

# **Skye Reinforcement Project**

## **Environmental Impact Assessment: Scoping Report**

**December 2021**





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## GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Alignment	A centre line of an overhead line, along with location of key angle structures.
Alignment (preferred)	An alignment for the overhead line taken forward to stakeholder consultation following a comparative appraisal of alignment options.
Alignment (proposed)	An alignment taken forward to consent application. It comprises a defined centre line for the overhead line and includes an indicative support structure (tower or pole) schedule, also specifying access arrangements and any associated construction facilities.
Amenity	The natural environment, cultural heritage, landscape and visual quality. Also includes the impact of SSEN Transmission's works on communities, such as the effects of noise and disturbance from construction activities.
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum
Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)	A site specific environmental management plan setting out the environmental management procedures, legislation and requirements for a particular project and site.
Conductor	A metallic wire strung from structure to structure, to carry electric current.
Consultation	The dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups, based on a genuine exchange of views, normally, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action.
Corridor	A linear area which allows a continuous connection between defined connection points. The corridor may vary in width along its length; in unconstrained areas it may be many kilometres wide.
Design Solution	The design of the transmission infrastructure (location, structure type) between Fort Augustus and Ardmore
Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A formal process set down in The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 used to systematically identify, predict and assess the likely significant environmental impacts of a proposed project or development.
Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs)	The Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes lists those gardens or designed landscapes which are considered by a panel of experts to be of national importance.
General Environmental Management Plan (GEMP)	Developed by the Applicant to document general procedures, legislation and requirements for a variety of processes, typically during the construction phase of a project.
GWDTE	Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystem
Habitat	Term most accurately meaning the place in which a species lives, but also used to describe plant communities or agglomerations of plant communities.
Kilovolt (kV)	One thousand volts.
Landscape Character Type	A defined area of consistent landscape character identified in the NatureScot National Landscape Character Assessment of Scotland.
Listed Building	Building included on the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest and afforded statutory protection under the 'Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997' and other planning legislation. Classified categories A – C(s).

Term	Definition
Limit of Deviation (LOD)	The area either side of the proposed alignment within which micro-siting of structures may take place in accordance with the conditions of the Section 37 consent.
Micro-siting	The process of positioning individual structures to avoid localised environmental or technical constraints.
Mitigation	Term used to indicate avoidance, remediation or reduction of adverse impacts.
Marine Protected Areas (MPA)	Marine Protected Areas are used to ensure protection of some of the most vulnerable species and habitats within marine ecosystems.
National Scenic Area (NSA)	A national level designation applied to those landscapes considered to be of exceptional scenic value.
Overhead line (OHL)	An electric line installed above ground, usually supported by lattice steel towers or poles.
Plantation Woodland	Woodland of any age that obviously originated from planting.
Route	A linear area of approximately 1 km width (although this may be narrower/wider in specific locations in response to identified pinch points / constraints), which provides a continuous connection between defined connection points.
Route (preferred)	A route for the overhead line taken forward to stakeholder consultation following a comparative appraisal of route options.
Route (proposed)	A route taken forward following stakeholder consultation to the alignment selection stage of the overhead line routeing process.
Routeing	The work undertaken which leads to the selection of a proposed alignment, capable of being taken forward into the consenting process under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989.
Scheduled Monument	A monument which has been scheduled by the Scottish Ministers as being of national importance under the terms of the 'Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979'.
Section	Due to the length of the project, it has been necessary to split the broad corridor into 'sections' to more easily describe, identify and assess route and alignment options. There are seven sections from Section 0 to Section 6.
Semi-natural Woodland	Woodland that does not obviously originate from planting. The distribution of species will generally reflect the variations in the site and the soil. Planted trees must account for less than 30% of the canopy composition.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Areas of national importance. The aim of the SSSI network is to maintain an adequate representation of all natural and semi-natural habitats and native species across Britain.
Skye Reinforcement Project	The current project for which a Scoping Opinion is being sought.
Span	The section of overhead line between two supporting structures.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	An area designated under the EC Habitats Directive to ensure that rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats or species of community interest are either maintained at or restored to a favourable conservation status.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Landscapes designated by The Highland Council which are considered to be of regional/local importance for their scenic qualities.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	An area designated under the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 74/409/EEC)



Term	Definition
	to protect important bird habitats.
Species Protection Plan (SPP)	Developed by the Applicant to document general procedures, legislation and requirements for ensuring protection to a variety of species.
Stakeholders	Organisations and individuals who can affect or are affected by SSEN Transmission works.
The National Grid	The electricity transmission network in Great Britain.
Underground Cable	An electric cable installed below ground, protected by insulating layers and marked closer to the surface to prevent accidental damage through later earthworks.
Volts	The international unit of electric potential and electromotive force.
Wayleave	A voluntary agreement entered into between SSEN Transmission and a landowner upon whose land an overhead line is to be constructed for the installation and retention of the transmission equipment.
Wild Land Area (WLA)	A series of 42 mapped areas which have been identified by NatureScot as comprising the most extensive areas of high wildness within Scotland, following a process of interpretive mapping and site survey. WLA is not a statutory designation but these areas are considered to be nationally important.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (herein referred to as 'SSEN Transmission'), operating under licence as Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc (SHE Transmission plc), is a wholly owned subsidiary of the SSE plc group of companies. SSEN Transmission owns and maintains the electricity transmission network across the north of Scotland and holds a license under the Electricity Act 1989 to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission.

SSEN Transmission, hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant', is proposing to submit an application for consent to construct and operate a new 132 kV overhead transmission line (OHL) between Fort Augustus Substation and Ardmore Substation on the Isle of Skye, Scotland. The project being promoted is known as the Skye Reinforcement Project.

The existing 132 kV OHL from Fort Augustus to Ardmore on the Isle of Skye ("the existing OHL") is the sole connection from the mainland electricity transmission system to Skye and the Western Isles. Recent studies into the condition of the existing OHL have confirmed that the section between Quoich Substation and Ardmore Substation is required to be rebuilt and, upon completion of construction of the new OHL, the existing OHL would be removed. Furthermore, as a result of an increase in renewable energy projects for which access to the electricity transmission network is being formally requested, there is a requirement to increase the capacity of the existing OHL for the entirety of its length between Ardmore and Fort Augustus. This includes replacing the recently constructed Skye Tee and Quoich to Aberchalder OHLs between Fort Augustus and Quoich. These OHLs would be decommissioned and dismantled on completion of the new higher capacity OHL.

To facilitate this asset replacement and meet this increased capacity requirement, a new double circuit 132 kV transmission connection is required between Fort Augustus Substation and Edinbane Substation. This will comprise a new double circuit steel lattice structure for the majority of the route, with underground cable proposed in two sections to mitigate a likely significant effect, or as a means of rationalising the OHL network. A new single circuit trident H wood pole (H pole) OHL, is also required between Edinbane Substation and Ardmore Substation. In total, the length of the transmission connection would be over 160 km. The existing OHL between Fort Augustus Substation and Broadford Substation would be removed, as well as the existing 132 kV wood pole line between Broadford Substation and Ardmore Substation. The new transmission connection is referred to in this Scoping Report as "the Proposed Development".

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), supported by appropriate surveys and specialist assessments, will be carried out to inform an EIA Report. This will form part of an application to Scottish Ministers under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 for consent to construct the project.

This Scoping Report is provided to support a formal request under Regulation 12 of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 by the Applicant for a Scoping Opinion to determine the information to be provided within the EIA Report.

The Applicant invites consultees to comment on the following:

- What environmental information do you hold or are aware of that will assist in the EIA described here?
- Do you agree with the proposed approach for baseline collection, and that the range of surveys across particular topics is sufficient and appropriate to inform the assessment of environmental effects?
- Is there any other relevant existing baseline data that should be taken into account?
- Are there any key issues or possible effects which have been omitted?
- Do you agree with the list of issues to be scoped out, and the rationale behind the decision?

Responses to this Scoping Report should be directed to the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) of the Scottish Government to ensure all responses are collated and included within the Scoping Opinion. Responses should be directed to:

Email: [Representations\\_Mailbox@gov.scot](mailto:Representations_Mailbox@gov.scot)

OR

Energy Consents Unit

Scottish Government

5 Atlantic Quay

150 Broomielaw

Glasgow, G2 8LU

When submitting a response to the Scoping Report, the Applicant would be grateful if you could also send a copy of your response to the address below:

Email to: [joanne.nicholson@sse.com](mailto:joanne.nicholson@sse.com)

OR

For the Attention of Joanne Nicholson

Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission PLC

10 Henderson Road

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IV1 1SN

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 The Proposals

- 1.1.1 Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (herein referred to as 'SSEN Transmission') operating under licence as Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc (SHE Transmission plc), is a wholly owned subsidiary of the SSE plc group of companies. SSEN Transmission, hereafter referred to as the Applicant, owns and maintains the electricity transmission network across the north of Scotland and holds a license under the Electricity Act 1989 to develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission.
- 1.1.2 The Applicant is proposing to submit an application for consent to construct and operate a new double circuit steel structure 132 kV overhead transmission line (OHL) between Fort Augustus Substation and Edinbane Substation and a new single circuit trident H wood pole (H pole) OHL between Edinbane Substation and Ardmore Substation. The project would also comprise approximately 22 km of underground cable, split over two sections, proposed to mitigate a likely significant effect, or as a means of rationalising the OHL network. The project is referred to as the Skye Reinforcement Project (and hereafter as the Proposed Development). An overview of the Proposed Development is shown on Figure 1.
- 1.1.3 The existing 132 kV electricity transmission OHL from Fort Augustus to Ardmore on the Isle of Skye ("the existing OHL") is the sole connection from the mainland electricity transmission system to Skye and the Western Isles. Recent studies into the condition of the existing OHL have confirmed that the section between Quoich Substation and Ardmore Substation is required to be rebuilt and, upon completion of construction of the new OHL, the existing OHL would be removed. Furthermore, as a result of an increase in renewable energy projects for which access to the electricity transmission network is being formally requested, there is a requirement to increase the capacity of the existing OHL for the entirety of its length between Ardmore and Fort Augustus. This includes replacing the recently constructed Skye Tee and Quoich to Aberchalder OHLs between Fort Augustus and Quoich. These OHLs would be decommissioned and dismantled on completion of the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.4 To facilitate this asset replacement and also meet increased capacity requirements, the Proposed Development represents a long-term approach in relation to planning for future transmission infrastructure requirements to Skye, particularly having regard to targets fixed by the Scottish and UK Governments to achieve net zero by 2045 and 2050 respectively. The policy objection of "net zero" is the reduction of carbon emissions by 100% from 1990 levels by 2050 in order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and seeks to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees centigrade. This target also applies to all sectors of the economy, including energy.
- 1.1.5 Given the length of the Proposed Development, this Scoping Report (and previous route and alignment consultation exercises) splits the project into seven defined 'Sections'<sup>1</sup> to more easily describe the Proposed Development. These 'Sections' are broadly defined as follows:
- Section 0 – Ardmore to Edinbane;
  - Section 1 – Edinbane to North of Sligachan;
  - Section 2 – North of Sligachan to Broadford;
  - Section 3 – Broadford to Kyle Rhea;
  - Section 4 – Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich;
  - Section 5 – Loch Cuaich to Invergarry; and
  - Section 6 – Invergarry to Fort Augustus.

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<sup>1</sup> Section lines should be considered as 'soft' rather than definitive lines, generally following topography and / or natural features.

## 1.2 The EIA Regulations

- 1.2.1 An application for consent for the OHL will be made to the Scottish Ministers under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989, along with a request for a direction that planning permission be deemed to be granted under section 57 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended, for construction and operation of the OHL and carrying out of ancillary works.
- 1.2.2 Certain ancillary works would be associated with the Proposed Development such as the formation of bellmouths at public road access points, temporary and permanent construction access tracks and tower working areas, cable sealing end compounds, construction compounds, borrow pits to provide stone, vegetation clearance and management, and other temporary measures required during construction. The underground cable elements of the project are also ancillary development. Whilst the section 37 consent is concerned only with the installation of the OHL, the Applicant will also seek deemed planning permission for the OHL and such ancillary development under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
- 1.2.3 The applicable EIA Regulations are the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, hereafter referred to as the “EIA Regulations”. Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations lists projects where EIA is mandatory. Schedule 2 lists projects where EIA may be required ‘where proposed development is considered likely to give rise to significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location’. The Proposed Development is categorised as ‘schedule 2’ development under the EIA Regulations. Due to the natural heritage designations crossed by the Proposed Development, the Applicant has committed to preparing an EIA Report to accompany the application for consent, in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Regulations.
- 1.2.4 Following completion and commissioning of the Skye Reinforcement Project, the existing 132 kV OHL would be dismantled and removed. The dismantling works do not form part of the consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 for the Proposed Development, but are a consequence of its construction. These works are therefore included here as ‘associated works’ for the purposes of the EIA.
- 1.2.5 Other related works include the need to upgrade some of the substation infrastructure at Broadford and Edinbane substations. These works, discussed further in sub-section 2.4 of this Scoping Report, will require separate applications for planning permission under the Town and County Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).
- 1.2.6 Further consultation with relevant statutory consultees would be undertaken to determine marine consent requirements for proposed works at the Kyle Rhea crossing towers.

## 1.3 Purpose of the EIA Scoping Report

- 1.3.1 The purpose of this EIA Scoping Report is to ensure that the subsequent EIA is focused on the key impacts likely to give rise to significant adverse effects. As well as identifying aspects to be considered in the EIA this document also identifies those aspects that are not considered necessary to assess further.
- 1.3.2 In accordance with the EIA Regulations, this EIA Scoping Report contains:
- a plan sufficient to identify the location of the Proposed Development;
  - a brief description of the nature and purpose of the Proposed Development and its possible effects on the environment; and
  - information and representations from the Applicant on the aspects of the Proposed Development or environment that are not considered necessary to assess further in the EIA Report.

## 1.4 Scoping Report Methodology

1.4.1 This report provides information on the individual factors which require consideration under Regulation 4(3) of the EIA Regulations. This EIA Scoping Report presents the findings of an initial appraisal of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development on the receiving environment. It provides a basic overview of the baseline conditions as understood at the time of writing and the likely potential effects as a result of the Proposed Development. Where site survey and further assessment are deemed necessary, the approach and methodologies are outlined. Environmental topics included for initial assessment in this EIA Scoping Report are:

- Landscape and Visual Amenity;
- Ecology and Nature Conservation;
- Ornithology;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Water Environment (Hydrology and Hydrogeology);
- Geological Environment (Peat, Soils and Geology);
- Forestry;
- Traffic and Transport;
- Socio-economics, Recreation and Tourism;
- Land Use and Agriculture;
- Population and Human Health;
- Accidents and Disasters; and
- Air Quality and Climate.

1.4.2 The proposed scope of the EIA Report is set out within this Scoping Report on a topic by topic basis. Where the scope of a topic differs according to the 'section' of the project, this is set out under each topic.

1.4.3 For each topic, an overall description of the baseline environment is provided relevant to that topic, and broken down on a section by section basis where relevant. This is followed by a summary of the potential effects associated with each environmental topic listed above, and the proposed scope of survey and assessment work relevant to that Section to determine effects, and identify appropriate mitigation measures. Issues to be scoped out of assessment are also provided.

## 1.5 Route and Alignment Selection

1.5.1 In March 2020, a Consultation Document was prepared to set out the project need and describe the Skye Reinforcement Project, seeking comments from stakeholders and members of the public on the route option studies undertaken, and the rationale for, and approach to, the selection of the preferred route.<sup>2</sup> Comments received were documented in a Report on Consultation (November 2020) which set out the consultation process for the project between mid-November 2019 and end of June 2020, during the route option stage of the project.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> SSEN Transmission, (March 2020): *Skye Reinforcement Consultation Document: Route Options*.

<sup>3</sup> SSEN Transmission, (November 2020): *Report on Consultation - Route Options: Skye Reinforcement Project*.

- 1.5.2 The Report on Consultation (November 2020) also confirmed that the preferred route put forward in the Consultation Document (March 2020) in Sections 0, 1, 4, 5 and 6 would be taken forward as the proposed route for the consideration of alignment<sup>4</sup> options. In Section 2 (North of Sligachan to Broadford) and Section 3 (Broadford to Kyle Rhea), the Report on Consultation (November 2020) confirmed that given the consultation responses received and the sensitivities and challenges present within these sections, further engineering and environmental review of the options available was required prior to identifying a proposed route, preferred alignment and design solution.
- 1.5.3 Work has since been carried out to seek to determine a proposed route for Sections 2 and 3 and an environmentally preferred alignment and design solution for all sections of the OHL, whilst also considering alternative OHL alignment options and design solutions. The results of this work were set out in the Consultation Document – Alignment Selection (September 2021).<sup>5</sup>
- 1.5.4 The Consultation Document (September 2021) described how the preferred alignment and design solution has been selected to provide an optimum balance of environmental, technical and economic factors, and has been informed through a collaborative working approach between environmental and engineering teams, as well as preliminary input from statutory consultees. The preferred alignment is generally routed adjacent to, or within the vicinity of, the existing OHL. The preferred design solution typically comprises single circuit wood pole OHL between Ardmore and Edinbane (Section 0), and steel lattice OHL between Edinbane and Fort Augustus Substation. In two areas; approximately 14 km between Glen Varragill Forest (north of Sligachan) and Luib (Section 2); and the final 6 km on approach to Fort Augustus Substation (Section 6), the preferred design solution presented in the Consultation Document (September 2021) is underground cable to mitigate likely significant landscape and visual effects, or to facilitate rationalisation of the electricity network.
- 1.5.5 A Report on Consultation will be produced to document consultation responses following the alignment stage consultation, and confirm the proposed alignment and design solution. It is anticipated this will be published in early 2022.
- 1.5.6 Within Section 3 of the project, through the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC, whilst a preferred alignment and design solution has been identified, an alternative option via Glen Arroch has not been ruled out at this stage. As such, both options continue to be assessed through the EIA stage of the project until a final decision has been made prior to the section 37 application being submitted. This decision will be informed through the Habitats Regulation Appraisal (see sub-section 3.6 of this Scoping Report) and EIA process. This is discussed further in Chapter 3 of this Scoping Report.

## 1.6 OHL Contractor

- 1.6.1 SSEN Transmission has engaged an experienced OHL construction contractor to inform the identification of a preferred alignment, to explore the advantages, disadvantages and constructability of OHL alignment options. This has proven valuable at this early stage of the project in terms of providing confidence in the buildability of alignment options, and construction access opportunities. Whilst the full access strategy is still being developed, construction and operational access requirements have been a key consideration in informing the preferred alignment, utilising existing access where possible and identifying access routes to facilitate the OHL.
- 1.6.2 Targeted ground investigation works are also being undertaken along the route of the line, which will further inform tower positions, foundation requirements and construction access requirements. This information should be available to inform the EIA stage of the project.

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<sup>4</sup> A centre line of an overhead line, along with the location of key angle structures.

<sup>5</sup> SSEN Transmission, (September 2021): *Skye Reinforcement Consultation Document: Alignment Options*.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The Proposed Development would primarily comprise the construction of a new double circuit steel structure 132 kV OHL between Fort Augustus Substation and Edinbane Substation. In two distinct parts of the route, in Section 2 around the Cuillins, and in Section 6 on approach and connecting into Fort Augustus Substation, an underground cable is proposed to either mitigate a likely significant effect (in the case of Section 2), or rationalise the existing OHL network (in the case of Section 6). Furthermore, a new single circuit trident H wood pole (H pole) OHL between Edinbane Substation and Ardmore Substation is proposed (as shown on Figure 1). The total length of the new transmission connection would be approximately 160 km in length.

2.1.2 The existing single circuit 132 kV OHL from Fort Augustus to Ardmore on the Isle of Skye is the sole connection from the mainland national grid to Skye and onwards, via subsea cable to the Western Isles. The security of supply on Skye and the Western Isles is dependent on this circuit. The existing OHL to Skye is made up of distinct sections, which were constructed at different times over the last 65 years in response to changing needs. This comprises of the following (see also Plate 2.1):

1. Fort Augustus Substation to Skye Tee (near Invergarry) – a 9 km section of OHL from Fort Augustus to the Skye Tee point, of trident wood pole construction and completed in June 2017;
2. Aberchalder (Skye Tee) to Quoich – Recently constructed OHL of trident wood pole construction. This OHL has been constructed as an asset replacement to the existing single circuit 132 kV steel lattice OHL through this area which was constructed in the mid 1950's to connect the Quoich hydroelectric power station to the grid;
3. Quoich to Broadford – double circuit of steel lattice towers, strung with a single circuit 132 kV OHL constructed between 1979 and 1980; and
4. Broadford to Ardmore – single circuit of trident wood pole, strung with a single circuit 132 kV OHL constructed in 1989.

2.1.3 From Ardmore, there are two Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution (SHEPD) owned 33 kV subsea cables; one to Loch Carnan on South Uist and the other to the Isle of Harris. The line continues from the Isle of Harris as a 132 kV transmission circuit to Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis.

