of Policy 11 of NPF4. (The distance from such assets is clarified at Paragraph 3.5.2 of the EA and Figure E.3).

9. Landscape and Visual Impact

- 9.1. Policy 11(E-ii) of NPF4 requires development proposals to demonstrate how the development has mitigated against any significant landscape and visual impacts, arising from the proposal. Where impacts are localised and appropriate design mitigation has been applied, the Policy confirms that development will generally be considered acceptable. Policy SG LDP ENV 14 in respect of Landscape and Policy LDP 3 of the adopted Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015 comprise the principal policies of relevance to landscape and visual evaluation of the Proposed Development. The aim of this policy is to protect, conserve and where possible enhance the built, human, and natural environment. Policy LDP 3 also notes that a development proposal would not be supported where adverse effects, including cumulative effects on the integrity or special qualities of international or nationally designated sites; or, significant adverse effects, on the special qualities or integrity of locally designated natural and built environment sites, would occur.
- 9.2. In addition, Policy LDP 9 concerns the design and setting of development, requiring development to be sited and positioned to pay regard to the context, and be compatible with the surroundings, particularly within sensitive locations including National Scenic Areas, Areas of Panoramic Quality or Gardens and Designed Landscapes.

- 9.3. The Environmental Appraisal at Chapter 3 of the EA and Annex D, Annex E (Parts 1,2 & 3) considers both landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development with reference to landscape character areas and photomontages provided from a range of viewpoints.
- 9.4. The LVIA assessment is focused on a study area of 5km. The applicants confirm that this has been informed by analysis of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) maps and an early appraisal of potential effects for a development of this scale. It is accepted that any notable landscape or visual effects would be confined within this geographical area owing to the reduction in relative scale and visibility of the proposal with distance within its landscape context.
- 9.5. The local landscape comprises a dense and geographically extensive spread of coniferous commercial forestry that encompasses extensive areas of the more elevated inland areas around Loch Fyne. This contrasts with the lower lying landscapes associated with the coastal areas and inland valleys, which comprise mixed uses including agriculture, parcels of broadleaved woodland / shelterbelt and residential settlement.
- 9.6. Topography within the Project Site ranges from 100-150 m AOD. The surrounding landform is gently undulating, rising to 220 m AOD at the summit of Craig Murrail to the north. To the south and east, the undulating landform gradually slopes downwards towards the coast of Loch Fyne.
- 9.7. Overall, the locality is sparsely settled with Lochgilphead and Ardrishaig representing the closest settlements to the Project Site that are of notable size. However, the landscape is traversed by a network of roads and footways that link the villages, hamlets and farm steadings scattered throughout other parts of the locality. These include the A816 and A83, which represent the primary transport corridors in the locality (located to the south / south west of the Project Site). In addition, the Crinan Canal extends in a broadly north-south direction approximately 1.9 km to the south west.
- 9.8. Figure E.2 illustrates the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within the Study Area, as defined within the National Landscape Character Assessment, which represents the most up-to-date assessment of landscape character across the Study Area. The Proposed Development Site and Associated Development are located within the Plateau Moor and Forest LCT. The Proposed Development Site and Associated Development are not located within a landscape designation. However, within the wider parts of the Study Area the Knapdale National Scenic Area (NSA) is located 1.1 km to the north-west. In addition, the West Loch Fyne Area of Panoramic Quality (APQ) is located 3.2 km to the east. There are no other landscape designations or Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs) within the Study Area.
- 9.9. Settlements within the Study Area from which there may be views of the Project would be limited to Lochgilphead, which is located 2.5 km to the south west and Cairnbaan, located 3.2 km to the west. With reference to the ZTV, there would be no views from the small scale villages of Bridgend or Kilmichael, Glassary, located 2.2 km and 2.4 km to the north west of the Proposed Development Site respectively, or from the village of Lochgair, located 4.1 km to the east.
- 9.10. In terms of site selection the applicants clarify that;

The location of the project has been chosen to avoid any notable ridgelines or visually prominent sections of skyline. The undulating landform in the locality in combination with extensive areas of forestry would restrict views of the Project across wider parts of the Study Area. From the higher summits in the wider surrounding areas, the Proposed Development and Associated Development would typically be back-clothed by the distant landscape and experienced below the skyline. In this way, the surrounding landform restricts potential effects on the surrounding landscape and visual amenity.....Furthermore, the Proposed Development Site and Associated Development are located in close proximity to existing electricity infrastructure, comprising nearby overhead lines extending north east to south west. As such, the Project would exert its primary influence over a local landscape already partially characterised by existing development, and avoids the spread of infrastructure into wider parts of the surrounding landscape

9.11. Table 3.1 of the LVIA set out at chapter 3 contains more detailed evaluation of the visibility and potential impacts of the proposals from a number of identified viewpoints. The conclusions set out in this table are agreed by officers.