2.1.4 The security of supply on Skye and the Western Isles is dependent on the Skye circuit as the only connection to the main Great Britain electricity grid. To enhance supply security on the Western Isles, there are SHEPD owned backup diesel generators at Battery Point and Arnish (both connected at Stornoway) to support Lewis and Harris, and diesel generators at Loch Carnan and Barra to support the Uists. Additionally, SHEPD use mobile backup diesel generation to secure supplies on the Isle of Skye. Therefore, in the event of a fault on the main line, customer supplies are solely reliant on ageing backup generators, with associated impacts on greenhouse gas emissions.

### 2.2 The Need for the Project

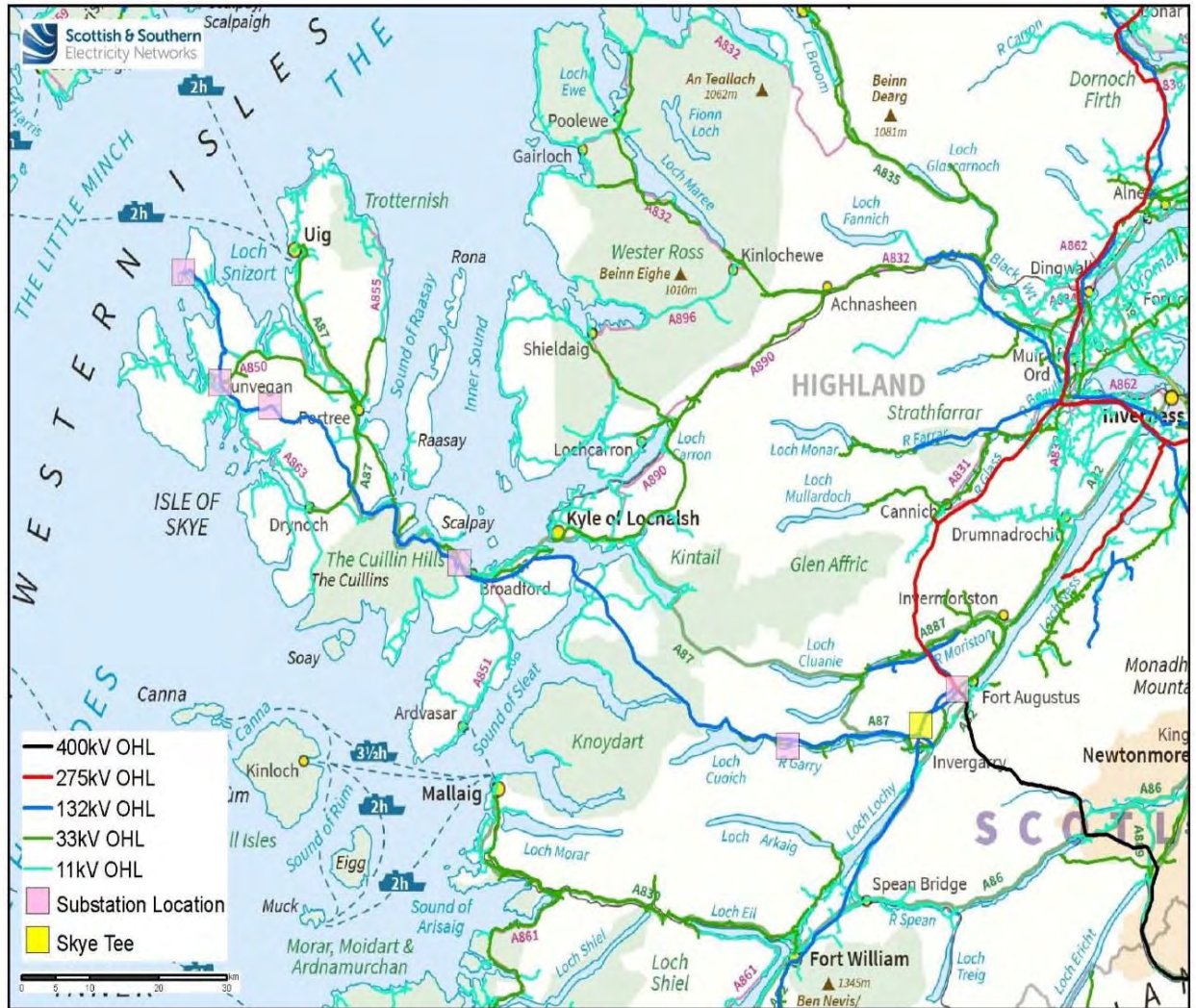
2.2.1 Over the past few years, several assessments have been carried out to determine the condition of the existing OHL and associated electricity infrastructure, including existing substation equipment. In addition, more applications for the generation and demand connections on Skye have been received over that period. This has caused SSEN Transmission to review the needs case for the project and the approach for upgrading the Skye transmission network to ensure that the best sustainable long-term solutions are identified. The need for the Skye Reinforcement Project can be summarised as follows:

- The existing OHL is reaching the end of its operational life and requires replacement in order to maintain security of supply for homes and businesses on Skye, and on the Western Isles that are currently supplied via a subsea cable from the north of Skye;



- There is a requirement to connect new renewable electricity generators on Skye which results in a requirement for an increase in capacity of the existing OHL; and
- Following commitment from both the UK and Scottish Governments to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and 2045 respectively, SSEN Transmission plans to ‘future proof’ the new OHL to facilitate this objective. This will allow incremental increases in capacity to support the connection of additional renewables generation when such need has been clearly demonstrated.

**Plate 2.1: Existing Line**



### 2.3 Proposed Development Components

2.3.1 The following table provides a summary of the main elements of the Proposed Development on a section by section basis. A description of each section is included in Chapter 4 of this Scoping Report.

**Table 2-1 Summary of Key Components of the Proposed Development**

Section	Design Solution	Other Ancillary / Associated Works
Section 0: Ardmore Substation to Edinbane Substation	Wood pole OHL for the entirety of this section (approximately 27 km in length), broadly following route of existing OHL with deviations at Trumpan, Hallin and Glen Heysdal. Wood pole structures approximately 13 m in height (including insulators and support), depending on ground conditions.	Temporary construction access, wood pole working areas and construction compounds. Dismantling of the existing 132 kV wood pole OHL
Section 1 – Edinbane to North of Sligachan;	Steel lattice OHL for the entirety of this section (approximately 20 km in length) from Edinbane Substation to a terminal tower and cable sealing end compound at approximate grid reference 148068 832110. Steel lattice towers approximately 28 m in height, although tower heights may be increased where local topography dictates in order to achieve sufficient clearance distances. Broadly follows route of existing OHL, with a deviation at Glenmore and Achaelathan.	Temporary and permanent construction access and steel lattice tower working areas, cable sealing end compounds, formation of new bellmouths off the public road, construction compounds and borrow pits. Dismantling of the existing 132 kV wood pole OHL
Section 2 – North of Sligachan to Broadford;	Underground cable for approximately 14 km, from a new sealing end compound at approximate grid reference 148068 832110 (as per Section 1) to a new cable sealing end compound near Luib (approximate grid reference 156389 827438). From here, a new steel lattice OHL proposed to Broadford Substation, broadly following route of existing OHL.	Temporary and permanent construction access, underground cable and steel lattice tower working areas, cable sealing end compounds, formation of new bellmouths off the public road, construction compounds and borrow pits. Dismantling of the existing 132 kV wood pole OHL
Section 3 – Broadford to Kyle Rhea;	Steel lattice OHL for the entirety of this section (approximately 20 km in length) from Broadford Substation to the existing crossing towers at Kyle Rhea. Steel lattice towers approximately 28 m in height, although tower heights may be increased where local topography dictates in order to achieve sufficient clearance distances. Follows route of existing OHL, with a deviation to the south of the existing OHL through the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC.  Due to sensitivities of routeing a new OHL through the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC, an alternative option through Glen Arroch and Kyleerhea (albeit also through the SAC) continues to be considered. This would comprise a new steel lattice OHL from Broadford Substation to the existing OHL crossing towers at Kyle Rhea via Glen Arroch (approximately 20 km in length).	Temporary and permanent construction access and steel lattice tower working areas, formation of new bellmouths off the public road, construction compounds and borrow pits. Dismantling of the existing 132 kV steel lattice OHL
Section 4 – Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich;	Steel lattice OHL for the entirety of this section (approximately 38 km in length) from the existing crossing towers at Kyle Rhea to Loch Quoich Dam (approximate grid reference 207192 802419). Steel lattice towers approximately 28 m in height, although tower heights may be increased where local topography dictates in order to achieve sufficient clearance distances. Follows route of existing OHL, except for a deviation at Loch Coire Shubh near Kinlochhourn.	Temporary and permanent construction access and steel lattice tower working areas, formation of new bellmouths off the public road, construction compounds and borrow pits. Dismantling of the existing 132 kV steel lattice OHL
Section 5 – Loch Cuaich to Invergarry;	Steel lattice OHL for the entirety of this section (approximately 23 km in length) from Loch Quoich Dam (approximate grid reference 206992 802484) to a new cable sealing end compound near Loch Lundie (approximate grid reference 251139 805410). Steel lattice towers approximately 28 m in height, although tower heights may be increased where local topography dictates to achieve sufficient clearance distances. Broadly follows route of existing OHL.	Temporary and permanent construction access and steel lattice tower working areas, formation of new bellmouths off the public road, construction compounds and borrow pits. Decommissioning of the existing 132 kV wood pole (Quoich to Aberchalder) OHL

Section	Design Solution	Other Ancillary / Associated Works
Section 6 – Invergarry to Fort Augustus.	An underground cable for the entirety of this section <sup>6</sup> , from a new cable sealing end compound near Loch Lundie (approximate grid reference 251139 805410) to Fort Augustus Substation, a distance of approximately 9.5 km..	Temporary and permanent construction access, underground cable working areas, cable sealing end compounds, construction compounds and borrow pits. Dismantling of the existing 132 kV wood pole (Fort Augustus to Skye Tee) OHL

## 2.4 Other Related Works

2.4.1 The Skye Reinforcement Project will give rise to a need to upgrade some of the existing substation infrastructure along the route of the new OHL. Further modifications are also required to existing substations due to asset condition and the need to provide capacity to connect generation proposed on the Isle of Skye. The proposed substation works are summarised below:

- Broadford Substation: Installation of a new 132 kV indoor switching station, a new 132/33 kV transformer, outdoor circuit breakers and indoor reactive compensation measures at the existing Broadford Substation site; and
- Edinbane Substation: Installation of a new 132 kV indoor switching station and establishment of a new indoor substation at the existing Edinbane Substation site.

2.4.2 These works will require applications for planning permission under the Town and County Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended). The works are classed as National Development within NPF3 and as such require formal pre-application consultation. The Applicant has submitted Proposal of Application Notices (PANs) for these projects and has consulted with the local community as well as with The Highland Council. The Applicant has also confirmed to The Highland Council that they will progress the works at each substation site as EIA development, and will therefore prepare an EIA Report to accompany the planning application for each site.

2.4.3 Whilst the proposed works at Broadford and Edinbane Substations will be subject to a separate consenting process to the Proposed Development, given the close links across the projects, it is proposed that the EIA Reports for each substation are appended to the EIA Report for the Proposed Development (see also Chapter 3 of this Scoping Report). Cumulative effects across projects will be considered.

2.4.4 A separate scoping exercise will be undertaken to determine an appropriately scoped EIA Report for each of the substation works.

2.4.5 In addition, there would be a requirement for a new switching station at Quoich Tee, near to the existing tee off at Kingie. This project would be developed separately by SHEPD and does not form part of this project.

2.4.6 Modification of the existing 11 and 33 kV distribution network in some areas is also likely to be required to accommodate the new OHL.

## 2.5 Dismantling the Existing OHL

2.5.1 Following completion of the Skye Reinforcement Project, the existing 132 kV OHL would be dismantled and removed. The dismantling works do not form part of the consent under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 for the Proposed Development, but are a consequence of its construction. These works are therefore included here as ‘associated works’ for the purposes of the EIA.

<sup>6</sup> In the Consultation Document – Alignment Selection, September 2021 (SSEN), the design solution within Section 6 of the project comprised an OHL solution for approximately 3.5 km, and an underground cable solution for the final 6 km to Fort Augustus Substation. A decision has since been made by the Applicant to extend the length of underground cable within this section to facilitate rationalisation of the electricity network in this area.

- 2.5.2 The Applicant would implement an Environmental Management Plan for these works to ensure good practice and compliance with all relevant environmental and nature conservation legislation.

## 2.6 Limit of Deviation

- 2.6.1 The section 37 application will seek consent for the construction and operation of the OHL, specifying a centre line, terminal and angle supporting structures with a prescribed horizontal Limit of Deviation (LOD) to allow flexibility in the final siting of individual towers and construction access to reflect localised land, engineering and environmental constraints.
- 2.6.2 The horizontal LOD, for which consent will be sought, will be refined through the EIA process, and will ultimately seek to balance the need for flexibility in micro-siting with the desirability of avoiding, reducing or controlling the potential for environmental impact. It is anticipated the LOD would be 50 m either side of proposed infrastructure (i.e. 100 m in total).
- 2.6.3 A vertical LOD, i.e. the maximum height of a pole or tower above ground level, would be confirmed through the EIA process as more detailed design information is obtained. Whilst indicative tower heights are known based on standard pole and tower designs (see sub-section 2.8 below), some structure heights may vary depending on topography.

## 2.7 Decommissioning the Proposed Development

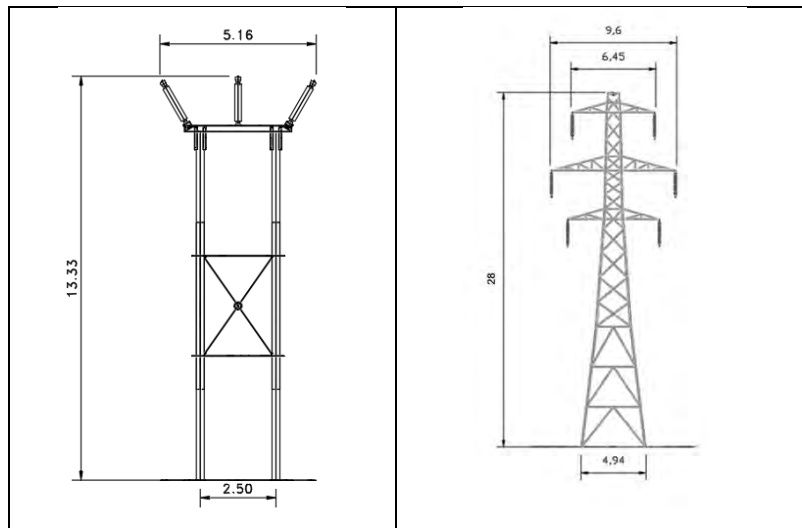
- 2.7.1 The Proposed Development would not have a fixed operational life. The effects associated with the construction phase can be considered to be representative of worst case decommissioning effects, and therefore no separate assessment is necessary.

## 2.8 OHL Design

### *Physical Characteristics of the OHL*

- 2.8.1 Where steel structures are proposed, these will be of lattice design. Towers would be approximately 28 m in height, although tower heights may be increased where local topography dictates in order to achieve sufficient clearance distances. The span lengths between towers would vary depending on topography and altitude but would be approximately 250 m apart. Exact heights of and the distances between towers would be determined after a detailed line survey and confirmed prior to submission of an application for consent.
- 2.8.2 The proposed new H wood pole OHL between Ardmore Substation and Edinbane Substation would have a nominal height of approximately 13 m (including insulators and support), depending on ground conditions. The spacing between poles would be approximately 80 m, subject to topography, altitude and further survey. This will also be confirmed prior to submission of an application for consent.
- 2.8.3 A schematic of the proposed wood poles and steel lattice towers is shown in Plate 2.2 below.

**Plate 2.2: Proposed Wood Pole and Steel Lattice Tower Typical Schematics**



## 2.9 OHL Construction

2.9.1 High voltage OHL construction typically follows a standard sequence of events as follows:

- Phase 1 – enabling works;
- Phase 2 – OHL construction;
- Phase 3 – OHL commissioning; and
- Phase 4 – re-instatement.

2.9.2 Further detail on typical construction activities and work methods would be set out in the EIA Report. An outline of the likely programme, phasing and working methods is provided here for the purpose of informing the initial scoping stage environmental assessment.

### *Construction Programme*

2.9.3 It is anticipated that the timeframe between commencement of development and completion of energising the line would be approximately 36 months.

2.9.4 The detailed construction phasing and programme would be subject to change as the design progresses and also due to necessary consents and wayleaves being agreed. Further information will be provided in the EIA Report on the indicative construction programme.

### *Standard Mitigation and Working Methods*

2.9.5 The initial scoping appraisal and the assessment in the EIA Report will be carried out on the basis that standard mitigation measures will be implemented during the construction work, including compliance with both project wide and site specific environmental management procedures, with reference to SSEN Transmission General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) and Species Protection Plans (SPPs).

2.9.6 A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) would be developed for the project and adopted by the successful contractor during the construction phase. The principal objective of this document is to provide information on the proposed infrastructure and to aid in avoiding, minimising and controlling adverse environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Development. Furthermore, this document will aim to define good practice as well as specific actions required to implement mitigation identified in the EIA Report, the planning process and / or other licencing or consenting processes. Mitigation measures relevant to the OHL

will be incorporated into the overall CEMP for the project. The CEMP would be updated during the pre-construction phase and would form part of the contractor documents between the Applicant and the appointed construction contractor.

## 2.10 Construction Practices and Phasing

### Phase 1 - Enabling Works

#### *Distribution*

- 2.10.1 Works would be required to the existing 33 kV distribution network infrastructure within some areas to facilitate safe working and operating conditions given the proximity of the distribution network to the existing (and proposed) 132 kV network. It is anticipated that these distribution network assets would be realigned or undergrounded to make way for the Proposed Development. Specific details are not available at this stage, but it is anticipated that any works would be carried out under Permitted Development rights.

#### *Access during Construction*

- 2.10.2 The construction of a new transmission connection approximately 160 km in length is a major undertaking, presenting significant construction challenges not just in terms of scale but also remoteness, terrain and seasonal weather conditions.
- 2.10.3 The commissioning by SSEN Transmission of an experienced OHL contractor (see sub-section 1.6) has enabled construction access considerations to be at the forefront during the design process. Whilst construction access details are yet to be finalised, an access track matrix has been developed by the project team considering both construction and operational access requirements, and with reference to NatureScot's good practice guide on constructing tracks in Scottish uplands<sup>7</sup>. Typical access solutions are set out below with respect to the different technology types under consideration, and will be subject to on-going review through the design process and EIA stages of the project.
- 2.10.4 In general, proposed construction site access would be taken via the existing public road network and would make use of existing forest and estate tracks as far as practicable, upgraded as required. Existing bellmouths would be utilised where possible, subject to improvements. New bell mouths would be required at a number of locations.
- 2.10.5 Where operational access is required, this would likely range from ATV routes with no formal track to a stone road suitable for 4x4 and waggon access. The selection of the type of track required will consider the proximity to a public road, structure type and potential maintenance activities / vehicles required in future to a given location (taking legal health & safety requirements into account). Access track details will be finalised through the EIA stage of the project and presented to illustrate where each access type will be deployed, and the rationale for that selection.
- 2.10.6 Materials required for the construction of any new stone access tracks are likely to be obtained from on-site borrow pits, or imported from local quarries. The exact location of borrow pits would be dependent upon site surveys, availability of suitable material and proximity to the required location.

#### *Wood Pole Construction Access*

- 2.10.7 For wood pole construction (i.e. in Section 0), vehicle access is required to each pole location during construction, moving along the line, to allow excavation and creation of foundations and pole installation. Preference will be given to lower impact access solutions including the use of low pressure tracked personnel

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<sup>7</sup> Constructed tracks in the Scottish Uplands (Updated September 2015), Scottish Natural Heritage.

vehicles and trackway in boggy / soft ground areas to reduce any damage to, and compaction of, the ground. These journeys would be kept to a minimum to minimise disruption to habitats along the route.

- 2.10.8 It is anticipated that helicopters would be used for the delivery of materials to each pole location for wood pole construction in Section 0. The key benefit of helicopter use for wood pole construction is that vehicular access to each pole location (as well as inline access) can be significantly reduced, with delivery of components and erection being facilitated by helicopter.

#### *Steel Lattice OHL Construction Access*

- 2.10.9 Typically, new stone tracks are likely to be required to access each steel tower location in Sections 1 to 5, as well as the requirement for inline access between towers. Stone tracks are designed to suit the heavy plant loads required for construction works for steel towers, and to suit the varied ground conditions along the route. It is anticipated that stone tracks would be approximately 4 m in width. On completion of construction, unless required for operational access, the stone tracks would be removed and the original material reinstated.
- 2.10.10 Where access to tower positions is difficult due to steep terrain, alternative methods would be proposed such as using smaller items of plant, specialist tracked plant, and in some cases using helicopters for moving materials.
- 2.10.11 Temporary trackways are an alternative method of providing access, dependent on ground conditions. Although there may be localised areas where trackway may be suitable, it is not considered an appropriate solution for the construction of steel lattice towers on this project in its entirety, due to the length of time they are required to be in place and the weight and size of construction plant that would be required to track over them. Stone tracks generally afford greater reliability and stability compared to trackway solutions. Similarly, the extensive use of wide tracked excavators and other plant without prior ground preparation are unlikely to be a viable solution for this project in its entirety, although they may be used for certain tasks during construction.
- 2.10.12 The use of helicopters for construction of steel lattice towers is feasible, however, the operational restrictions (e.g. weather, proximity to public roads and environmental factors), and the significant cost implications, for a project of this scale are key considerations. The use of helicopters is likely to be required in more remote sections of the project, and where particular environmental or geographical constraints necessitate their use. Where helicopters are used, construction plant would still require access to each tower location to facilitate construction and erection of towers. Helicopter landing zones would also require to be identified.

#### *Underground Cable Construction Access*

- 2.10.13 Installation of an underground cable would typically require a wide construction corridor (approximately 30 m) to accommodate excavation and cable installation equipment. A construction haul road would be required for much of the cable installation route. After construction, disturbed ground can be reinstated and restored.

#### *Access during Operation*

- 2.10.14 Permanent access tracks would only be required in more remote areas where access during construction requires a higher specification track, and where long term maintenance needs require permanent access. It is intended however to keep requirements for permanent access tracks to a minimum. Where required, permanent tracks would be reinstated to a width suitable for 4x4 vehicles.

#### *Forestry Clearance*

- 2.10.15 The Proposed Development would pass through or close to areas of woodland and commercial forestry. Where the Proposed Development passes through areas of woodland or forestry, a wayleave corridor would likely be required. The width of this corridor would be variable depending on the nature of the woodland or forestry.

### *Site Compounds*

It is currently anticipated that a number of construction compounds and laydown areas would be required given the scale of the Proposed Development, the locations of which would be confirmed by the Principal Contractor.

### *Phase 2 – Construction Works*

#### *Foundations*

2.10.16 Depending on topography, the type of pole and the ground conditions, the foundations for each double trident wood H pole would be either:

- augered sleeve, typically requiring the use of a tracked vehicle mounted auger to create two holes approximately 700 mm in diameter and 2 to 3 m deep, into which the poles would be slotted before being grouted. Helicopters could also be used; or
- standard concrete foundation, involving the excavation of soils to create a concrete block foundation.

2.10.17 Different approaches to forming foundations may be used for steel lattice towers, subject to ground conditions at each location. These are likely to comprise:

- spread type e.g. concrete pad and chimney; or
- piled type e.g. driven concrete, tube and micro pile; or augered.

2.10.18 Foundation types and designs for each pole and tower will be confirmed following detailed geotechnical investigation at each position.

#### *H Pole Construction*

2.10.19 It is anticipated that the assembled pole structures would be transported and landed into the foundations by helicopter. A team of operatives would be present on the ground to position and centralise the poles into their foundations before release of the structure. Stays would be installed at angle and terminal poles and potentially on cross slopes for stability.

#### *Steel Lattice Tower Construction*

2.10.20 Tower construction can typically commence two weeks after the foundations have been cast, subject to weather conditions and concrete curing rates. Tower steelwork would be delivered to each tower construction site either as individual steel members or as prefabricated panels, depending on the method of installation and the available access. A working area, up to approximately 50 m x 50 m, is required at each tower location to facilitate access, laydown and assembly.

#### *Conductor Stringing*

2.10.21 The conductor would be delivered to site on wooden drums in pre-determined pulling section lengths. Prior to stringing the conductors, temporary protection measures (e.g. netted scaffolds), would be required across public roads and existing access tracks.

2.10.22 Conductor stringing equipment (i.e. winches, tensioners and ancillary equipment) are set out at either end of pre-selected sections of the OHL.

2.10.23 Pilot wires would be pulled through the section to be strung. These would be hung on blocks (wheels) at each suspension tower and connected to a winch and tensioner at the respective end of the section. The winch, in conjunction with the tensioner is used to pull the pilot wires between the structures. The conductor is pulled via the pilot wires through the section under tension to avoid contact with the ground and any under-running



obstacles. Once the conductor has been strung between the ends of the section it is then tensioned and permanently clamped at each pole / tower.

#### *Underground Cable*

2.10.24 An underground cable solution for this project would comprise of a double circuit, with a cable rating required to match the corresponding OHL at 348 Mega Volt Amps (MVA). The cables would be terminated at a Cable Sealing End (CSE) compound, which would allow for transition between underground cable to OHL (an example is shown in Plate 2.3 below). A permanent access track would be required at each CSE compound.

2.10.25 The overall cable construction corridor would need to be approximately 30 m wide to accommodate excavation and cable installation equipment and store excavated materials during construction for reinstatement once the installation process is complete. A haul road would be constructed along the length of the cable section during the construction phase, with the circuits installed on either side. Similarly, access points and tracks from existing public roads to the proposed haul road would likely be required.

2.10.26 To facilitate a more efficient installation cables would be installed via ducts. These plastic ducts would be installed prior to the cable pull job to minimise open ground works / excavations. The high voltage cable would then be pulled into place at each joint bay location, required at intervals of approximately 800-900 m along each cable circuit route.

#### **Plate 2.3: Example of a Cable Sealing End Compound**



2.10.27 It is anticipated that the underground cable connection would comprise two banks of three 132 kV cables installed in a trefoil duct formation. These would be installed within a single trench. A fibre optic cable would also be installed within the trench for monitoring purposes.

2.10.28 The underground cable would be installed in a ducted system laid in open cut trenches (approximately 1.6 m depth x 1.5 m width) which would be backfilled to sub formation level to reduce the need of an open trench over longer distances. Joint bays would be required approximately every 900 m along the length of the cable. These would comprise an underground concrete lined structure approximately 9 m in length, 3.5 m wide and 2 m deep.

2.10.29 Watercourse crossing methods would be tailored for each crossing dependent on the watercourse width and water volumes. Crossings of watercourses over 2 metres wide are likely to be performed using Horizontal Direct

Drill (HDD) where conditions allow. The temporary haul road would also require appropriately designed drainage and cut-off ditches to maintain natural drainage patterns.

#### Phase 3 - Commissioning

2.10.30 The OHL and support poles and towers would then be subject to an inspection and snagging process. This allows the Contractor and SSEN Transmission to check that the works have been built to specification and are fit to energise. The circuits would then be energised from the substations in a phased sequence.

#### Phase 4 - Reinstatement

2.10.31 Following commissioning of the Proposed Development, it is anticipated that all construction sites would be reinstated. Reinstatement would form part of the contract obligations for the Principal Contractor and would include the removal of all temporary access tracks, all work sites around the pole and tower locations and the re-vegetation of all construction compounds.

### **2.11 Associated Works – Dismantling the Existing 132 kV OHL**

2.11.1 The OHL dismantling process typically follows a standard sequence of events as follows:

- Phase 1 - enabling works;
- Phase 2 – conductor and insulator removal;
- Phase 3 – lattice tower or wood pole removal; and
- Phase 4 - re-instatement.

2.11.2 The phase 1 enabling works would include any vegetation management and temporary access arrangements to facilitate the dismantling work, utilising existing access routes and tracks where possible. Access will typically use low ground pressure tracked machines, excavators, small dumpers and 'Hagglund' type tracked personnel carriers. Where access is difficult, for example within the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC in Section 3, it is anticipated that the use of helicopters would be employed to remove steel tower structures from site.

2.11.3 Where ground conditions are particularly wet and boggy it may be preferable to install a temporary track to avoid excessive ground damage. Bog mats (long timber sleepers) can be used in the majority of tower locations, however a temporary 'geo-road' may be installed by laying a geotextile material and some imported stone to form a running track, which will be removed immediately after the dismantling work.

2.11.4 As for the construction phase, the initial scoping appraisal and the assessment in the EIA Report will be carried out on the basis that standard mitigation measures will be implemented during the dismantling work, including the implementation of an Environmental Management Plan and compliance with both project wide and site specific environmental management procedures, with reference to SSEN Transmission GEMPs and SPPs.

2.11.5 Following the enabling work, the conductor would be removed and collected using winch and cable drum, either by:

- unclamping, lowering to the ground and winching where there are no ground based constraints; or
- by installing rollers (running out blocks) at each pole, unclamping the conductor and placing the conductor in the rollers prior to winching.

2.11.6 Following the removal of the conductor and insulators, each tower or pole would be removed.

## **2.12 Construction Employment and Hours of Work**

- 2.12.1 SSEN Transmission takes community responsibilities seriously. The delivery of a major programme of capital investment provides the opportunity to maximise support of local communities.
- 2.12.2 Employment of construction staff will be the responsibility of the Principal Contractor but SSEN Transmission encourages the Principal Contractor to make use of suitable labour and resources from areas local to the location of the works.
- 2.12.3 It is envisaged that there will be a number of separate teams working at the same time at different locations along the Proposed Development route. The resource levels will be dependent on the final construction sequence and will be determined by the Principal Contractor.
- 2.12.4 Construction working is likely to be during daytime periods only. Working hours are currently anticipated between approximately 07.00 to 19.00 March to September and 07.30 to 17.30 (or within daylight hours) October to February, Monday to Friday. Weekend working would also be proposed with slightly reduced working hours (i.e. works to cease at 16.00). Working hour assumptions would be set out within the EIA Report, and confirmed with The Highland Council as local authority.

## **2.13 Construction Traffic**

- 2.13.1 The construction will give rise to regular numbers of staff transport movements, with small work crews travelling to work site areas. It is anticipated that the Principal Contractor will identify main compound areas, each with a safe area for parking away from the public highway.
- 2.13.2 Vehicle movements will be required to construct new or upgraded access roads; deliver the foundation and pole / tower components and conductor materials to site; deliver and collect materials and construction plant from the site compounds and to individual pole and tower locations.
- 2.13.3 Where practicable (predominantly for wood pole sections), helicopters will be utilised for delivery of construction materials, so as to minimise potential impacts upon soils and the landscape from conventional traffic. The sourcing and implementation of helicopters for this purpose would be defined by the Principal Contractor.
- 2.13.4 The EIA Report would provide a summary of the total anticipated traffic movements associated with construction of the Proposed Development, broken down by phases.

## **2.14 Operation and Management of the OHL**

- 2.14.1 OHLs require very little maintenance. Regular inspections are undertaken to identify any unacceptable deterioration of components, so that they can be replaced. From time to time, inclement weather, storms or lightning can cause damage to either the insulators or the conductors. If conductors are damaged, short sections may have to be replaced.
- 2.14.2 The wooden H poles typically have a lifespan of 40 years, while steel lattice towers generally last 80 years.
- 2.14.3 In addition to the removal of vegetation to facilitate construction, it may be necessary to manage all vegetation within the vicinity of the OHL throughout operation, to maintain required safety clearance distances. Vegetation clearance required will be dependent on the height of the vegetation adjacent to the OHL and the surrounding topography.

## 3. EIA APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The EIA Report will be prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations, and the Good Practice Guidance published by the Scottish Government's Energy Consents & Deployment Unit in January 2013. Consideration will also be given to advice contained in Planning Circular 1/2013 and 1/2017 (Environmental Impact Assessment), and other good practice guidance documents where relevant.
- 3.1.2 The EIA work will comprise a series of specialist environmental studies which will be targeted to assess the potential significant effects which the Proposed Development is likely to have on the environment. Each topic included within the EIA Report will be incorporated as a separate chapter in the main body of the EIA Report (pertaining to a particular 'section' as required, see sub-section 3.2 of this Chapter), or included as an appendix if the assessment of the subject matter requires to be more detailed.
- 3.1.3 On receipt and consideration of this Scoping Report, the Energy Consents Unit (ECU of the Scottish Government, following input by statutory and non-statutory consultees, will issue their Scoping Opinion confirming the scope of the EIA Report. Throughout the EIA Report, where an issue raised in the Scoping Opinion is addressed, this will be clearly referenced in the relevant chapter. A scoping matrix will also be included in the EIA Report which will detail all consultation responses received during the scoping and EIA process, with a reference to where these responses have been addressed in the EIA Report. A schedule of mitigation measures will also be included as an appendix and cross-referenced in the relevant assessment work.

### 3.2 Structure of the EIA Report

- 3.2.1 Given the scale of the project, it is proposed to structure the EIA Report in a manner which provides the reader with the opportunity to easily focus on a particular area of interest. As such, it is anticipated that the EIA Report will be structured as follows:
- Volume 1 – An Overview of the Project and EIA Report. This volume will provide an introduction to the EIA Report, a description of the project, the alternatives considered, the EIA process, the approach taken to consultation and a summary of the likely significant environment effects across the project as a whole.
  - Volume 2 – Section Reports. This volume will comprise seven separate reports, split in accordance with the seven 'sections' of the project. Each report will describe the project at a local level (i.e. in terms of the particular 'section') and will report on the baseline environment, potential effects, mitigation and likely significant environmental effects across all EIA topics scoped into the assessment of each section.
  - Volume 3 – Figures. This volume would provide supporting figures (primarily A3 size) to the assessments carried out as part of Volume 2.
  - Volume 4 – Visualisations. This volume would provide visualisations of the Proposed Development from agreed viewpoint locations.
  - Volume 5 – Appendices. This volume would include supporting appendices to the assessments carried out as part of Volume 2, and other information such as scoping and consultation responses, and assessment methodologies.
  - A Non Technical Summary would form part of the EIA Report, summarising the project and its likely significant effects.
  - A Planning Statement would also be provided, assessing the Proposed Development against the planning context.

- 3.2.2 The description of the likely significant effects will cover direct effects and indirect (including secondary) effects. The description of effects will typically identify the effect duration (short-term, medium-term and long-term), whether effects are permanent or temporary, and if effects can be categorised as adverse or beneficial.
- 3.2.3 Consideration would also be given to the potential for cumulative effects, where the assessment would describe the additional effect associated with the Proposed Development, when considered in combination with other reasonably foreseeable projects of a similar type (defined as those which are the subject of a valid consent or application for consent). The basis for this is that only these developments have the potential to result in significant cumulative effects in combination with those arising from the Proposed Development. The final list of development to be considered in the cumulative effects assessment would be finalised three months prior to publication to allow sufficient time to compile the EIA Report. The works required at Broadford and Edinbane Substations would be considered where relevant in the assessment of cumulative effects.
- 3.2.4 It is considered that there would be no potential for transboundary effects associated with the Proposed Development, and therefore no further assessment of transboundary effects is proposed.
- 3.2.5 As noted in Chapter 2 of this Scoping Report (see sub-section 2.4), the Proposed Development would give rise to a need to upgrade substation infrastructure at Broadford and Edinbane substations. Whilst these works would be subject to a separate consenting process to the Proposed Development, given the close links across the projects, it is proposed that the EIA Reports for each substation are included as a Technical Appendix within Volume 5 of the EIA Report for the Proposed Development. A separate scoping exercise will be undertaken to determine an appropriately scoped EIA Report for the substation works.
- 3.2.6 A more detailed overview of the guidance and methodology adopted for each technical study is provided within Chapters 5 to 15 of this Scoping Report.

### **3.3 Consideration of Alternatives**

- 3.3.1 The Proposed Development has been subject to a route and alignment selection process, informed by SSEN Transmission's guidance<sup>8</sup> which provides a framework to ensure environmental, technical and economic considerations are identified and appraised at each stage of the routeing process. This has also included the consideration of alternative technology solutions.
- 3.3.2 The guidance splits the routeing stage of a project into four principal stages, as follows:
- Stage 0: Routeing Strategy Development;
  - Stage 1: Corridor Selection;
  - Stage 2: Route Selection; and
  - Stage 3: Alignment Selection.
- 3.3.3 Each stage is an iterative process and involves an increasing level of detail and resolution, bringing cost, technical and environmental considerations together in a way which seeks to achieve the best balance at each stage. The stages that are carried out can vary depending on the type, nature of and size of a project and consultation is carried out at each stage of the process.
- 3.3.4 The route and alignment process has been documented as follows:
- SSEN Transmission, (March 2020): Skye Reinforcement Consultation Document: Route Options.
  - SSEN Transmission, (November 2020): Report on Consultation - Route Options: Skye Reinforcement Project.

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<sup>8</sup> SSEN Transmission (March 2018), Procedures for Routeing Overhead Lines of 132kV and above (updated in September 2020)

- SSEN Transmission, (September 2021): Skye Reinforcement Consultation Document: Alignment Selection.

3.3.5 A summary of the alternatives considered will be set out within the EIA Report, including the alternative technologies considered during the route and alignment selection process.

### **3.4 Consideration of Alternative Route within Section 3**

3.4.1 Within Section 3 of the project, through the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC, whilst a preferred alignment and design solution has been identified, as reported within the Consultation Document: Alignment Selection (September 2021), it is acknowledged that the sensitivities of Section 3 of the project through this SAC are such that the alternative route option through Glen Arroch (referred to in route and alignment consultation documents as Route Option 3B) must remain under consideration whilst the adverse effects on the SAC, and other factors, are fully determined.

3.4.2 As such, this alternative route option will be assessed through the EIA and Habitats Regulation Appraisal process in combination with the preferred alignment.

### **3.5 Mitigation**

3.5.1 The routeing and alignment selection process described in sub-section 3.3 of this Chapter has sought to avoid or minimise likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development through careful routeing. Mitigation in the form of undergrounding has already influenced the design solution proposed in Sections 2 and 6 of the project, either to mitigate likely significant landscape and visual effects (in the case of Section 2), or as a means of rationalising the electricity network (as in Section 6).

3.5.2 The engagement by SSEN of an experienced construction contractor, coupled with the emerging findings of the EIA, will provide further opportunity to mitigate likely significant effects, for example through the micro-siting of infrastructure and construction access, and the implementation of good practice during construction.

3.5.3 The EIA will identify and assess potentially significant effects prior to mitigation. Where mitigation measures are proposed to reduce or avoid a potential effect, the significance of the 'residual' effect will then be assessed. The Applicant and / or the successful contractor will be committed to implementing all the mitigation measures identified in the EIA Report.

### **3.6 Habitats Regulation Appraisal**

3.6.1 The Proposed Development passes through, or within close proximity of, a number of European designated sites. Where this occurs, a Habitats Regulation Appraisal (HRA) is likely to be required to be carried out by the Competent Authority upon submission of a consent application. In each case, a shadow HRA will be provided within the EIA Report.

### **3.7 Scoping Methodology**

3.7.1 The following Chapters of this Scoping Report aim to provide sufficient detail to characterise the potential interactions between the Proposed Development and the environmental receptors identified. In presenting a rationale for the proposed scope of environmental assessment, this report has taken the sensitivity of the current state of the environment into account, based on an understanding of the baseline conditions. The Scoping Report has also been prepared with reference to the potential magnitude of impacts, considering the typical construction and operational activities, physical characteristics and potential emissions/residues associated with the Proposed Development.

- 3.7.2 Where there is sufficient evidence to support scoping a topic out of the EIA process, this is presented. Otherwise, where it is considered that there is the potential for likely significant effects, the scoping report provides details of the proposed scope or detailed impact assessment, including the approach to further baseline data collection and brief details of the proposed methodology for impact assessment which would be employed for each topic.
- 3.7.3 Within each specialist topic described in this report, an overall description of the baseline environment is provided, followed by a summary of the potential effects, and the proposed scope of survey and assessment work required as a result.

## 4. SUMMARY OF SECTIONS

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This Chapter of the Scoping Report provides a brief summary of each of the seven sections of the project.

### 4.2 Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane

4.2.1 This section of the project originates at Ardmore Substation, following a southerly direction through Waternish Peninsula before reaching Dunvegan Substation. From here, the Proposed Development would head in a south easterly direction, terminating at Edinbane Substation (see Figures 2.0.1a to 2.0.1c).

4.2.2 The terrain throughout this section largely comprises gently undulating open moorland, at an altitude of between sea level and approximately 160 m AOD. Typical upland mire, heathland and rough grassland pasture can be found within this section, as is common on Skye.

4.2.3 Residential settlements in this section exist along the Waternish coast including Trumpan, Halistra, Hallin and Stein where there are open, coastal views, and scattered crofting properties at Upper Feorlig in Glen Heysdal and Balmeanach. Within Section 0, access is generally limited to rural roads, including the A850 and B886.

### 4.3 Section 1: Edinbane to North of Sligachan

4.3.1 This section of the project originates at Edinbane Substation, heading generally south-east towards Glenmore and Mugeary, and continuing towards Glen Varragill to the north of Sligachan (see Figures 2.1.1a to 2.1.1b).

4.3.2 This is another sparsely populated section, dominated by areas of open moorland and commercial forestry. In the north-west of this section, hillocks and rocky knolls are common features. River valleys are typically flanked by moderately sloping ground. Settlement is found only at Glenmore and Mugeary and access through this section is limited to the B885, minor single-track roads and the A87 at Glen Varragill.

4.3.3 This section generally comprises low lying topography, with soft / peaty soils and several watercourses.

### 4.4 Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford Substation

4.4.1 This section transitions from the open moorland and relatively gently sloping nature of the landscape character types in Sections 0 and 1, into the mountainous and steep hillsides of the Cuillin Hills, before flattening out again upon reaching Broadford Substation (see Figures 2.2.1a to 2.2.1b). Section 2 is characterised by the mountains of the Black and Red Cuillin ranges which rise steeply from the shore providing a prominent focus, and the long fjord-like sea-lochs of Loch Sligachan and Loch Ainort which cut deeply inshore to the feet of the mountains. This is a sensitive and dramatic landscape and the accessibility provided by the A87 trunk road, which winds around the bases of the mountains and around the heads of the lochs, results in this area being highly popular with tourists and visitors.