9.12. The visual effects of the activities during the construction phase would be temporary and limited to localised areas due to the containing influence of surrounding forestry in combination with the underlying landform. As such, potential views would predominantly be experienced intermittently by hillwalkers on Core Path 125, and road users on the A816 as they pass the Proposed Development Site access.

9.13. Within more open views the project would represent a new element of built form within the landscape. This contrasts with the rural characteristics of the LCT as a whole, which is described as having 'very few buildings' other than 'isolated dwellings on edges of the moor'. However, the local landscape is influenced by existing electricity infrastructure. The influence of the Project would be confined to the same geographic area, and therefore contain the potential effects of larger scale built objects to a particular location within the landscape. As a result, the Project would reinforce the presence of electrical infrastructure as a characteristic within the locality and exert extremely limited influence across wider parts of the LCT (thereby reducing the potential cumulative spread of development upon the surrounding landscape).

9.14. The submission concludes that:

In summary, based on the addition of the Proposed Development, the main effects would be focused within approximately 300-400 m to the south / east, and within approximately 100 m to the north / west (where visibility drops off more sharply). Across these localised areas, the magnitude of change would be Medium and the level of effect would be Moderate. At greater distances, views would be predominantly screened by surrounding forestry in combination with the undulating landform. As a result, across the wider LCT the magnitude of change based on the Proposed Development would be Negligible and the level of effect would be Minor.

9.15. Table 3.2 of Chapter 3 provides a summary of the appraisal of Landscape and Visual Impact. Officers are in agreement with these conclusions. Photomontages of the development are provided at Annex E parts 2 and 3 to assist in considering landscape impacts.

9.16. It is evidenced and accepted by officers that the proposed development will result in some localised adverse visual impacts in the immediate vicinity of the site, and that due to the overall proportions of the development at close range the magnitude of change will be large/perceptible. It has however been evidenced from the Environmental Appraisal

that the landscape and visual effects have been carefully considered, and despite the site selection resulting in the loss of a relatively small area of existing commercial forestry there will be an acceptable visual integration of this development, and medium and long range views are extremely limited and contextualised against existing electricity infrastructure. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy 11 of NPF4, and Policy SG LDP ENV 14 in respect of Landscape and Policy LDP 3 of the adopted Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2015.

10. Road Network, Parking and Associated Transport Matters.

- 10.1. Policy 11 (E-vi) of NPF4 requires developments to demonstrate how they've mitigated against any impacts on road traffic and on adjacent trunk roads, including during construction.
- 10.2. Details in respect of construction and operational traffic generation are set out at Chapter 9 of the submissions. This sets out the proposed routing of vehicles and the anticipated volume of vehicles associated with mainly the construction phase of the development as operational traffic will be minimal. Tables 9.3 and 9.4 provide projected volumes of light and heavy vehicles. The applicants submit at 9.8 that *"with the implementation of the proposed mitigation the traffic and transport effects arising from the construction and operation of the Project will be minor or less"*.
- 10.3. The Council's Area Roads Officer and Transport Scotland have no objections to the proposal on transport and road safety grounds. Subject to the inclusion of the planning conditions, the transport related impacts of the proposal are deemed to be acceptable and can be appropriately managed. As such, the proposal has been found to be in accordance with Policy 11 of NPF4.

11. Noise and Construction Impacts

- 11.1. Policy 11 (E-i) of NPF4 requires development proposals to demonstrate how they've mitigated against any impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including residential amenity, visual impact and noise arising from the development.
- 11.2. The applicant recognises that noise nuisance can arise from operational substations and the need to ensure that this is limited in respect of existing noise sensitive properties. In view of this Chapter 8 of the Environmental Appraisal provides a Noise Impact Assessment [NIA] (January 2023 version). Further information is provided in Annex S (January 2023 version). Both of the original documents were superseded by these more recent versions.
- 11.3. The nearest residential premises has been identified as a dwelling at Auchoish approximately 1.3 km to the southwest of the site. Other properties are located at a further distance to the southwest (dwellings in Lochgilphead), northwest (dwelling in Achnashelloch), and south (dwellings in Kilmory). A plan indicating the location of these premises has been is provided in Appendix A of Annex S.
- 11.4. The applicants confirm that pre-application consultation was undertaken with Environmental Protection Officers to agree the survey and assessment methodology to be adopted for this noise impact assessment and at Para 8.6.3 confirm that;

"no noise mitigation is required for the construction activities. However, in any case, any mitigation required for noise generated by rock breaking will be agreed with Argyll and Bute Council, for inclusion in the Construction Noise Management Plan."