### 4.5 Section 3: Broadford Substation to Kyle Rhea

4.5.1 From the existing Broadford Substation this section initially traverses a relatively flat area of open moorland and commercial forestry plantation to the south of the populated A87 corridor, comprising the towns of Broadford, Harrapool, Skulamus and Breakish. Where the section enters Glen Arroch and the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC / SSSI the terrain turns mountainous with areas of steep gradient before reaching the existing OHL steel lattice towers supporting the OHL crossing at Kyle Rhea (see Figures 2.3.1a to 2.3.2b).



#### **4.6 Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich**

4.6.1 This section is approximately 38 km in length, running north-west to south-east between the east landing point of the Kyle Rhea crossing on the mainland to Loch Quoich dam (see Figures 2.4.1a to 2.4.1c).

4.6.2 The terrain throughout this section is technically challenging for construction of an OHL, dominated by extensive areas of mountainous topography, with exposed steep to very steep rock. Access is restricted to a small number of existing single track minor roads at Glenelg and Kinloch Hourn. The area between Balvraid and Kinloch Hourn has no public road access at all, although there are some forestry and estate tracks, as well as walkers paths through this remote part of the route.

#### **4.7 Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry**

4.7.1 This section is routed west to east, from Quoich dam, and following to the north of Loch Poulary and Loch Garry prior to crossing the A87 and heading towards Loch Lundie, to the north of Invergarry (see Figures 2.5.1a to 2.5.1c).

4.7.2 Commercial forestry dominates the central and eastern areas of this section.

4.7.3 Settlement is present within this section at Invergarry, Munerigie and Leacan Dubh. Dispersed dwellings exist along the lower slopes of Glen Garry, including in Tomdoun, Poulary, Inchlaggan and Garrygualach. Access within the section comprises the minor road to Kinloch Hourn, and the A87 to the east.

#### **4.8 Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus**

4.8.1 Within this Section the Proposed Development generally follows that of the existing Fort Augustus to Skye Tee 132 kV wood pole OHL (which would be removed), past Loch Lundie before entering Inchnacardoch Forest which it is routed through prior to terminating at Fort Augustus Substation (see Figure 2.6.1).

4.8.2 Land use is dominated by commercial forestry plantations at Auchteraw and east of Loch Lundie. Settlement within the vicinity of the Proposed Development is sparse, confined to Auchteraw.

## 5. PLANNING POLICY

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This Chapter provides an overview of the planning policy context for the Proposed Development. A more detailed discussion and evaluation of relevant policies will be included within the Planning Statement that will be provided as a supporting document with the application for consent. An up-to-date list of relevant planning policies will be contained within the EIA Report.

### 5.2 National Planning Policy

#### *National Planning Framework 3*

5.2.1 National Planning Framework (NPF) provides a framework for long-term spatial development in Scotland. The third NPF (NPF3) was laid before the Scottish Parliament and approved in June 2014. NPF3 sets out the Government's development priorities over the next 20-30 years and identifies national developments which support the development strategy. The central vision is set out over four key policy objectives for Scotland to be: a successful, sustainable place; a low carbon place; a natural, resilient place; and, a connected place. The Proposed Development is closely related to the objective of 'a low carbon place', due to its importance in supporting an increased capacity electricity network for renewable energy developments, whilst also ensuring security of supply.

5.2.2 NPF3 supports the maintenance and enhancement of the electricity grid network, which is directly related to the Proposed Development.

5.2.3 The development and enhancement of the high voltage electricity network (i.e. 132 kV and above) is regarded as 'national development' under NPF 3. Such developments are considered '*vital in meeting national targets for electricity generation, statutory climate change targets, and security of energy supplies*'<sup>9</sup>.

#### *Draft Fourth National Planning Framework*

5.2.4 The draft NPF4 was published in November 2021 for Parliamentary scrutiny and public consultation. The consultation period is open until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2022. It sets out how planning and development will help Scotland to achieve a 'net zero, sustainable Scotland by 2045.' It confirms the necessary shift required to achieve net zero-emissions by 2045. It will also 'play a critical role in supporting nature restoration and recovery' and will be followed by a Scottish biodiversity strategy which will set targets for 2030.

5.2.5 The draft NPF4 confirms that a concerted effort to work together with communities will be required so that the transition to net zero and nature recovery is fair to all. One of the four key actions identified for Scotland's north and west islands and coastal communities is to *Strengthen Resilience and Decarbonise Connectivity* by improving grid connections. This will actively facilitate decarbonised heating and electricity generation and distribution.

5.2.6 Moreover, the draft NPF4 identifies the need for a significant increase in electricity generation from renewable sources to meet the net zero emissions targets and that the electricity transmission grid will need substantial reinforcement and additional infrastructure to achieve this. Developments that fall within one or more of the following categories will be designated as national development:

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<sup>9</sup> The Scottish Government, Scotland's Third National Planning Framework (June, 2014). Annex A, Statement of Need 4, Page 73,

- 'Electricity generation, including electricity storage, from renewables of or exceeding 50 megawatts capacity;
- New and/or replacement high voltage electricity lines and interconnectors of 132kv or more; and
- New and/or upgraded infrastructure directly supporting high voltage electricity lines and interconnectors including converter stations, switching stations and substations.'

5.2.7 The Proposed Development therefore continues to be classed as national development under draft NPF4.

*Scottish Planning Policy*

5.2.8 Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) was published by the Scottish Government in June 2014 and sets out a national policy framework for land use planning. The SPP is a statement of Scottish Government policy on how nationally important land use planning matters should be addressed. The SPP is relevant to understanding the national context, and the material considerations for a project during the decision making process.

### 5.3 Local Planning Policy

5.3.1 The site lies entirely within the jurisdiction of The Highland Council. The Proposed Development would be considered against the following Local Development Plan documents.

*Highland-wide Local Development Plan*

5.3.2 The Highland Wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) 2012 provides the local planning framework for the area and provides the general policy context against which the Proposed Development would be assessed.

5.3.3 Policy 69 is the policy of most relevance to the Proposed Development given that it is specific to electricity transmission infrastructure. The policy acknowledges the significance and importance of proposals for electricity transmission infrastructure and provides support for proposals which are assessed as not having an unacceptable significant impact on the environment, taking into consideration mitigation measures.

5.3.4 Other relevant policies from the HwLDP are listed in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: List of Relevant HwLDP Policies**

Policy Reference	Name
Policy 36	Development in the Wider Countryside
Policy 51	Trees and Development
Policy 52	Principle of Development in Woodland
Policy 28	Sustainable Design
Policy 29	Design Quality and Place-Making
Policy 30	Physical Constraints
Policy 53	Minerals
Policy 55	Peat and Soils
Policy 56	Travel
Policy 57	Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
Policy 58	Protected Species
Policy 59	Other Important Species
Policy 60	Other Important Habitats and Article 10 Features
Policy 61	Landscape
Policy 62	Geodiversity
Policy 63	Water Environment
Policy 64	Flood Risk

Policy 69	Electrical Transmission Infrastructure
Policy 72	Pollution
Policy 77	Public Access
Policy 78	Long Distance Routes

*Area Local Development Plan*

- 5.3.5 The West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan) (adopted 2019) also forms part of the development plan. It is used to guide decisions on planning applications and sets out the policies and land allocations to guide development over the next 20 years.

## 6. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL AMENITY

### 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 This Chapter of the Scoping Report provides a brief overview of the landscape character and visual amenity baseline conditions, the likely significant effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report on a section by section basis.

### 6.2 Baseline Conditions

6.2.1 The following sets out the baseline conditions for each section of the Proposed Development, describing the landscape designations, other protected landscapes, landscape character and key visual receptors present. Reference should also be made to Figures 2.0.1a to 2.6.3.

#### *Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane*

6.2.2 The following landscape designations are crossed by the Proposed Development in this section:

**Table 6-1 Designated or Otherwise Protected Landscapes: Section 0**

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	North West Skye	Approximately 10 km of the Proposed Development falls within this SLA in this Section	Special Qualities of the SLA of potential sensitivity to the OHL involve the relationship between land and sea, the traditional patterns of the crofting landscapes and their association with historic land use, and distinctive features of the terrain, including views towards MacLeod's Tables from within and around the SLA.

6.2.3 The landscape of Section 0 is heavily influenced by the coast with an intricate coastline of bays and rocky promontories backed by croft lands and strung-out settlements. Inland areas are characterised by stepped moorland with occasional patches of forest plantation. The Proposed Development crosses two coastal valleys (Glen Heysdal and Balmeanach glen) where improved croft lands and scattered settlement extend inland slightly.

6.2.4 Section 0 of the Proposed Development falls within the following landscape character types from the NatureScot National Landscape Character assessment:

- LCT 357 - Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh;
- LCT 359 - Upland Sloping Moorland; and
- LCT 360 - Stepped Moorland.

6.2.5 The above LCTs are considered to be broadly accommodating of a wood pole OHL of the type proposed, particularly as this comprises a replacement to an existing, similar OHL.

6.2.6 Potential visual receptors within Section 0 include occupants of residential settlements along the Waternish coast including Trumpan, Halistra, Hallin and Stein where there are open, coastal views; a small number of properties around the wider outskirts of Dunvegan; and scattered crofting properties at Upper Feorlig in Glen Heysdal and Balmeanach. A recreational viewpoint at Trumpan, Core Paths near Stein, Dunvegan and Ullinish, and the rural roads which serve these communities, including the A850, A863 and B886, are also visually sensitive, being used by residents and popular with visitors and tourists.

*Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan*

6.2.7 The Proposed Development does not cross through any landscape designations within this section. However, the following designated or protected landscapes are present within the wider context:

**Table 6-2 Designated or Otherwise Protected Landscapes: Section 1**

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
National Scenic Area (NSA)	Cuillin Hills	This NSA lies just over 2 km to the south of the south-eastern end of the Proposed Development.	Taking account of the location of the Proposed Development in relation to this designated landscape, with limited intervisibility the potential to affect any of its Special Qualities is considered very low.
Wild Land Area (WLA)	Cuillin Wild Land Area (WLA 23)	The southernmost end of the Proposed Development in Section 1 falls around 2.7 km from the Cuillin Wild Land Area (WLA 23), identified by NatureScot.	Given the limited intervisibility of the Proposed Development with this area and the context where existing forest plantation and tourism features at Sligachan are already influential on the areas which would be affected, the potential for any effects on the degree of wildness experienced or WLA Key Qualities is considered unlikely.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	North West Skye	This SLA covers an area of Bracadale Glen around 3.6 km to the south of the Proposed Development.	Taking account of the location of the Proposed Development in relation to this designated landscape, with limited intervisibility the potential to affect any of its Special Qualities is considered very low.

6.2.8 The landscape of Section 1 is characterised by broad, open swathes of moorland plateau with a large scale pattern of plantation forestry. Within the western part of this section, the landscape is characterised by small and very distinctive, flat-topped rocky knolls which are scattered throughout. Wind turbines further to the north-west also influence this part of the section. To the east, the landform becomes characterised by more pronounced rounded hills and sweeping valleys, with linear croft lands strung along the valley of Glenmore.

6.2.9 Section 1 of the Proposed Development falls within the following landscape character types from the NatureScot National Landscape Character assessment.

- LCT 359 - Upland Sloping Moorland; and
- LCT 360 - Stepped Moorland.

6.2.10 The broadscale pattern of moorland and forest plantation which characterises these LCTs is considered to be reasonably accommodating of an OHL, although it is acknowledged that there is some potential for this to form a noticeable new feature in some areas.

6.2.11 Potential visual receptors within Section 1 include residents of crofting properties at Glen More and Mugeary where properties are orientated to take advantage of elevated westerly views across the valley, and at Glen Vic Askill where a Core Path is also present. Residents, visitors and tourists utilising the local road network would also gain views of the OHL, particularly the A87 between Portree and Sligachan, and the B885, crossing between Bracadale and Portree.

*Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford*

6.2.12 The following designated or protected landscapes fall within and in the vicinity of the Proposed Development in this section:

**Table 6-3 Designated or Otherwise Protected Landscapes: Section 2**

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
National Scenic Area (NSA)	Cuillin Hills	12 km of UG cable falls within the NSA or within 1 km of its boundary and 7.7 km of OHL falls within the NSA.	Although the majority of the Proposed Development through the NSA would be an underground cable, there would be likely short term landscape effects during construction and reinstatement.
Wild Land Area (WLA)	Cuillin Wild Land Area (WLA 23)	The Proposed Development follows around the edge of WLA 23. Cuillin, although only around 3.3 km of the Proposed Development would fall within the WLA area (the remainder being mostly within 1 km of the boundary),	The position of the Proposed Development being generally close to the public road and other features around the coast, is considered likely to limit potential wild land effect.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Trotternish and Tianavaig	The Proposed Development falls within 2 km of this SLA at Balmeanach Bay.	The Proposed Development is unlikely to have any intervisibility with this area.

6.2.13 The landscape context of Section 2 is characterised by the mountains of the Black and Red Cuillin ranges with their high summits and well-recognised silhouettes forming a prominent landscape and visual focus within the wider surrounding area. The long, fjord-like sea-lochs of Loch Sligachan and Loch Ainort cut inshore to the feet of the mountains and form a strong composition of land, and sea which emphasises the height and contrast of the mountains. Residential and tourism development and transport routes are strung along the A87 trunk road around the coastal edge whilst the remote landscape away from the shore is highly popular with recreational users. This is a highly sensitive landscape due to its dramatic mountains and wild land qualities which can be easily experienced by visitors from the A87, and its status as one of the most iconic landscapes of Scotland.

6.2.14 Section 2 of the Proposed Development falls within the following landscape character types from the NatureScot National Landscape Character assessment.

- LCT 357 – Farmed and Settled Lowlands - Skye & Lochalsh;
- LCT 358 – Low Smooth Moorland;
- LCT 360 – Stepped Moorland; and
- LCT 367 – Smooth Mountain Range.

6.2.15 The characteristics of these LCTs within Section 2 and their contribution to the NSA designation are considered to be highly sensitive to OHL development and therefore a buried cable option has been selected as the preferred method though the majority of this section to minimise likely significant landscape and visual effects.

6.2.16 Potential visual receptors within Section 2 include residents of, and visitors to crofting communities which are strung along the coast, including Sligachan, Peinachorain and Sconser where views would be likely to be limited to the temporary effects of the proposed underground cable installation, and Luib, Dunan, Strollamus and Broadford where views may be obtained of the proposed OHL. Properties are almost entirely orientated to take advantage of coastal views. However, secondary views, particularly from garden areas and associated croft land are obtained towards the mountainous interior. In addition to residential properties, there is also a concentration of tourism development including a hotel and restaurant and other features at Sligachan.

6.2.17 Residents, visitors and tourists utilising the local road network would also potentially gain views of the Proposed Development, particularly the A87 as it rounds the foot of the mountains and the heads of Loch Sligachan and Loch Ainort, and also the A863 on the approach to Sligachan and the single track road between Strollamus and Loch Ainort, via Moll. Passengers on the Raasay Ferry may also obtain views of the Proposed Development. This section is highly popular for recreation and there are also numerous recreational routes throughout including Core Paths, Scottish Hill Tracks and mountain ascent routes, mostly commencing at Sligachan, the head of Loch Ainort, Luib and Strollamus.

### Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea

6.2.18 The following designated or protected landscapes fall within and in the vicinity of the Proposed Development in this section:

**Table 6-4 Designated or Otherwise Protected Landscapes: Section 3**

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
National Scenic Area (NSA)	Cuillin Hills	The initial part of Section 3, commencing at Broadford Substation is on the boundary of The Cuillin Hills NSA.	The existing forestry plantations around the substation create a clear transition between the designated and non-designated landscape and the Proposed Development is unlikely to be noticeably different to the existing OHL to be removed in the area closest to the NSA.
Inventory of the Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDL)	The Lochalsh Woodland Walks	The Lochalsh Woodland Walks GDL lies around 2.1 km from the Proposed Development on the northern shore of Loch Alsh.	The GDL is considered outstanding for its scenic interest and is a setting for views across Loch Alsh to the area which would be occupied by the Proposed Development.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Kyle – Plockton	The edge of the SLA around the Skye Bridge falls within 2 km of the Proposed Development.	Area is considered unlikely to be affected by the Proposed Development.

6.2.19 The landscape of Section 3 differs in character between its eastern and western parts. The western part is characterised by the southern fringes of Broadford and associated crofting communities which make up its outskirts. These neighbour broad, open swathes of moorland and large-scale forestry plantation. To the east, the landscape is characterised by the remote southern coastline of Loch Alsh with a rocky shoreline and steep wooded slopes. The existing steel lattice tower line comprises the only development through this area, although scattered settlement along the A87 is present on the northern side of Loch Alsh.

6.2.20 Section 3 of the Proposed Development falls within the following landscape character types from the NatureScot National Landscape Character assessment:

- LCT 358 – Low Smooth Moorland;
- LCT 359 – Upland Sloping Moorland; and
- LCT 365 – Rugged Massif – Skye and Lochalsh.

6.2.21 As an existing steel lattice OHL would be replaced though this section, the landscape sensitivity to the Proposed Development would be reduced. The alignment parallel to the existing OHL through the western part of the section within LCTs 358 and 359 would amount to a virtual like-for-like replacement. However, in the more remote eastern part of the section LCT 365 is considered to have a higher sensitivity, with the alignment for the Proposed Development being higher up the slope than the existing OHL which would be replaced.

6.2.22 Potential visual receptors within Section 3 comprise individuals residing at properties on the outskirts of Broadford including crofting communities at Harrapool, Breakish and Skulamish, and also on the outskirts of Kyleakin. There is the potential for views from public roads, comprising the A87 which runs close to the Proposed Development and the A851, B8083 and minor roads to Kyclerhea and Heasta which would be crossed by the Proposed Development. There is also the potential for longer distance views across open water from the north of Loch Alsh from the A87 including parking areas and viewing locations. There may also be views for recreational users of Core Paths between Broadford and Suardale and at Cnoc a' Mhadaidh Ruaidh near Kyleakin.



### Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea (Alternative Route)

- 6.2.23 The alternative alignment through Section 3 would differ in its effects through the eastern part of the section, passing through Glen Arroch, an open, upland moorland glen influenced by surrounding coniferous plantation and small stands of native woodland, and Kylerhea Glen, a broad, sweeping coastal glen, with a patchwork of scattered settlement, woodland and forest planting at its foot.
- 6.2.24 This alternative alignment would not affect any additional designated or protected landscapes or LCTs compared to the Proposed Development. The western part of this alignment would result in the same virtual like-for-like replacement as for the Proposed Development and therefore the landscape is considered to be reduced in sensitivity through this area. The character of the eastern part through the glens within LCT 365 is considered to be more sensitive to development of the type proposed due to its combinations of elevated and expansive open sea views and the smaller scale settled and wooded landscapes.

Potential visual receptors for this alternative alignment include residents and visitors to the settlement of Kylerhea, at the foot of Kylerhea Glen, and users of the minor Glen Arroch / Kylerhea road and ferry crossing which is a popular alternative route for tourists to arrive in Skye. Visitors to an RSPB reserve at Otter Haven, near to Kylerhea would also be very sensitive to views of the alternative alignment, including users of a car park, footpath and wildlife hide. On the eastern side of the Kyle Rhea sea narrows there would also be potential views from a visitor centre and Core Path near to the ferry terminal.

### Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich

- 6.2.25 Section 4 passes through a number of landscape designations and other protected landscapes. The following designated or other protected landscapes fall within and in the vicinity of the Proposed Development in this section:

**Table 6-5 Designated or Otherwise Protected Landscapes: Section 4**

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
National Scenic Area (NSA)	Knoydart	Approximately 17 km of the Proposed Development through the central, mountainous part of this section falls within the NSA..	The Proposed Development would largely follow a similar alignment to the existing OHL to be removed through the NSA and therefore sensitivity to the Proposed Development considered to be somewhat reduced.
Wild Land Area (WLA)	Kinlochhourn - Knoydart – Morar (WLA 18.)	Approximately 12 km of the Proposed Development through the central, mountainous part of the section passes through this WLA and the Proposed Development continues to follow the boundary of the WLA for a further 15 km to the east.	The Proposed Development would largely follow a similar alignment to the existing OHL to be removed through the WLA and therefore would affect areas where the baseline strength of wildness is already slightly reduced.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel	The Proposed Development passes through this SLA for approximately 9.5 km alongside Loch Cuaich.	The Proposed Development would largely follow a similar alignment to the existing OHL to be removed through the SLA and therefore sensitivity to the Proposed Development considered to be somewhat reduced.

- 6.2.26 The landscape of Section 4 is characterised by an extensive stretch of remote mountains, upland moorland and long, sweeping glens, interspersed with large bodies of water comprised of the long finger sea-loch of Loch Hourn and the expansive Loch Cuaich. This section is largely uninhabited but small scale agricultural use and settlement is present around the coastal fringes and within some of the coastal glens including Glen More and Gleann Beag.

6.2.27 Section 4 of the Proposed Development falls within the following landscape character types from the NatureScot National Landscape Character assessment:

- LCT 239 – Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber;
- LCT 357 – Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh;
- LCT 363 – Rugged Coastal Hills – Skye & Lochalsh; and
- LCT 365 – Rugged Massif – Skye and Lochalsh.

6.2.28 These LCTs are typically sensitive to OHL development. However, the presence of the existing steel lattice OHL which would be replaced reduces the sensitivity to the Proposed Development with the potential to result in a virtual like-for-like replacement through much of this section.

6.2.29 Potential visual receptors within Section 4 are mostly likely to be recreational users, although there would be potential views from residential properties as the Proposed Development crosses Glen More and at Kinloch Hourn. Travellers and tourists using the minor roads via Glen More to Glenelg and to Kinloch Hourn alongside Loch Quoich would also obtain views of the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would cross or run close to Core Paths along the shore of Kyle Rhea, in Glen Bernera, in Gleann Beag, and at Gleann dubhlochan. There would also be potential views from other popular mountain and glen walking routes in particular along the stretch between Gleann Beag and Kinloch Hourn.

*Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry*

6.2.30 The following designated or protected landscapes fall within and in the vicinity of the Proposed Development in this section:

**Table 6-6 Designated or Otherwise Protected Landscapes: Section 5**

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
Wild Land Area (WLA)	Kinlochhourn - Knoydart – Morar (WLA 18.)	The Proposed Development lies approximately 150 m from the SLA boundary at the far western end of the section and just over 2 km to the north of the SLA near Tomdoun.	The Proposed Development would comprise a virtual like-for-like replacement to the existing OHL though this part of the WLA and is therefore considered unlikely to lead to any changed effect on the WLA Key Qualities.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Loch Lochy and Lochy Oich	The SLA lies approximately 1.7 km from the eastern end of the Proposed Development in this section.	There would unlikely be any shared intervisibility with the Proposed Development.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel	Approximately 2 km of the Proposed Development at the western end of this section lies within this SLA.	It is not anticipated that the Proposed Development would lead to a noticeably increased level of impact of the Special Qualities of the SLA, given the virtual like-for-like replacement of the existing OHL through this part of the SLA. However, there would be potential for cumulative effects in relation to the Proposed Development within Section 4.

6.2.31 The landscape of Section 5 is characterised by large expanses of coniferous forest plantation which cloth the slopes to the east and west of the large open waterbodies of Loch Garry and Loch Pouлары. At the western end of the section, open, moorland slopes with small clumps of native woodland characterise a steep-sided valley which contains the Quoich Dam with panoramic views towards the western mountains. A greater sense of enclosure is experienced as the section progresses eastwards and forest plantation and native woodland surrounding the lochs become more dominant. Dispersed, rural properties are scattered throughout this section, alongside the lochs and within the edges of the forest, reached by narrow single track roads and tracks leading from the A87 and rural road alongside Loch Garry.

6.2.32 Section 5 of the Proposed Development falls within the following landscape character types from the NatureScot National Landscape Character assessment:

- LCT 235 – Broad Forested Strath; and
- LCT 237 – Rocky Moorland – Lochaber.

6.2.33 An existing steel lattice OHL through much of this section is currently being decommissioned and therefore the baseline for the LVIA through Section 5 is not anticipated to feature these existing towers. However, the semi-forested characteristics of LCT 235 with the existing wayleave which would be largely utilised is anticipated to be broadly accommodating of the Proposed Development, which would effectively re-establish the recently decommissioned steel lattice OHL and would replace the recently constructed wood pole OHL. Whilst LCT 237 is considered to have a higher sensitivity to development of the type proposed, the Proposed Development would form a virtual like-for-like replacement to existing steel lattice towers through this LCT and therefore landscape effects would be likely to be limited.

6.2.34 Potential visual receptors though Section 5 are comprised of individuals located at residential properties throughout Glen Garry, users of the local road network and various recreational routes. The greatest concentration of population is located in Invergarry village at the eastern end of the route which also features a hotel and other community facilities. Further rural properties are scattered along the length of the study area in this section with the more notable groupings comprising Kingie, Poulary, Tomdoun, Inchlaggan, Garrygualach, Torr na Carraidh, Ardochy House, Achadh-Iuachrach and Munerigie. Views from these properties are predominantly across the forested valley or overlooking Lochs Garry and Poulary but are often filtered or enclosed by woodland and forest. Potential views from routes may be obtained by users of the A87 and other minor roads, including the rural road alongside Loch Garry to Loch Cuaich. Users of a number of identified Core Paths around Invergarry and Scottish Hill Tracks commencing in Glen Garry and leading into the wider hills would also potentially gain views of the Proposed Development.

*Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus*

6.2.35 This section of the Proposed Development does not cross any designated or protected landscapes. The following landscape designations fall within the vicinity of the Proposed Development in this section:

**Table 5-7 Landscape Designations Section 6**

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Loch Lochy and Lochy Oich	The southern end of the Proposed Development in this section lies approximately 1.7 km to the north-west of the SLA.	The Proposed Development would be unlikely to have any interaction with this SLA.
Special Landscape Area (SLA)	Loch Ness and Dunelchaig	The southern end of the SLA lies approximately 2.6 km to the east of the Fort Augustus Substation	The Proposed Development would be unlikely to have any interaction with this SLA.

6.2.36 The landscape of Section 6 is broadly characterised by a mosaic of upland moorland and coniferous forestry on higher ground, and a low –lying pastoral glen floor with rural settlement. Existing OHL’s are already a noticeable feature within this landscape.

6.2.37 Section 6 of the Proposed Development falls within the following landscape character types from the NatureScot National Landscape Character assessment:

- LCT 225 – Broad Steep-sided Glen; and
- LCT 237 – Rocky Moorland – Lochaber.

6.2.38 Potential visual receptors within this section include those residing in properties located on the valley floor at Auchterawe. However, as a buried cable is proposed through this part of the section, visual effects to these receptors would be likely to be temporary. Additional visual receptors would include recreational users of a

network of tracks and paths, many of which are Core Paths within Inchnacardoch Forest and around Loch Lundie. It is unlikely that there would be any views of this section of the Proposed Development from Invergarry. Whilst views of temporary works may be obtained from parts of Fort Augustus, it is unlikely that these would be significant due to the distance from the Proposed Development.

### 6.3 Potential Effects

6.3.1 The potential landscape character and visual amenity effects associated with the construction and operation of an OHL includes:

- Temporary or long term effects on the special qualities of designated or protected landscapes;
- Temporary or long term physical effects on landscape fabric;
- Temporary or long term effects on landscape character; and
- Temporary or long term effects on views.

6.3.2 In addition to these general potential effects, the following table provides a high level list of potential landscape character and visual amenity effects specific to each section of the project:

**Table 6-8 Potential Landscape Character and Visual Amenity Effects**

Section	High Level Potential Effect
Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Qualities and integrity of the North West Skye SLA;</li> <li>• Landscape effects on LCT 357 (Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh), LCT 359 (Upland Sloping Moorland) and LCT 360 (Stepped Moorland);</li> <li>• Views obtained from settlement areas along the Waternish peninsula, the wider outskirts of Dunvegan and at Upper Feorlig and Balmeanach;</li> <li>• Views obtained by visual receptors using the A850, A863, other minor roads, Core Paths near Stein, Dunvegan and Ullinish and other public walking routes; and</li> <li>• Cumulative effects, including those of other related works at Edinbane Substation.</li> </ul>
Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscape effects on LCT 359 (Upland Sloping Moorland) and LCT 360 (Stepped Moorland);</li> <li>• Views obtained from properties at Glen Vic Askill, Glenmore and Mugeary, users of the A87 and B885 and Core Path (SL28.01) and other public paths; and</li> <li>• Cumulative effects, including those of other related works at Edinbane Substation.</li> </ul>
Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Qualities, and integrity of the Cuillin Hills NSA;</li> <li>• Key Wild Land Qualities of the Cuillin WLA;</li> <li>• Landscape effects on LCT 357 (Farmed and Settled Lowlands - Skye &amp; Lochalsh), LCT 358 (Low Smooth Moorland), LCT 360 (Stepped Moorland) and LCT 367 (Smooth Mountain Range);</li> <li>• Views obtained from properties and tourist developments around the shores of Loch Sligachan and Loch Ainort;</li> <li>• Views obtained by travellers and tourist using the A87, A863 and other minor roads, including popular laybys and stopping locations, and the Rassay Ferry;</li> <li>• Views obtained from recreational routes including Core Paths, mountain ascent routes and other public paths; and</li> <li>• Cumulative effects, including those of other related works at Broadford Substation.</li> </ul>
Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential effects on the wider landscape setting and valued views from the Lochalsh Woodland Walks GDL;</li> <li>• Landscape effects on LCT 358 (Low Smooth Moorland), LCT 359 (Upland Sloping Moorland);</li> </ul>

	<p>and LCT 365 (Rugged Massif – Skye and Lochalsh);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Views obtained from communities along the A87 corridor, and across the open waters of Loch Alsh;</li> <li>Views from public roads including the A87, A851, B8083 and minor roads to Kylerhea and Heasta; and recreational routes including Core Paths and other public paths.</li> <li>For the alternative route, views from settlement and the rural road through Kylerhea Glen, the Kylerhea Ferry and Otter Ferry RSPB reserve, properties on the eastern side of the Kyle Rhea sea narrows, Core Paths and other public paths; and</li> <li>Cumulative effects, including those of other related works at Broadford Substation.</li> </ul>
Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special Qualities and integrity of the Knoydart NSA and Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA;</li> <li>Key Wild Land Qualities of the the Kinlochhourn – Knoydart – Morar WLA;</li> <li>Landscape effects on LCT 239 (Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber), LCT 357 (Farmed and Settled Lowlands – Skye and Lochalsh), LCT 363 (Rugged Coastal Hills – Skye &amp; Lochalsh), and LCT 365 (Rugged Massif – Skye and Lochalsh);</li> <li>Views obtained from settlement areas within Glen More and at Kinloch Hourn;</li> <li>Views obtained by travellers on public roads including minor roads via Glen More to Glenelg and to Kinloch Hourn alongside Loch Cuaich;</li> <li>Views obtained by recreational users including those using Core Paths, and rural mountain and glen walking routes including those between Kinloch Hourn, Gleann Beag, and Glen Arnisdale via Gleannubhlochach; and</li> <li>Cumulative effects.</li> </ul>
Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special Qualities and integrity of the Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA, particularly with respect to cumulative effects alongside Section 4;</li> <li>Landscape effects on LCT 235 (Broad Forested Strath) and LCT 237 (Rocky Moorland – Lochaber);</li> <li>Views obtained from scattered settlement though-out Glen Garry, the A87 and rural road alongside Loch Garry and Loch Pouлары including popular laybys and stopping locations;</li> <li>Views obtained by recreational users using Core Paths and Scottish Hill Tracks within Glen Garry and around Loch Lundie and other recognised public paths; and</li> <li>Cumulative effects with other proposed OHL and substation infrastructure within the area.</li> </ul>
Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landscape effects on LCT 225 (Broad Steep-sided Glen and LCT 237 (Rocky Moorland – Lochaber);</li> <li>Views obtained from communities at Auchterawe and Fort Augustus, and by users of recreational routes including Core Paths within Inchnacardoch Forest and around Loch Lundie, and other public paths; and</li> <li>Cumulative effects with other proposed OHL and substation infrastructure within the area.</li> </ul>

#### *Dismantling of the Existing OHL*

- 6.3.3 The dismantling of the existing OHL is not likely to result in significant adverse effects on landscape and visual receptors. In some areas, for example where the existing OHL would be removed from particular views or landscape areas, or where underground cable is proposed, the dismantling of the existing OHL could result in a beneficial long term effect compared to the baseline situation.

6.3.4 Whilst short term effects could occur as towers are dismantled and removed, it is anticipated that an Environmental Management Plan for the dismantling works would be put in place to ensure such activities are undertaken to minimise potential effects and disturbance, and ensure restoration of disturbed ground.

6.3.5 The temporary effects of the removal of the existing OHL and potential for longer term beneficial effects will be considered in the LVIA.

## **6.4 Mitigation**

6.4.1 The routeing and alignment selection process for the Proposed Development has enabled consideration of likely significant landscape and visual effects to be integral to the evolution of the project to date. Through the EIA process, the LVIA will seek to inform any further refinements to the Proposed Development, and consider where other landscape mitigation measures may be utilised to minimise potential landscape and visual effects.

6.4.2 The implementation of a successful restoration plan will also be important to ensure long term effects of construction access are minimised.

## **6.5 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology**

6.5.1 The general scope for the landscape and visual assessment which will be applicable to all sections of the project would include:

- A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) carried out in accordance with the 3rd Edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2013) (GLVIA3);
- The landscape assessment would describe the key components, features and characteristics that make up the various LCTs found within the study area. It would consider the extent to which the loss of features and the introduction of the proposed OHL would influence the character of the LCTs; and
- The visual assessment would give consideration to views obtained by those living, working and travelling and undertaking recreation within the study area including all settlement areas, transport and recreational routes and other identified valued viewing locations.

6.5.2 The study area for the LVIA would be determined prior to the start of the assessment, and would be informed by site survey and review of the ZTV. However, it is anticipated that the following study areas would be adopted:

- Section 0 (wood pole); 1.5 km; and
- Sections 1 to 6 (steel lattice OHL and underground cable); 2.5 km.

6.5.3 In addition to the general scope, set out above, the following table describes where additional, more specific scope, is proposed for each section of the project.

**Table 6-9 Proposed Scope of Assessment for Landscape Character and Visual Amenity**

Topic	Additional Scope of Assessment
Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landscape assessment will include a review against the Special Qualities and Integrity of the North West Skye SLA;</li> <li>• Cumulative assessment of combined effects with any other proposed OHL or electricity infrastructure works within the study area, including other related works at Edinbane Substation; and</li> <li>• Visualisations will be prepared to inform and support the LVIA. Two sets of visualisations would be produced to meet the requirements of THC Guidance: Visualisation Standards for Wind Energy Developments July 2016 (THC Visualisation Standards), and NatureScot Guidance: Visual Representation of Wind Farms, Version 2.2, February 2017 (NatureScot Visualisation Standards). Visualisations for Section 0 are proposed at the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Trumpan (OS Grid Ref: NG 23214 61169); and</li> <li>○ Upper Feorlig (OS Grid Ref: NG 29898, 44566).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumulative assessment of combined effects with any other proposed OHL or electricity infrastructure works within the study area, including other related works at Edinbane Substation; and</li> <li>• Visualisations will be prepared to inform and support the LVIA to meet THC and NatureScot Visualisation Standards. Visualisations for Section 1 are proposed at the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ B885 at Leacan Nighean an t-Siosalaich (OS Grid Ref: NG 39520,42660); and</li> <li>○ Mugeary (OS Grid Ref: NG 44292, 39321).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An assessment of the potential effects on the Special Qualities of The Cuillin Hills NSA will be undertaken. Whilst it is proposed that a full Wild Land Assessment would be scoped out of the LVIA, a review of the Proposed Development with respect to the Key Qualities of the Cuillin WLA will be included in the LVIA;</li> <li>• Cumulative assessment of combined effects with any other proposed OHL or electricity infrastructure works within the study area, including other related works at Broadford Substation; and</li> <li>• Visualisations will be prepared to inform and support the LVIA to meet THC and NatureScot Visualisation Standards. As much of this section is proposed to be buried cable, the visualisations would focus on OHL parts of the Proposed Development. Visualisations for Section 2 are therefore proposed at the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Allt Dubh Viewpoint, north of Sligachan (OS Grid Ref NG 47870 31680);</li> <li>○ Luib (OS Grid Ref NG 56420, 27740); and</li> <li>○ Strollamus (OS Grid Ref: NG 59115, 27140).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landscape assessment will also include consideration of potential effects on the Lochalsh Woodland Walks GDL;</li> <li>• Cumulative assessment will be undertaken of combined effects with any other proposed OHL or electricity infrastructure works within the study area, including other related works at Broadford Substation; and</li> <li>• Visualisations will be prepared to inform and support the LVIA to meet THC and NatureScot Visualisation Standards. Visualisations for Section 3 are proposed at the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A851 near Market Stance (OS Grid Ref NG 67334, 22118);</li> <li>○ Cnoc a'Mhadaidh Ruaidh Core Path (OS Grid Ref NG 73970, 25720); and</li> <li>○ Donald Murchison's Monument (OS Grid Ref: NG 78703, 27081).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The alternative option through Glen Arroch will be assessed through the EIA process, including undertaking a LVIA. Visualisations will be prepared to support this assessment. These are proposed from the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bealach Udal (OS Grid Ref: NG 75393, 20708); and</li> <li>○ RSPB Otter Ferry Car Park (OS Grid Ref: NG 78671 , 21149).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An assessment of the potential effects on the Special Qualities of the Knoydart NSA and Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA will be undertaken;</li> <li>• Given the presence of the existing OHL to be replaced through most of this section, it is considered that a full Wild Land Assessment will not be required. However, a review of the Proposed Development with respect to the Key Qualities of WLA 18. Kinlochhourn - Knoydart – Morar will be included in the LVIA;</li> <li>• Cumulative assessment will be undertaken of combined effects with any other proposed OHL or electricity infrastructure works within the study area; and</li> <li>• Visualisations will be prepared to inform and support the LVIA to meet THC and NatureScot Visualisation Standards. Visualisations for Section 4 are proposed at the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Glen More (OS Grid Ref NG 84368, 20134);</li> <li>○ Bealach Aoidhdailean (OS Grid Ref NG 88393, 12087);</li> <li>○ GleannDubhlochain (OS Grid Ref: NG 90755, 10218);</li> <li>○ Road above Kinloch Hourn (OS Grid Ref: NG 95517, 06379); and</li> <li>○ Loch Coire Shubh (OS Grid Ref NG 96215, 04624).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An assessment of the potential effects on the Special Qualities of the Moidart, Morar and Glen Shiel SLA will be undertaken;</li> <li>• Cumulative assessment will be undertaken of combined effects with any other proposed OHL or electricity infrastructure works within the study area; and</li> <li>• Visualisations will be prepared to inform and support the LVIA to meet THC and NatureScot Visualisation Standards. Visualisations for Section 4 are proposed at the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Quoich Dam (OS Grid Ref – NH 07082, 02474); and</li> <li>○ Loch Lundie Core Path (OS Grid Ref NH 29568, 02784)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumulative assessment will be undertaken of combined effects with any other proposed OHL or electricity infrastructure works within the study area; and</li> <li>• Visualisations will be prepared to inform and support the LVIA to meet THC and NatureScot Visualisation Standards. Visualisations for Section 6 are proposed at the following locations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Loch Lundie Core Path (OS Grid Ref NH 29568, 02784).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



## 6.6 Issues to be Scoped Out

6.6.1 The following table confirms the issues that are proposed to be scoped out of detailed landscape character and visual amenity assessment for each section of the project.

**Table 6-10 Issues Scoped out of Assessment**

Topic	Issues Scoped out of Assessment
Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential effects on wild land are not considered to be significant through this section therefore it is not proposed to undertake a wild land assessment.</li> </ul>
Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential effects on the The Cuillin Hills NSA are considered unlikely and therefore it is proposed that this be scoped out of the LVIA for this section;</li> <li>Potential effects on the North West Skye SLA are considered unlikely and therefore it is proposed that this be scoped out of the LVIA for this section; and</li> <li>Potential effects on wild land are not anticipated to be significant through this section therefore it is not proposed to undertake a wild land assessment.</li> </ul>
Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential effects on the Trotternish and Tianavaig SLA are considered unlikely and therefore it is proposed that this be scoped out of the LVIA; and</li> <li>Although a small part of the proposed OHL would fall within WLA 23. Cuillin, significant effects are considered unlikely due to the proximity to the public road. A Wild Land Assessment is therefore proposed to be scoped out. However, the LVIA will include a review of the Proposed Development with respect to the Key Qualities of the WLA.</li> </ul>
Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential effects on the Cuillin Hills NSA and Kyle – Plockton SLA are considered unlikely and are therefore proposed to be scoped out of the LVIA; and</li> <li>Potential effects on wild land are not anticipated to be significant through this section and therefore it is not proposed to undertake a wild land assessment.</li> </ul>
Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given the presence of the existing steel lattice OHL which would be replaced by the Proposed Development, a full WLA Assessment is not proposed. However, the LVIA would include a review of the Proposed Development with respect to the Key Qualities of the WLA.</li> </ul>
Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Given the presence of the existing steel lattice OHL which would be replaced by the Proposed Development, no noticeable effects to WLA 18. Kinlochhourn - Knoydart – Morar are anticipated and therefore it is proposed to scope out a wild land assessment of this WLA from the LVIA for this section.</li> </ul>
Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential effects on the Loch Lochy and Loch Oich SLA Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA are considered unlikely and these areas are therefore proposed to be scoped out of the LVIA.</li> </ul>

## 7. ECOLOGY AND NATURE CONSERVATION

### 7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This Chapter of the Scoping Report provides a brief overview of the terrestrial ecological baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development, and the proposed scope and assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

### 7.2 Baseline Conditions

7.2.1 The following sets out the baseline conditions for each section of the Proposed Development, describing relevant sites designated for nature conservation, habitats and protected species likely to be present. Reference should also be made to Figures 2.0.1a to 2.6.3.