- 11.5. It is also confirmed that no construction works are proposed to take place during the night-time period, without prior written agreement from ABC in exceptional circumstances. Similarly, the distance to the nearest noise sensitive receptor and the low level of operational noise associated with the substation does not indicate any adverse impacts.
- 11.6. The noise assessment evaluation concludes at 8.7.5 that no adverse impacts are expected in respect of either construction or operation of the substation to residential properties and therefore no specific mitigation measures are proposed as part of the submission and that embedded best practice contained within the EA will be sufficient.
- 11.7. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection on the grounds of noise impacts arising from the proposal and is in agreement with the suggested hours of operation set out in the application submission. A condition reflecting these requested hours of operation has been imposed. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the provisions of Policy 11 of NPF4 subject to the imposition of recommended conditions to protect sensitive receptors from noise.

12. Net Economic Impact, Including Local and Community Socio-Economic Benefits such as Employment, Associated Business and Supply Chain Opportunities

- 12.1. Policy 11(c) of NPF4 states that development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities.
- 12.2. The development of grid infrastructure has been identified as a national priority together within investment in renewable energy. The development of substation projects as presented within this application are not only beneficial in strengthening the robustness of the country's grid network, but also result in further job and investment opportunities through the development of associated supply chains. The development is required to facilitate the connection of wind farms/ renewable schemes to the national grid, which will allow the export of electricity generated to consumers. The relationship of the development to the economic and social benefits of renewable energy developments is therefore relevant, in a positive way.
- 12.3. Argyll and Bute is experiencing significant construction activity in the transmission network. The approval of the current application will have a short term positive construction economic impact, although significantly less impact at the operational stage with the design having a permanent design life. The construction of the development is predicted to have a peak number of workers in comparison to the operation of the facility which would not require any staff to be permanently based onsite.
- 12.4. The design, landscaping and limited visual impact of the development, means the impacts of the development are not anticipated to have adverse impact on the local economy, particularly tourism. Its impact, at a more local level, equally is not anticipated to significantly impact on existing businesses or recreational interests.
- 12.5. NPF4 calls for national developments to be exemplars of a Community Wealth Building (CWB) approach to economic development under Policy 25 of NPF4. CWB is defined as "A people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people". Based on this, it is recommended that the development should seek to agree a housing strategy to ensure that the temporary workers associated with the proposals do not have an unacceptable and adverse impact on the functioning of the local housing market area to the detriment of the community and other businesses. A planning condition is therefore

recommended to secure the housing delivery programme strategy. Officers are aware that Argyll and Bute Council has very recently declared a “Housing Emergency”

12.6. Having due regard to the above the proposals net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities has been assessed and it is concluded that the proposal is consistent with the provisions of Policies 11 and 25 of NPF4.

13. The Need for Conditions Relating to the Decommissioning of Developments, Including Ancillary Infrastructure, and Site Restoration (Including Cumulative Impacts)

13.1. Policy 11(f) of NPF4 confirms that consents for development proposals may be time-limited. The Proposed Development will have a design life of 45 years or more, after which the need for re-powering or decommissioning will be considered at that time. The Proposed Development is therefore treated as permanent in the submitted Environmental Appraisal, and repowering and decommissioning are therefore not considered.

13.2. On a project with this projected lifespan, where the substantive new build elements are judged by officers not to be causing substantive harm in terms of landscape or localised impacts, this is considered by officers to be a reasonable approach. Having due regard to the above it is concluded that the need for conditions relating to the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration has been considered and due to the nature of the development being to support the ongoing transmission of electricity to the wider area, the proposal is considered to be acceptable without any time limitation imposed. Any subsequent upgrade to equipment, where required, in the future would be reviewed through future applications.

14. Conclusion

14.1. The Council is supportive of delivering this renewable energy related infrastructure upgrade within its Renewable Energy Action Plan and the proposals represent important National Infrastructure supported in NPF4. Although localised landscape effects will take place as identified in the EA, these are considered largely unavoidable with an infrastructure project of this scale.

14.2. Officers consider that overall the landscape, ecological, historic environment, transportation and other potential effects have been appropriately addressed and mitigated in defining the proposed development site and design. Appropriate mitigation can be secured through the imposition of conditions in line with the proposals set out within the EA, and those included within consultation responses. In conclusion, it is therefore recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.