#### *Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane*

7.2.2 The Proposed Development does not cross any natural heritage sites designated for ecology within this section.

7.2.3 Within this section, the Proposed Development would generally pass through typical upland mire and heath habitats and patches of rough acid grassland pasture and marshy grassland common on Skye. Habitats along the route of the Proposed Development in this section mainly comprise areas of acid and improved grasslands, a mix of wet and dry heaths and areas of blanket bog in places. Some of these are sensitive habitats but opportunities exist to mitigate impacts through micro-siting of poles and minimising disturbance during construction.

7.2.4 There are no areas of ancient woodland (as listed within the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)) in close proximity to the Proposed Development along Section 0. Only two stands are present locally, located approximately 450 m from the Proposed Development by Brae Stein, and approximately 470 m from the Proposed Development at Pairc Dhubh.

7.2.5 Watercourses and water bodies throughout are considered suitable for supporting otters. Protected species surveys in 2020 recorded otter signs on several watercourses around the Proposed Development, mainly in the form of spraints; however, only one potential protected feature was recorded (an otter resting up area, known as a couch). Very few Potential Roost Features (PRFs) for bats were recorded during surveys in 2020, and those that were, are of low to low-moderate suitability.

7.2.6 The following protected species: red squirrel, wildcat, badger and water vole, are not considered to be present on the Isle of Skye, as per distribution information on these species presented in Mathews *et al.* (2018)<sup>10</sup>.

#### *Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan*

7.2.7 The following natural heritage designations (non-avian) fall within the vicinity of the Proposed Development within this section:

**Table 7-1 Natural Heritage Designations**

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
Special Area of Conservation	Sligachan Peatlands	The Proposed Development would not pass through the SAC,	The qualifying interests for which the site is designated are blanket bog, depressions on peat substrates, acid peat-stained lakes and ponds, wet heathland with cross-

<sup>10</sup> Mathews F, Kubasiewicz LM, Gurnell J, Harrower CA, McDonald RA, Shore RF. (2018) A Review of the Population and Conservation Status of British Mammals. A report by the Mammal Society under contract to Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage. Natural England, Peterborough. ISBN 978-1-78354-494-3

(SAC)		however, would in some locations cross minor watercourses that are approximately 0.35 km upstream.	leaved heath, clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels, and very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface. Appropriate mitigation to avoid silt and pollution entering these watercourses during construction would be required to avoid indirect effects on the SAC.
SSSI	Sligachan Peatlands	The Proposed Development would not pass through the SSSI, however, would in some locations cross minor watercourses that are approximately 0.35 km upstream.	Shares the same boundary as the Sligachan Peatlands SAC in this section. The SSSI notified qualifying interests are blanket bog, dystrophic and oligotrophic lochs, and vascular plant assemblage. Appropriate mitigation to avoid silt and pollution entering these watercourses during construction would be required to avoid indirect effects on the SSSI.

7.2.8 In this section, the Proposed Development would generally pass through open moorland and heathland comprising areas of blanket bog, wet heath, wet modified bog, dry modified bog and small patches of scattered acid grassland habitats.

7.2.9 Deeper areas of peat and blanket bog habitats are likely to be present to the south of Loch Connan, north-east of Am Maol, and particularly in the flat low-lying ground at Achaelathan (situated west of Glenmore).

7.2.10 There are no areas of ancient woodland in proximity to the Proposed Development along Section 1.

7.2.11 European Protected Species such as otter and bats could be present, as well as other protected species, including reptiles. Red squirrel, wildcat, badger and water vole, are not considered to be present on the Isle of Skye, as per distribution information on these species presented in Mathews *et al.* (2018).

*Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford*

7.2.12 The following natural heritage designations (non-avian) fall within the vicinity of the Proposed Development within this section:

**Table 7-2 Natural Heritage Designations**

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
SAC	Sligachan Peatlands	The Proposed Development would not pass through the SAC, however, would in some locations cross minor watercourses that are approximately 0.36 km upstream.	The qualifying interests for which the site is designated are blanket bog, depressions on peat substrates, acid peat-stained lakes and ponds, wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels, and very wet mires often identified by an unstable 'quaking' surface. Appropriate mitigation to avoid silt and pollution entering these watercourses during construction would be required to avoid indirect effects on the SAC.
SSSI	Sligachan Peatlands	The Proposed Development would not pass through the SSSI, however, would in some locations cross minor watercourses that are approximately 0.36 km upstream	Shares the same boundary as the Sligachan Peatlands SAC in this section. The SSSI notified qualifying interests are blanket bog, dystrophic and oligotrophic lochs, and vascular plant assemblage. Appropriate mitigation to avoid silt and pollution entering these watercourses during construction would be required to avoid indirect effects on the SSSI.

- 7.2.13 In terms of habitats, this section of the Proposed Development passes through high sensitivity habitats. The predominant habitat recorded along the Proposed Development is wet heath, which forms a large expanse of near continuous habitat which at times is only occasionally interspersed with small patches of other upland habitat types, including blanket bog, wet modified bog, and dry heath.
- 7.2.14 Deeper areas of peat and blanket bog habitats likely to be present south of Am Meall (e.g. large flat peaty area located at the headwaters of the Garbh-allt and close to Loch nam Madach Uisge), and close to Loch Cuil na Creige and at Allt Mhic Leanain associated with flat lying areas.
- 7.2.15 There are no areas of ancient woodland in close proximity to the Proposed Development along Section 2, with only a single stand noted approximately 460 m away from the Proposed Development to the east of Creag Strollamus.
- 7.2.16 European Protected Species such as otter and bats could be present, as well as other protected species, including reptiles. Red squirrel, wildcat, badger and water vole, are not considered to be present on the Isle of Skye, as per distribution information on these species presented in Mathews *et al.* (2018).

*Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea*

- 7.2.17 The following natural heritage designations (non-avian) fall within the general vicinity of the Proposed Development within this section.

**Table 7-3 Natural Heritage Designations**

Designation Type	Name	Distance to nearest part of Proposed Development	Comments
SAC	Strath	Approximately 0.5 km. The Proposed Development is entirely located downstream of the SAC and is not hydrologically linked.	This site comprises two lime-rich lochs, surrounded by the most extensive exposure of Durness limestone in Britain. The component lochs represent high-quality hard-water, oligotrophic habitat with water clear to the bottom of the lochs at 4 m depth. The qualifying interests for which the site is designated are: base-rich fens; alpine and subalpine calcareous grasslands; plants in crevices on base-rich rocks; Calcium-rich nutrient-poor lakes, lochs and pools; limestone pavements; wet heathland with cross-leaved heath; hard-water springs depositing lime; and mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes.
SAC	Mointeach nan Lochain Dubha	The Proposed Development would cross the northern tip of this SAC.	An area of blanket bog located at the headwaters of a number of rivers and burns, displaying a range of linear and rounded pool-patterning. The qualifying features for which this site is designated are: blanket bog; depressions on peat substrates; acid peat-stained lakes and ponds; Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels; and very wet mires often identified by an unstable `quaking` surface.
SAC	Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills	The Proposed Development would pass through the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC.	The primary qualifying feature of the SAC are the old sessile oak woods varying from acidic oak–birch woodland, to base-rich ash–hazel woodland with a herb-rich ground flora. The full list of qualifying features includes: alpine and subalpine heaths; blanket bog; dry heaths; wet heathland with cross-leaved heath; western acidic oak woodland; mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes; and otter.
SAC	Lochs Duich, Long and Alsh Reefs	The Proposed Development would pass over the Lochs Duich, Long and Alsh Reefs (SAC) at the Kyle Rhea crossing.	Extensive area of extremely sheltered reefs within a system of fjordic sea lochs. The qualifying interest for which the site is designated is reefs.

SSSI	Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills (Monadh Chaol Acainn is Cheann Loch)	The Proposed Development would pass through the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SSSI.	The SSSI is designated for blanket bog, upland oak woodland, lichen assemblage, bryophyte assemblage, subalpine dry heath, subalpine wet heath, alpine heath, and otter.
SSSI	Strath	Approximately 0.5 km <sup>2</sup> The Proposed Development is entirely located downstream of the SSSI and is not hydrologically linked.	Underpinning the Strath SAC described above, the SSSI site is designated for the following biological features: base-rich loch; upland assemblage, upland birch woodland, vascular plant assemblage; and molluscs.
SSSI	Mointeach nan Lochain Dubha	The Proposed Development would cross the northern tip of this SSSI.	Designated for upland blanket bog and its oligotrophic lake.

7.2.18 Within this section the Proposed Development initially follows the route of the existing steel lattice OHL, heading east from Broadford Substation, firstly through mature conifer plantation, crossing the Broadford River, then continuing east through predominantly blanket bog and wet heath habitats and passing to the south of the town of Broadford and villages of Harrapool and Breakish.

7.2.19 The eastern extent of the Proposed Development would pass through the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC and SSSI. The qualifying features of the SAC and their condition and date last assessed are noted in Table 7.4 below.

**Table 7-4 Qualifying Features of the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC**

Feature	Identified Pressures	Condition & Date Last Assessed	Description
Alpine and subalpine heaths	Overgrazing (deer)	Unfavourable Recovering 17 Feb 2015	Annex I habitat
Blanket bog	No negative pressures	Favourable Maintained 13 Nov 2014	Annex I priority habitat
Dry heaths	Invasive species (bracken)	Favourable Maintained 17 Feb 2015	Annex I habitat
Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes	Invasive species Overgrazing	Unfavourable Recovering 9 Oct 2013	Annex I priority habitat
Western acidic oak woodland	Invasive species Overgrazing	Unfavourable Declining 9 Oct 2013	Annex I habitat
Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath	Overgrazing	Unfavourable Declining 11 Sept 2009	Annex I habitat
Otter	Dumping/storage of materials Forestry operations Other	Favourable Maintained 21 Aug 2011	Annex II species

7.2.20 The habitats along, or within the vicinity of the Proposed Development within the SAC are dominated by broadleaved woodlands, dry heaths, wet heaths, blanket bogs, and bracken (or various mosaics thereof, particularly mosaics of blanket bog and wet heath). The majority of habitats along and surrounding the Proposed Development are qualifying features of the SAC. Habitat components of note include the stands of broadleaved woodland which contain mature trees along the watercourses west of Mudalach, and the expanse of woodland along the unnamed watercourse west of the Allt Mor Ghuaidhre, which lies to the east of Mudalach. These larger woodland stands generally lie in deeply incised gorges. The Proposed Development also traverses several smaller areas of blanket bog and wet heath/blanket bog mosaics. Dry heaths are generally avoided along the majority of the Proposed Development, with the remainder generally crossing wet heath areas. No areas of alpine and subalpine heath are crossed by the Proposed Development.

- 7.2.21 The woodlands at Mudalach are also listed on the AWI.
- 7.2.22 The SAC also supports an otter population, although the citation notes otter was not a primary reason for SAC site selection. The population within the SAC is representative of the Scottish west coast and encompasses a large number of holts and couches used for shelter and breeding, intertidal and inland feeding areas, and freshwater pools. Recent surveys in 2018 and 2020 have confirmed that evidence of otter was predominantly recorded along the coast, with little evidence found inland in suitable habitat, e.g. along watercourses and in boulder piles, beyond 50 m from the shore.
- 7.2.23 Elsewhere, and outwith the SAC/SSSI area, habitats are predominantly wet heath, with smaller areas of blanket bog. There is the potential for areas of deep peat. Coniferous forestry plantation is located to the western and eastern extents of the Proposed Development.
- 7.2.24 Other constraints include protected species, with otter, a European Protected Species, likely to be present and using the coast, watercourses and waterbodies within the vicinity of the Proposed Development. Other European Protected Species such as bats could be present along the Proposed Development, in the areas of more mature broadleaved woodland. Other protected species such as reptiles may be present in suitable open areas, and pine marten in woodland areas.
- 7.2.25 Red squirrel, wildcat, badger and water vole, are not considered to be present on the Isle of Skye, as per distribution information on these species presented in Mathews *et al.* (2018).

*Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea (Alternative Route)*

- 7.2.26 An alternative route for the eastern extent of the Proposed Development through Glen Arroch would also pass through the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC and SSSI. The qualifying features of the SAC and their condition and date last assessed have already been noted in Table 7.4 above.
- 7.2.27 The habitats along the alternative route within the SAC are predominantly dominated by wet heath with some smaller patches of dry heath, blanket bog, acid flushes and bracken (and mosaics thereof). The majority of habitats along and surrounding the Proposed Development here are qualifying features of the SAC. Habitat components of note include wet heath/blanket bog mosaics at Bealach Udal and in lower Kylerhea Glen. Larger expanses of blanket bog are generally avoided. The Proposed Development crosses the Allt Mor watercourse where there is a riparian strip of broadleaved woodland along the banks, however, other than this broadleaved woodland is avoided along the alternative route.
- 7.2.28 There are no areas of ancient woodland in proximity to the alternative route.
- 7.2.29 Otter is likely to be present using the coast, watercourses and waterbodies within the vicinity of the Proposed Development. Otter surveys of the alternative route in 2018 identified most otter activity here occurring along the coast between the existing Kyle Rhea crossing location and Kylerhea village. Limited evidence of otter was recorded in proximity to the Proposed Development along the watercourses in Glen Arroch.
- 7.2.30 There is a lack of suitable woodland along the alternative route that would offer PRFs for bats. Other protected species such as reptiles may be present in suitable open areas, and pine marten in woodland areas.

*Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich*

- 7.2.31 The Proposed Development does not cross any natural heritage sites designated for ecology (non-avian) within this section.
- 7.2.32 Habitats along the route in this section are predominantly wet heath with patches of dry heath and blanket bog. Grassland and stands of bracken can be found in some areas, and there are isolated areas of mixed and

broadleaved woodland. These woodlands comprise native woodland, predominantly classified as upland birchwood. The majority of these woodland stands are also classified as ancient woodland. Some of this woodland may require removal to accommodate the Proposed Development.

7.2.33 There is suitable habitat along the Proposed Development for protected species including otter and bats, as well as other protected species including pine marten, red squirrel, water vole, badger and reptiles.

*Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry*

7.2.34 The Proposed Development does not cross any natural heritage sites designated for ecology (non-avian) within this section.

7.2.35 Habitats along the Proposed Development are predominantly wet heath, with patches of dry heath and blanket bog (with potential for deep peat in some areas). Isolated patches of grassland can be found on the lower areas, as well as forestry plantations. Native woodland, including mature oak and birch woodland, is also present, much of which is listed on the ancient woodland inventory, particularly to the north of Loch Garry. Some of this woodland may require removal to accommodate the Proposed Development.

7.2.36 There is potential for European Protected Species including otter and bats, as well as other protected species including pine marten, red squirrel, water vole, badger and reptiles along the Proposed Development.

*Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus*

7.2.37 The Proposed Development does not cross any natural heritage sites designated for ecology (non-avian) within this section.

7.2.38 Habitats along the Proposed Development are predominantly blanket bog, wet heath and areas of native woodland / commercial forestry with areas of bracken in woodland openings and existing wayleaves.

7.2.39 A number of areas of woodland along the Proposed Development in Section 6 are listed in the AWI. Some of this woodland may require removal to accommodate the Proposed Development.

7.2.40 European Protected Species such as otter and bats could be present within the surrounding area of the Proposed Development, along with other protected species such as badger, pine marten, red squirrel and reptiles.

### **7.3 Potential Effects**

7.3.1 The potential terrestrial ecology and nature conservation effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development includes:

- Temporary or permanent, direct and/or indirect effects, on the integrity or qualifying features of designated nature conservation sites (including ancient woodland);
- Temporary or permanent, direct (e.g. from land-take) and/or indirect (e.g. through changes caused by impacts to supporting systems such as groundwater or overland flow) losses or alteration/disturbance of habitats of nature conservation value;
- Temporary or permanent direct effects on protected species, such as loss of life as a result of the Proposed Development, loss of key habitat, displacement from key habitat, barrier effects preventing movement to/from key habitats, and general disturbance;
- Temporary or permanent indirect effects on protected species through loss/changes of/to food resources, population fragmentation, or degradation of key habitat (e.g. as a result of pollution); and
- Cumulative effects – ecological effects arising from the addition of the Proposed Development in combination with other relevant EIA projects.

### *Dismantling of the Existing OHL*

- 7.3.2 On the assumption that the dismantling of the existing OHL would be subject to the implementation of an Environmental Management Plan, with appropriate safeguards for pollution prevention, pre-construction checks for protected species, and effective restoration measures of disturbed ground, no likely significant adverse effects on terrestrial ecology are anticipated.

## **7.4 Mitigation**

- 7.4.1 The routing and alignment selection process for the Proposed Development has enabled consideration of likely significant effects on habitats and species, and for such effects to be minimised where practicable through this process. This will continue through the EIA process, whereby further survey data will help inform the citing of infrastructure and construction access to further minimise effects on habitats and species where practicable.
- 7.4.2 In addition, the Applicant has established best practice construction techniques and procedures that have been agreed with statutory consultees, including SEPA and NatureScot (formerly SNH). These are set out within the Applicant's General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs) and Species Protection Plans (SPPs). The Proposed Development would be constructed in accordance with these plans.
- 7.4.3 A contractual management requirement of the successful Principal Contractor would be the development and implementation of a comprehensive and site-specific robust Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This document would detail how the successful Principal Contractor would manage the works in accordance with all commitments and mitigation detailed in the EIA Report, SSE's GEMPs, SPPs, statutory consents and authorisations, and industry best practise and guidance, including pollution prevention guidance.

## **7.5 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology**

- 7.5.1 A desk study to supplement and confirm existing baseline data about the site and the surrounding area, such as the location of designated sites or other natural features of potential ecological importance, would be undertaken. The desk study area, anticipated to be defined as a 1 km corridor around the Proposed Development, would review readily available data sources such as NatureScot Site Link, the Ancient Woodland Inventory, the NatureScot Carbon and Peatland Map 2016 and National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway. Relevant Local Biodiversity Action Plans would also be reviewed.
- 7.5.2 A Phase 1 Habitat and National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey of the site has been undertaken to identify habitats and vegetation communities across the survey area (defined as the OHL / underground cable alignment and associated new tracks with a minimum 150 m buffer either side (i.e. a 300 m survey corridor), and a 200 m survey corridor around any associated existing access tracks identified as requiring upgrades outwith and in addition to this area<sup>11</sup>). Habitat surveys have been undertaken following the NVC scheme<sup>12</sup> using standard methods<sup>13</sup> and incorporating Phase 1 Habitat Survey characterisation<sup>14</sup>;
- 7.5.3 The NVC data will also be used to identify areas of potential GWDTE within the survey area as described above. Potential GWDTE habitats will be identified in line with SEPA guidance<sup>15</sup>;

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<sup>11</sup> In many instances the survey corridors are notably larger than the distances specified here, due to the amalgamation of several survey visits to account for earlier iterations of the Proposed Developments design, layout, and route option alignments.

<sup>12</sup> Rodwell, J.S. (Ed) *et al.* (1991 – 2000). *British Plant Communities* (5 volumes). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

<sup>13</sup> Rodwell, J.S. (2006). *NVC Users' Handbook*. ISBN 978 1 86107 574 1.

<sup>14</sup> Joint Nature Conservancy Council. (2010). *Handbook for phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit*. JNCC, Peterborough.

<sup>15</sup> SEPA. (2017). Land Use Planning System Guidance Note 4 - Planning guidance on on-shore windfarm developments and SEPA (2017). Land Use Planning System Guidance Note 31 - Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Development Proposals on Groundwater Abstractions and Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems.



- 7.5.4 Walkover surveys for Protected Species, focussing on otter, bat potential roost features (PRFs), and pine marten on the Isle of Skye (Sections 0-3), and also including surveys for red squirrel, badger and water vole on the mainland (Sections 4-6), in accordance with best practice methodologies. As well as surveys for the aforementioned species, any incidental records or signs of any other protected species (e.g. wildcat, reptiles, or newts) where they may be present will be recorded, or any features of particular importance (i.e. potential hibernacula or potential dens). Surveys will occur in areas of suitable habitat and will be undertaken for all protected species potentially present within a 100 m survey corridor around the preferred alignment and associated new tracks. This 'core' 100 m protected species survey area will also be further buffered by 30 m (for bats<sup>16</sup>, red squirrel<sup>17</sup> and reptiles), 100 m (for pine marten<sup>18</sup>, badger<sup>19</sup> and water vole<sup>20</sup>) and 200 m (for otter<sup>21</sup>), giving a survey corridor of up to 500 m, in the case of otter<sup>22</sup>.
- 7.5.5 The results of these surveys would be used to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of the Proposed Development, carried out in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (2018<sup>23</sup>), and with due consideration of any other relevant legislation, policy or guidance.
- 7.5.6 Where appropriate, mitigation measures would be recommended within the EclA to remedy any adverse effects and measures to enhance the local ecology would also be incorporated within the assessment. An assessment of residual effects would then be undertaken and reported within the EIA Report.
- 7.5.7 Within Section 3, and in addition to an assessment under the EIA Regulations, the Proposed Development will be subject to a Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) under the EU Habitats Directive given that the OHL passes through the Mointeach nan Lochain Dubha SAC and the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC. As part of a HRA, the competent authority would be required to undertake an Appropriate Assessment. The EIA Report will include relevant information to allow the competent authority to undertake this assessment.
- 7.5.8 In the case of the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC, a preliminary shadow HRA is being undertaken to inform the design and assess the Proposed Development, and the alternative route option in this section. The results of this will be provided for discussion with NatureScot.

## 7.6 Issues to be Scoped Out

- 7.6.1 It is proposed that the following is scoped out of the detailed terrestrial ecology and nature conservation assessment:
- Lochs Duich, Long and Aish Reefs SAC will be crossed by the Proposed Development at the existing Kyle Rhea crossing using the existing tower locations. No works are anticipated to occur within the SAC and

<sup>16</sup> Surveyed in line with Collins, J. (ed) (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

<sup>17</sup> Surveyed in line with Gurnell, J., Lurz, P. McDonald, R. & Pepper, H. (2009). Practical Techniques for Surveying and Monitoring Squirrels. Forestry Commission Practice Note.

<sup>18</sup> Surveyed in line with O' Mahony D., O' Reilly, C. & Turner, P. (2006). National Pine Marten Survey of Ireland 2005. Council for Forest Research and Development, Ireland.

<sup>19</sup> Surveyed in line with Neal, E., and Cheeseman, C.L. (1996). Badgers. Poyser Natural History, London and Scottish Badgers (2018). Surveying for Badgers: Good Practice Guidelines. Version 1.

<sup>20</sup> Surveyed in line with Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016). The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series). Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. The Mammal Society, London.

<sup>21</sup> Surveyed in line with Bang, P., and Dahlström, P. (2001). Animal Tracks and Signs. Oxford University Press, Oxford; Sargent, G., and Morris, P. (2003). How to Find and Identify Mammals. The Mammal Society, London; and Chanin, P. (2003). Monitoring the Otter (*Lutra lutra*). Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No.10 English Nature, Peterborough.

<sup>22</sup> For existing tracks and paths to be upgraded, the survey area is the actual route buffered by the above distances to create the respective survey corridors.

<sup>23</sup> CIEEM (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine (version 1.1). Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

therefore no works are predicted to affect the qualifying feature of the SAC. Effects on this SAC are therefore scoped out of the EclA;

- Sligachan Peatlands SAC and SSSI are present within approximately 0.3 km of the Proposed Development at the closest point, however only a small proportion of the very southern part of Section 1 and very small fragment of Section 2 are hydrologically linked via a small number of minor watercourses to the portion of the SAC/SSSI which lies immediately west of the A87 to the north and north-east of Caiplach. Appropriate mitigation to avoid silt and pollution entering these hydrologically linked watercourses during construction as part of the CEMP would be required to avoid indirect effects on certain SAC/SSSI qualifying features, however provided these measures are in place then no significant or adverse effects on the SAC/SSSI are predicted and this site is proposed to be scoped out of the detailed EclA;
- Strath SAC and SSSI are present within approximately 0.5 km of the Proposed Development at the closest point, however the Proposed Development is entirely situated downstream of Strath SAC and SSSI and there is therefore no hydrological connectivity, and with the adoption of best practice construction methods no other potential effects on Strath SAC and SSSI have been identified. As such, effects on this designated site are scoped out;
- Freshwater habitat surveys and fisheries. Whilst the Proposed Development would cross a number of watercourses throughout each section many of these are small, steep, and minor upland watercourses unlikely to contain a population of fish, or they may only contain a small population of resident brown trout in suitable stretches. Notwithstanding this, the Proposed Development would also cross a number of larger watercourses with likely fisheries interests, including migratory salmonids, however wood pole and steel lattice structures would be located at sufficient buffer distance from watercourses. With the implementation of best practice construction methodology and pollution prevention measures as part of the CEMP, and the presence of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) or other suitably qualified ecological consultant to carry out pre-construction surveys or checks in line with an approved SPP at notable water crossings or where underground cabling of watercourses is proposed during the spawning or egg incubation period, significant effects are not anticipated;
- Specific protected species surveys for badger, water vole, red squirrel and wildcat will not be required in Sections 0-3 as these species are not present on Skye, as discussed above. These species will be scoped-out of the associated assessments in these sections;
- Specific surveys and associated assessments for great crested newt (GCN) are not considered to be required for the Proposed Development. GCN are not considered to be present on Skye (Sections 0-3) in accordance with the best available information (i.e. there is only a single accepted record of GCN on Skye on the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) from 1985 at Upper Ollach (more than 4 km from the Proposed Development), this record may be attributed to an unsuccessful artificial introduction on Skye<sup>24</sup>, there are no other GCN records on Skye). Furthermore, along the mainland length of the Proposed Development (Sections 4-6) there are no records of GCN, with the habitat generally unsuitable, as per Oldham *et al.* (2000)<sup>25</sup>, O'Brien *et al.* (2017)<sup>26</sup>, and McInerny (2018)<sup>24</sup>, as a consequence GCN surveys and assessment have been scoped-out. In the unlikely scenario that this species is discovered in proximity to the Proposed Development then the adoption of a SPP will ensure all relevant wildlife legislation is complied with and significant effects are not anticipated;
- Specific surveys for reptiles and other amphibians are not considered to be required, however as noted above incidental field signs, or evidence of presence, will be recorded. With implementation of best practice

<sup>24</sup> McInerny, C.J. (2018). Amphibian and Reptile Conservation in Scotland: Focus on the Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* and the European Adder *Vipera berus*, Reptiles and Amphibians, David Ramiro Aguilón Gutiérrez, IntechOpen, DOI: 10.5772/intechopen.74949. Available from: <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/59670>

<sup>25</sup> Oldham, R.S., Keeble, J., Swan, M.J.S. and Jeffcote, M. (2000). Evaluating the Suitability of Habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Herpetological Journal, Vol. 10 pp.143-155.

<sup>26</sup> O'Brien, D., Hall, J., Miró, A., Wilkinson, J. (2017). Testing the validity of a commonly-used habitat suitability index at the edge of a species' range: great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* in Scotland. Amphibia-Reptilia 38: 265-273.

construction methodology and adoption of SPPs, significant effects on these ecological receptors are not anticipated; and

- Effects on habitats that are considered to be of low conservation value<sup>27</sup> and are common habitat types locally and regionally are scoped out of the assessment. This will likely include, but not be limited to conifer plantation (including clearfell areas), improved grasslands, acid grasslands, neutral grasslands, and bracken. The full list of habitats recorded and scoped-out per section will be detailed in the EclA.

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<sup>27</sup> That is, habitats outwith the following categories: Habitats listed in Annex I to the Habitats Directive, Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) or Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL) Priority Habitats, Highland Nature Biodiversity Action Plan (2021-2026) Habitats for Action, or Habitats or species protected by legislation such as The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and/or the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended).

## 8. ORNITHOLOGY

### 8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This Chapter of the Scoping Report provides an overview of the field surveys that have been undertaken to inform the ornithological baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with the Proposed Development and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report on a section by section basis.

### 8.2 Field Survey Methodologies

8.2.1 NatureScot guidance has been used to inform initial survey design during the route and alignment stages of the project. These included a range of baseline ornithological surveys between April 2016 and August 2021 targeted to key areas across the length of the Proposed Development.

8.2.2 The study area for survey design has been defined with reference to the OHL route and alignment as the project has evolved. The survey buffer size has been dependent on the sensitivity of key species to potential effects associated with the Proposed Development.

8.2.3 The assessment will be informed by the following surveys already completed:

- Moorland Bird Surveys (April to July 2018 and April to July 2021; within selected sections of the Proposed Development and a 500 m buffer);
- Scarce Breeding Bird surveys (April to September 2016, April to August 2018, October 2018 to March 2019 and January to July 2021; within selected sections of the Proposed Development extending up to 6 km depending on species);
- Black grouse surveys (April and May 2018; within Section 5 of the Proposed Development and 1.5 km buffer);
- Flight activity (vantage point) surveys (April to September 2016, February 2017 to August 2017, March 2018 to March 2019 and February to August 2021; within selected sections of the Proposed Development extending up to 2 km); and
- Coastal Bird Surveys (April to June 2018 and January to March 2019; Loch Sligachan and Loch Ainort).

8.2.4 Survey methods follow contemporary best practice guidance and no further surveys to inform the assessment are anticipated. Further details of the survey methods are provided below.

#### *Moorland Bird Surveys*

8.2.5 The Brown & Shepherd (1993)<sup>28</sup> method for surveying upland waders was modified to provide reliable estimates for some breeding moorland passerines by undertaking some surveys during the first few hours of daylight. All target bird species were surveyed. Surveyors conducted four separate “visits” during the survey period. Bird locations and behaviour were plotted onto 1:25,000 scale maps, using the standard Common Birds Census notation. Supplementary behavioural observations and notes were made to determine breeding locations as accurately as possible.

8.2.6 Suitable habitat within the moorland bird survey area was systematically searched for evidence of breeding birds. A survey route was chosen to ensure that all parts of the survey area were surveyed to within 100 m of the observer. The surveys were carried out during daylight hours, avoiding strong winds, heavy rain, fog and low cloud. Walking, listening and scanning by eye and with binoculars were the methods used to locate the birds. Particular attention was given to any topographical and vegetation features likely to influence bird

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<sup>28</sup> Brown, A.F. and Shepherd, K.B. (1993) A method for censusing upland breeding waders. *Bird Study* 40: 3 pp189 -195.

distribution. Birds were considered to be breeding if they were observed singing, displaying, carrying nest material, if nests or young were found, or evidence observed of repetitively alarmed adults or disturbance displaying, or birds carrying food or in territorial dispute.

#### Scarce Breeding Bird Surveys

- 8.2.7 Priority was given to detecting the species considered most likely to occur; black-throated diver (*Gavia arctica*), red-throated diver (*G. stellata*), common scoter (*Melanitta nigra*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), peregrine (*F. peregrinus*), barn owl (*Tyto alba*) and short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*). Surveys focussed on areas or sites suitable for nesting and foraging within a buffer of between 0.5 and 6 km of the Proposed Development. The survey methods used for each species are described below.

#### *Diver species*

- 8.2.8 The methods described in Gilbert *et al.* (1998)<sup>29</sup> for surveying breeding diver species were used. All potential breeding sites within 1 km of the Proposed Development were checked for suitability and, if deemed to be required, further checks for occupancy were made at least twice per calendar month in May-July. Wherever possible, lochs were scanned from a distance to search for incubating birds or other evidence of breeding.

#### *Common scoter*

- 8.2.9 The methods described in Gilbert *et al.* (1998) for surveying breeding common scoter were used. All potential breeding sites were checked for suitability and, if deemed to be required, further checks for occupancy were made.

#### *Eagle species*

- 8.2.10 Survey methods given in Hardy *et al.* (2013)<sup>30</sup> were followed. Targeted watches and searches focusing on sites known to have been used for nesting in previous years were undertaken. In addition, areas potentially suitable for nesting and roosting within 6 km of the Proposed Development were searched for signs of recent activity.

#### *Osprey*

- 8.2.11 Survey methods given in Hardey *et al.* (2013) were followed. Potential nest sites were searched for in spring to look for the evidence of occupancy (presence of birds, faeces, fresh prey remains).

#### *Hen harrier*

- 8.2.12 Survey methods given in Hardey *et al.* (2013) were followed. Emphasis was given to searching habitats considered potentially suitable for nesting within 2 km of the Proposed Development; in this case including areas of heath/bog with stands of heather >0.4m tall, and suitable habitats within plantation forest.

#### *Merlin*

- 8.2.13 Survey methods given in Hardey *et al.* (2013) were followed. Within suitable habitats, old crow nests (which could be re-used by merlin), fenceposts, hummocks, bushes and trees within 2 km of the Proposed Development were checked for signs of occupation (e.g. plucked prey, moulted feathers, pellets and faeces). Emphasis was given to heath/bog habitats with stands of heather >0.4m tall.

<sup>29</sup> Gilbert, G., Gibbons, D.W. & Evans, J. (1998) Bird monitoring methods. RSPB Sandy, Bedfordshire.

<sup>30</sup> Hardey, J., Crick, H., Wernham, C., Riley, H., Etheridge, B. & Thompson, D. (2013). Raptors, a field guide to survey and monitoring. The Stationery Office, Edinburgh.

## Peregrine

- 8.2.14 Survey methods given in Hardey *et al.* (2013) were followed. Potential nest sites were searched for in spring to look for the evidence of occupancy (presence of birds, faeces, fresh prey remains).

## Barn owl

- 8.2.15 Survey methods given in Hardey *et al.* (2013) were followed. Potential nesting and roosting sites were identified. Some suitable sites were checked for signs of occupancy (adult birds, young, pellets, feathers, faecal splash).

## Short-eared owl

- 8.2.16 Survey methods given in Hardey *et al.* (2013) were followed. Suitable habitat was checked for evidence of hunting males, territorial activity and other signs of presence.

## Flight Activity Surveys

- 8.2.17 Information on bird flight activity was collected during timed watches from strategic Vantage Points (VPs) using the methods described by Band *et al.* (2007)<sup>31</sup>. The Flight Activity Survey Area is defined by the area considered suitable for development plus a 500 m buffer.
- 8.2.18 VPs were selected through a mix of GIS analysis and field trials, with the aim of maximising ground visibility within the site using the minimum number of points. Viewsheds are derived using a 20 m vertical cut-off and are truncated horizontally to 2 km.
- 8.2.19 Watches from these vantage points did not exceed three hours in length and were timed to ensure each vantage point has observations spread throughout daylight hours each month.
- 8.2.20 The height above ground level of flights by target and secondary species were judged to be within one of several bands so that an estimate can be made of flight activity within the zone where powerlines would be present.

## Black Grouse Lek Surveys

- 8.2.21 Suitable habitat within the 1.5 km survey buffer was surveyed for displaying (lekking) male black grouse during April and May 2018. Survey methods were based on those in Gilbert *et al.* (1998) and care was taken to avoid disturbing birds.
- 8.2.22 In areas which were identified as being potentially suitable for display by black grouse, two visits were undertaken within two hours of dawn to locate leks. Visits were conducted in calm, dry weather with good visibility. Observers watched and listened for lekking birds from a number of suitable vantage points.

## Coastal Bird Surveys

- 8.2.23 Focussed searches for breeding and wintering waders and waterfowl were carried out in areas identified through desk studies and consultations as being suitable for these species. These areas were confined to suitable habitat at the head of Loch Sligachan and head of Loch Ainort.

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<sup>31</sup> Band, W., Madders, M. & Whitfield, D.P. (2007) Developing field and analytical methods to assess avian collision risk at wind farms. In de Lucas, M, Janss, G.F.E. and Ferrer, M. (Eds.) Birds and Wind Farms: Risk assessment and Mitigation, pp. 259 - 275. Quercus, Madrid

8.2.24 For breeding birds, surveys were in the same areas as for winter and followed methods outlined in Gilbert *et al.* (1998), *i.e.* three visits were undertaken between April and July. Coastal breeding sites including saltmarsh, grazing marshes, shingle beaches, dunes, rocky-shores and lowland grassland were surveyed.

### 8.3 Baseline Conditions

#### *Designated Sites*

8.3.1 There are three sites with a statutory designation for ornithological interest with potential connectivity to the Proposed Development. The details of the designations and qualifying features are summarised in Table 8.1. Reference should also be made to Figures 2.0.1a to 2.6.3.

**Table 8.1 Ornithological Designated Sites**

Site	Qualifying feature	Approximate distance (km)	Section of Proposed Development
Cuillins SPA	Golden eagle	0	Section 1 and 2
West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA	Black-throated diver Common scoter	0.05	Section 5 and 6
West Inverness-shire Lochs SSSI	Black-throated diver Common scoter	0.05	Section 5 and 6

8.3.2 As the Proposed Development passes through the Cuillins Special Protection Area (SPA) and West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA a HRA under the EU Habitats Directive will be required. As part of a HRA, the competent authority would be required to undertake an Appropriate Assessment. The EIA Report will include relevant information to allow the competent authority to undertake this assessment.

8.3.3 Impacts upon the SSSI designation which spatially overlaps the West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA will also be assessed.

#### *Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane*

8.3.4 Hen harriers breed within the wider area and there are also records of corncrake and white-tailed eagle. There is potential for displacement and disturbance during construction to these species, but this could be mitigated through timing of these activities. Moorland breeding bird surveys carried out between April and July 2021 detected no notable species of conservation concern within the vicinity of the Proposed Development. Similarly, scarce breeding bird surveys over the same period detected no breeding sites of scarce raptors within 500 m of the Proposed Development, although flights by white tailed eagle, peregrine and merlin were recorded. A single male corncrake was also recorded holding territory at Trumpan in May 2021.

8.3.5 Hen harriers, merlin, peregrine, corncrake and white-tailed eagle are all bird species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

#### *Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan*

8.3.6 The Proposed Development would pass through, or close to the edge of the Cuillins SPA for approximately 3 km in this section, for which golden eagle is a qualifying feature. It is understood that up to four golden eagle nest territories and three white-tailed eagle territories exist within approximately 6 km of the Proposed Development.

8.3.7 Known ornithological sensitivities include white-tailed eagle, golden eagle, hen harriers, red-throated diver and greenshank, all of which frequent the area. Nest sites for some of these species are known to exist within the

wider area and bird survey work undertaken in 2021 has been used to inform alignment selection, and to further inform appropriate mitigation measures. Moorland breeding bird surveys within this section between May and July 2021 detected greenshank, golden plover and curlew within the area, and flights of white-tailed eagle and red-throated diver. Flight activity surveys for golden eagle and white-tailed eagle have been carried out in 2021, supplementing existing survey data. Flights of both species were recorded throughout this area. A focus on identifying known nest sites for birds of conservation concern during 2021 surveys has helped inform the alignment selection process.

- 8.3.8 Golden eagle, white-tailed eagle, red-throated diver, greenshank, golden plover and curlew are all bird species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

*Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford*

- 8.3.9 The Proposed Development would pass through the Cuillins SPA, classified for 8 pairs of breeding golden eagles. Active white-tailed eagle territories within 6 km, plus information from surveys, sightings and satellite tags suggest use of the surrounding area. Other sensitivities include breeding greenshank, and possible merlin breeding habitat, plus waders, waterfowl and gulls.

*Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea*

- 8.3.10 The Proposed Development includes a short section through the Cuillins SPA. Golden eagle is a qualifying feature. One active white-tailed eagle territory and an active golden eagle territory are located within 6 km of the Proposed Development. Also, white-tailed eagle and golden eagle, and other birds of conservation concern, use the areas around the narrows at Kyle Rhea.

- 8.3.11 In terms of the alternative route through Glen Arroch an active golden eagle territory is located within 6 km and white-tailed eagle are known to roost in the woodland on the slopes of Beinn na Caillich, north of Kylerhea.

*Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich*

- 8.3.12 There are two to three active golden eagle territories between Kinloch Hourn and Glenelg within the vicinity of the Proposed Development, albeit flight activity is typically focussed on the higher ground, and there are no known nest sites close by.

- 8.3.13 Potential for black-throated diver, red-throated diver and common scoter flight activity, as well as greenshank. Black-throated diver, common scoter and greenshank are all bird species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

*Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry*

- 8.3.14 The Proposed Development runs within close proximity of the West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA, which is classified for 6.6 pairs (on average) of black-throated divers and 7.8 pairs (on average) of common scoter. Black-throated divers and common scoters may fly between the composite lochs of the SPA and could be vulnerable to collision from OHL's between the lochs. There is some potential collision risk for birds flying between these lochs, although as the new OHL would be predominantly through forestry and follows the existing OHL, the risk will be lower.

- 8.3.15 Other ornithological sensitivities include black grouse and an active golden eagle territory within the vicinity of the route. Greenshank and osprey also nest along the route and potential disturbance due to construction activities may occur and will require mitigation if nests are located within possible disturbance distances.



*Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus*

8.3.16 The Proposed Development runs to the east of Loch Lundie at the eastern edge of the West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA then through forestry to Fort Augustus Substation at Auchterawe.

8.3.17 Black grouse are present with a known lek near Loch Lundie.

#### **8.4 Potential Effects**

8.4.1 The potential ornithological effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development includes:

- Effects on the integrity or qualifying features of designated nature conservation sites;
- Reductions in productivity and/or survival following displacement from key habitats due to disturbance during construction, direct loss of habitat and avoidance of habitats; and
- Increased mortality due to collision with the OHL.

*Dismantling of the Existing OHL*

8.4.2 The dismantling of the existing OHL is not likely to result in significant adverse effects on ornithology, subject to (in some cases) timing of works and pre-construction checks. It is anticipated that such measures would be incorporated into an Environmental Management Plan for the dismantling works to minimise potential effects and disturbance.

#### **8.5 Mitigation**

8.5.1 The routeing and alignment selection process for the Proposed Development has enabled consideration of likely significant effects on ornithological receptors throughout the evolution of the project to date. Further assessment will continue through the EIA process, and mitigation measures developed to minimise adverse effects on ornithology.

#### **8.6 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology**

8.6.1 The ecological impact assessment (EclA) would be completed in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management Ecological Impact Assessment Guidance (CIEEM, 2018)<sup>32</sup>, as well as having regard to other relevant guidance documents. The assessment would use the ornithological baseline to identify the sensitive ornithological features that could be impacted by the construction or operation of the Proposed Development.

8.6.2 The assessment determines the potential effects of the Proposed Development and considers the likelihood of their occurrence. Effect is defined as change in the assemblage of bird species present as a result of the impacts accrued by the Proposed Development. Change can occur either during or beyond the life of the Proposed Development. Where the response of a population has varying degrees of likelihood, the probability of these differing outcomes is considered. Note effects can be adverse, neutral or beneficial.

8.6.3 In assessing whether an effect is significant or not, three factors are considered:

- the Nature Conservation Importance of the species involved,
- the magnitude of the likely effect, and
- the conservation status of the species.

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<sup>32</sup> URL: <https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-ecological-impact-assessment-ecia/> [Accessed 09/11/2021]

- 8.6.4 The significance of potential effects is then determined by integrating the assessments of these factors in a reasoned way. The magnitude of likely effects involves consideration of their spatial and temporal magnitudes. In making judgements on significance by this integration, consideration is given to the national and regional trends of the potentially affected species, and how the integrated effects may impinge on the conservation status of the species involved at these geographical levels. The effect of the impact on each ornithological feature would then be considered in the absence of any mitigation and classified as significant or not significant.
- 8.6.5 Where appropriate, mitigation measures would be recommended within the EclA to remedy any adverse impacts. An assessment of residual effects and cumulative effects would then be undertaken and reported within the EIA Report.
- 8.6.6 Table 8.2 describes the proposed ornithological scope of assessment for each section of the project.

**Table 8.2 Proposed Scope of Assessment**

Topic	Proposed Scope of Assessment
All Sections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data and survey methods will be compiled into a Technical Report (TR) and this will inform the EIA ornithology chapter. The chapter will include a thorough analysis of the survey data plus other data gained through the desk studies and consultations. It will consider the potential impacts on birds of collision, disturbance and habitat loss due to displacement and land-take through all stages of the proposal from construction to removal of the existing line.</li> </ul>
Sections 1 & 2: Edinbane to North Sligachan and North of Sligachan to Broadford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to assessment under the EIA Regulations, the Proposed Development will be subject to a HRA under the EU Habitats Directive given that the OHL passes through the Cuillins SPA. As part of a HRA, the competent authority would be required to undertake an Appropriate Assessment. The EIA Report will include relevant information to allow the competent authority to undertake this assessment.</li> </ul>
Sections 5 & 6: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry and Invergarry to Fort Augustus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to assessment under the EIA Regulations, the Proposed Development would be subject to a HRA under the EU Habitats Directive given that the OHL passes adjacent to the West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA. As part of a HRA, the competent authority would be required to undertake an Appropriate Assessment. The EIA Report will include relevant information which should allow the competent authority to undertake this assessment.</li> </ul>

## 8.7 Issues to be Scoped Out

### *Dismantling of the Existing OHL*

- 8.7.1 The dismantling of the existing OHL is not likely to result in significant adverse effects on ornithology, subject to (in some cases) timing of works and pre-construction checks. It is anticipated that such measures would be incorporated into an Environmental Management Plan for the dismantling works to minimise potential effects and disturbance. It is, therefore, proposed to scope out a detailed assessment of the dismantling of the existing 132 kV OHL.

### *Barrier Effects*

- 8.7.2 A barrier effect would be where the vertical configuration of wires and towers creates an actual or perceived barrier which bird species may not cross, or at the very least would need to habituate to crossing.
- 8.7.3 The existing OHL runs for much of the length of the Proposed Development. This suggests that birds would habituate/have already habituated to the presence of an OHL and would not treat it as a barrier. The alignment and tower configuration in this area would mean that the Proposed Development would not present a

significantly different barrier to ornithological features than that presented by the existing OHL. Therefore, the effect of this impact is considered to be of negligible significance.

*Electrocution*

- 8.7.4 Bird electrocution on OHLs is possible either where a bird is able to touch a conductor while it is perched on an earthed tower, touch a conductor and the earth wire simultaneously or touch two conductor wires simultaneously. The configuration of the wires and towers of the Proposed Development means that none of these scenarios are possible as the gaps between conductors and perch points would be greater than any bird wingspan.

*Disturbance (Operational Phase)*

- 8.7.5 When operational, the Proposed Development would require very occasional visits by site personnel both on foot and in vehicles for maintenance activities. While the Proposed Development may also result in disturbance arising from noise and visual effects associated with the wires, the magnitude of both of these potential impacts is considered too low to cause a significant effect.

*Habitat Loss (Construction Phase)*

- 8.7.6 Both permanent and temporary habitat loss and habitat modification due to vegetation management or hydrological change would be assessed in the chapter dealing with non-avian ecology. The levels of habitat loss and/or modification associated with tower and track construction are low and are not considered to represent a likely significant additional loss and/ or modification of bird habitat than that presented by the existing OHL.

## 9. CULTURAL HERITAGE

### 9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 This Chapter of the Scoping Report provides an overview of the cultural heritage baseline within the vicinity of the Proposed Development, describes the potential effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development on a section-by-section basis, and presents the assessment methodology to be used in the Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment.

### 9.2 Baseline Conditions

9.2.1 The cultural heritage baseline summarised below was identified through a desktop study carried out during the route and alignment selection stages of the project, drawing on data from The Highland Council (THC) Historic Environment Record (HER) and designation lists held by Historic Environment Scotland (HES). That data was augmented by a study of historic Ordnance Survey mapping and aerial photography/satellite imagery (available via Bing Maps, Google Earth and ESRI World Imagery), and by targeted field surveys directed towards those areas where there was an identified concentration of archaeological remains; the purpose of the field surveys was to ground-truth the archaeological sensitivity in those areas (Section 0 Trumpan to Fairy Bridge and Section 3 (alternative route) through Glen Arroch).

#### *Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane*

9.2.2 The archaeological and cultural heritage baseline of this area is characterised by features typical of upland rural landscapes throughout the Highlands. On the more cultivable land, irregular fields defined by drystone walls and earthen banks enclose cultivation remains in the form of spade-cut lazy beds and/or plough-cut rig and furrow. In the upland pasture, stock management features such as sheepfolds, drovers' tracks, shieling huts, and livestock pens and enclosures are evident. Settlement remains include abandoned crofting townships, cleared and abandoned during the Highland Clearances of the late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and there are traces of 18<sup>th</sup> century military roads, carried over the numerous burns by simple stone bridges.

9.2.3 The majority of these features most likely date to the late-medieval and post-medieval periods, although some evidence of prehistoric settlement and activity is present in the form of Iron Age brochs, hut circles, and occasional chance finds of artefacts. The relative scarcity of cultivable land on suitable terrain is likely to mean that later settlement has largely continued and developed on lands exploited in prehistoric periods, and it is likely that the later activity has obscured (but not obliterated) much of the evidence of earlier settlement and occupation. The evidence suggests a long and in places continuous occupation from the Bronze Age to the present. The landscape formed by this historic and prehistoric occupation is both extensive and well-preserved throughout much of Section 0.

9.2.4 There are two Scheduled Monuments within the general vicinity of the Proposed Development; the medieval remains of Trumpan church and burial ground (SM 949), approximately 270 m north-east of the Proposed Development at Trumpan; and Dun Hallin (SM 916), a prehistoric broch approximately 220 m north-east of the existing OHL.

9.2.5 There is a Category C Listed Building, of low sensitivity, in the general vicinity of the Proposed Development. This is the original early-19<sup>th</sup> century 'Fairy Bridge' (LB 466) at Duirinish.

9.2.6 There are numerous and extensive non-designated cultural heritage assets recorded on the THC HER within this section. In the main, these comprise the remains of crofting townships of post-medieval date with occasional remains of prehistoric date scattered amongst the later settlement. These remains were all well recorded in detail by The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) in the 1990s.

*Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan*

- 9.2.7 Land use within most of this section comprises rough upland pasture with areas of commercial forestry plantation. Here, stock management features such as sheepfolds, drovers' tracks, shieling huts, and livestock pens and enclosures are evident, if sparse. On the scarce areas of historically cultivable land, irregular fields defined by drystone walls and earthen banks enclose cultivation remains in the form of spade-cut lazy beds and/or plough-cut rig and furrow. Settlement remains include crofting townships, cleared and abandoned during the Highland Clearances of the late-18th and early-19th centuries.
- 9.2.8 The majority of these features most likely date to the late-medieval and post-medieval periods, although some evidence of prehistoric settlement and activity is present in the form of hut circles, but includes the reported discovery of a souterrain in the 1920s. The relative scarcity of cultivable land on suitable terrain is likely to mean that later activity has largely continued on lands exploited in prehistoric periods, and it is likely that this has obscured (but not obliterated) much of the evidence of earlier settlement and occupation. The evidence suggests occupation from the Bronze Age to the present. The landscape formed by this historic and prehistoric occupation is intermittent but moderately well-preserved along much of Section 1.
- 9.2.9 The relative scarcity of heritage assets recorded within Section 1 partly reflects the upland nature of the landscape and partly the lack of archaeological investigation. Recorded features are mostly post-medieval, such as buildings, field boundaries, and cultivation remains.
- 9.2.10 In the wider Study Area, Dun Arkaig Broch Scheduled Monument (SM 13662) is located approximately 1.3 km from the Proposed Development at its closest point.

*Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford*

- 9.2.11 Cultivable land is relatively scarce in this section, and settlement is mostly concentrated in the crofting townships of 'Sconser', 'Luib' and 'Strollamus'.
- 9.2.12 In and around these townships, and on low-lying, flatter land along the coast, irregular fields defined by drystone walls and earthen banks enclose cultivation remains in the form of spade-cut lazy beds and/or plough-cut rig and furrow. On the steeper uplands, the land is largely used as rough pasture and/or wild grazing. Stock management features such as sheepfolds, drovers' tracks, shieling huts, and livestock pens and enclosures are evident. Settlement remains include abandoned crofting townships, cleared and abandoned during the Highland Clearances of the late-18th and early-19th centuries.
- 9.2.13 The majority of these features most likely date to the late-medieval and post-medieval periods, although some evidence of prehistoric settlement and activity is present in the form of Iron Age hut circles. The relative scarcity of cultivable land on suitable terrain is likely to mean that later settlement has largely continued and developed on lands exploited in prehistoric periods, and it is likely that the later activity has obscured (but not obliterated) much of the evidence of earlier settlement and occupation. The evidence suggests a long and in places continuous occupation from the Iron Age (if not earlier) to the present. The landscape formed by this historic and prehistoric occupation is both extensive and well-preserved along much of Section 2.
- 9.2.14 There are three designated heritage assets within the vicinity of the Proposed Development: these are three Category B Listed Buildings at 2 Luib, 5 Luib, and 6 Luib, each of which is a nineteenth century cottage: 5 Luib is preserved as a folk museum. There are also a number of non-designated cultural heritage assets recorded on the THC HER within this section.
- 9.2.15 In the wider Study Area, the Proposed Development would pass near the Category C listed Sligachan Old Bridge (LB 1783), and a Scheduled Monument (Old Corry cairns (SM 13673)) near Broadford (also discussed in relation to Section 3).

*Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea*

- 9.2.16 Cultivable land is relatively scarce in this section, and land use comprises a mix of partially improved, enclosed pasture, wilder upland grazing, and commercial forestry plantations. Settlement, and crofting land-use, is mostly concentrated around Broadford Bay in the conjoining townships of Broadford, Harrapool, and Breakish.
- 9.2.17 In and around these townships, and on low-lying, flatter land along the shore at Kyle Rhea, irregular fields defined by drystone walls and earthen banks enclose traces of historic cultivation remains in the form of spade-cut lazy beds and/or plough-cut rig and furrow. On the steeper uplands, the land is largely used as rough pasture and/or wild grazing. Stock management features such as sheepfolds, drovers' tracks, shieling huts, and livestock pens and enclosures are evident. Settlement remains include abandoned crofting townships, cleared and abandoned during the Highland Clearances of the late-18th and early-19th centuries.
- 9.2.18 The relative scarcity of cultivable land on suitable terrain is likely to mean that settlement has largely continued and developed on lands previously exploited in prehistoric periods, and it is likely that the later activity has obscured (but not obliterated) much of the evidence of earlier settlement and occupation. The evidence suggests a long, and in places continuous, occupation from the late-Bronze Age / Iron Age periods (if not earlier) to the present-day. The landscape formed by this historic and prehistoric occupation is moderately well-preserved along much of Section 3, although commercial forestry has been established (mostly in the latter part of the 20th century) in certain sections.
- 9.2.19 There is only one designated heritage asset in the vicinity of the Proposed Development in Section 3: Old Corry cairns, (SM 13673) consists of three prehistoric burial cairns and lies in forestry close to the route alignment west of Broadford. In the wider area, other designated heritage assets include three Scheduled Monuments, around 1 km to the north of the alignment: Broadford Bay, chambered cairn (SM 13724), Ashaig church (remains) and burial ground (SM 13720) and Ashaig burnt mound (SM 13721), and several listed buildings (two of Category B and three of Category C) in the harbour area at Broadford.
- 9.2.20 There are numerous non-designated heritage assets recorded on the THC HER along this section, mostly along the low-lying ground around Broadford Bay. The majority of these most likely date to the late-medieval and post-medieval periods, although some evidence of prehistoric settlement and activity is also present, in the form of late-Bronze Age or Iron Age hut circles and chance artefact finds around Broadford.

*Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea Alternative Route*

- 9.2.21 Along the alternative route, through Glen Arroch, there are only two designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the alternative route: two category B listed buildings: Kylerhea Old Inn (LB 13984) and (Kylerhea slipway (LB 51413), at the eastern end of the route, at Kyle Rhea Ferry. Each within about 500 m of the alternative alignment.
- 9.2.22 Along the route through Glen Arroch, field surveys in 1989 recorded a small number of scattered isolated shielings and other small buildings dotted along the valley and relatively close to the present-day road. The route through Glen Arroch, from Broadford to Kyle Rhea, was historically a major droving route taking cattle from across Skye to the crossing to the mainland at Kyle Rhea.

*Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich*

- 9.2.23 Cultivable land is very scarce in this section, and land use comprises some partially improved pasture towards the western end of the section. Otherwise, it is dominated by wild upland grazing and moorland south and east of Glen More, with occasional areas of commercial forestry plantation. Settlement is sparse, and almost exclusively confined to small townships and farms around Glen More and Kinloch Houran. In and around these settlements, and on any areas of low-lying, flatter land along the route, irregular fields defined by drystone walls and earthen banks enclose traces of historic cultivation remains in the form of spade-cut lazy beds and/or

plough-cut rig and furrow. On the steeper uplands, the land is largely used as rough pasture and/or wild grazing. Stock management features such as sheepfolds, drovers' tracks, shieling huts, and livestock pens and enclosures are evident. Settlement remains include abandoned crofting townships, forcibly emptied during the Highland Clearances of the late-18th and early-19th centuries.

- 9.2.24 The majority of the cultural heritage features along Section 4 most likely date to the late-medieval and post-medieval periods, although some evidence of prehistoric settlement and activity is also recorded, in the form of possible settlement platforms on the slopes above Inner Loch Hourn, and Iron Age forts, brochs, and associated features in Gleann Beag.
- 9.2.25 The relative scarcity of cultivable land on suitable terrain is likely to mean that settlement has largely continued and developed on lands previously exploited in prehistoric periods, and it is likely that the later activity has obscured much of the evidence of earlier settlement and occupation. The evidence suggests occupation from the prehistoric period to the present-day. The landscape formed by this occupation is moderately well-preserved along parts of Section 4, although commercial forestry has been established (mostly in the latter part of the 20th century) in certain sections of the route. The damming of Loch Quoich in the late 1950s resulted in the rise of the water level, flooding the original shoreline. A number of settlements and features recorded on historic Ordnance Survey mapping have been submerged, and it could also be the case that any surviving prehistoric evidence along the lochside was similarly flooded.
- 9.2.26 There is one designated heritage asset within the vicinity of the Proposed Development in Section 4: Quoich Dam and Intake Gatehouse Towers (LB 51704) is a Category B Listed Building of 20<sup>th</sup> century date.
- 9.2.27 There are a number of non-designated cultural heritage assets recorded on the THC HER within this section.
- 9.2.28 Two Scheduled Monuments in Gleann Beag ((Dun Grugaig fort (SM 914) and Dun Telve and Dun Troddan brochs (SM 90152)) are within the wider area. Dun Grugaig (SM 914) is approximately 840 m south-west of the Proposed Development, on a steep knoll alongside the Abhainn a'Ghlinne Bhig. Approximately 2 km north-west of Dun Grugaig, along Gleann Beag, Dun Telve broch stands near the river, around 1.7 km south-west of the Proposed Development, while Dun Troddan broch is set on a terrace in the hillside, a little further east and 1.3 km south-west of the Proposed Development.

#### *Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry*

- 9.2.29 Cultivable land is very scarce in this section, and land use towards the western end of the section is dominated by wild upland grazing and moorland. Between the eastern end of Loch Poulary and Invergarry the route is largely under commercial forestry plantation. Settlement is sparse, and almost exclusively confined to small townships and farms at Tomdoun, Inchlaggan, and Ardochy. In and around these settlements, and on any areas of low-lying, flatter land along the route, irregular fields defined by drystone walls and earthen banks enclose traces of historic cultivation remains in the form of spade-cut lazy beds and/or plough-cut rig and furrow. On the steeper uplands, the land is largely used as rough pasture and/or wild grazing. Stock management features such as sheepfolds, drovers' tracks, shieling huts, and livestock pens and enclosures are evident. Settlement remains include abandoned crofting townships, forcibly emptied during the Highland Clearances of the late-18th and early-19th centuries.
- 9.2.30 The majority of the cultural heritage features along Section 5 most likely date to the late-medieval and post-medieval periods, although some evidence of prehistoric settlement and activity is recorded (the HER records the chance find of a Bronze Age pot near Ardochy in the 1900s).
- 9.2.31 The relative scarcity of cultivable land on suitable terrain is likely to mean that settlement has largely continued and developed on lands previously exploited in prehistoric periods, and it is likely that the later activity has obscured much of the evidence of earlier settlement and occupation. The evidence suggests activity, if not

occupation, from the prehistoric period to the present-day. The landscape formed by this activity is moderately well-preserved along parts of Section 5, although commercial forestry has been established in the eastern half of this section.

9.2.32 There is one designated heritage asset within the vicinity of the Proposed Development within Section 5; Quoich Dam and Intake Gatehouse Towers (LB 51704), a Category B Listed Building of 20<sup>th</sup> century date.

9.2.33 There are also a modest number of non-designated cultural heritage assets recorded on THC HER within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

#### *Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus*

9.2.34 There is almost no cultivable land in this section, and land use is dominated by commercial forestry plantations at Auchterawe and east of Loch Lundie. Settlement is very sparse, confined to the small township around Auchterawe House. The cultural heritage features along Section 6 most likely date to the late-medieval and post-medieval periods, although some evidence of prehistoric settlement and activity may be present. The scarcity of cultivable land on suitable terrain is likely to mean that settlement has largely continued and developed on lands previously exploited in prehistoric periods, and it is likely that the later activity has obscured much of the evidence of earlier settlement and occupation. A collection of heritage assets remains in a group around the Invervigar Burn and are evidently perhaps all associated remains of the small, Dail a' Chuirn / Achadh-nan-darach township settlement.

9.2.35 Torr Dhuin Scheduled Monument (SM 794), is located approximately 1.3 km south-east of the Proposed Development near Auchterawe. The monument is located on a steep, forested knoll overlooking the River Oich and is visible from the valley floor to the east, which it overlooks. The Caledonian Canal between Oich Bridge and Fort Augustus (comprising seven individual Scheduled Monuments in this section) runs broadly parallel to Section 6, approximately 2 km to the east and south-east.

9.2.36 There are a small number of non-designated cultural heritage assets recorded on THC HER within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

### **9.3 Potential Effects**

9.3.1 The potential cultural heritage effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development include:

- Direct physical damage to, or destruction of, cultural heritage assets; and
- Indirect effects on the setting of cultural heritage assets.

#### *Dismantling of the Existing OHL*

9.3.2 Prior to mitigation, it is possible that direct adverse effects could occur to cultural heritage assets as a result of the dismantling of the existing OHL. However, it is anticipated that such effects could be avoided, reduced or offset through appropriate mitigation measures such as monitoring of ground works. The dismantling of the existing OHL would be subject to an Environmental Management Plan, which would include appropriate safeguards and monitoring proposals for protecting the cultural heritage resource.

9.3.3 In some areas, removal of the existing OHL may result in a slight improvement in setting effects from Scheduled Monuments in the vicinity.

### **9.4 Mitigation**

9.4.1 The routeing and alignment selection process for the Proposed Development has enabled consideration of likely significant effects on cultural heritage receptors throughout the evolution of the project to date. Further



assessment will continue through the EIA process, and mitigation measures developed to minimise adverse effects on cultural heritage.

- 9.4.2 It should be relatively straightforward to mitigate any potential direct impacts through design modifications and the use of micrositing to avoid structural remains of former buildings and other standing structures. Where it is not possible to avoid direct impacts upon heritage assets through micrositing (for instance in extensive areas of cultivation remains), impacts can be reduced through adoption of sensitive construction techniques, such as the use of low ground pressure vehicles and the sensitive routing of temporary access tracks. A focussed programme of supporting archaeological work, such as topographic survey and recording, will help to further mitigate any potential impacts. The details and scope of such a programme of mitigation would need to be agreed through consultation with THC Historic Environment Team (HET).

## 9.5 Proposed Scope and Methodology of Assessment

- 9.5.1 Direct or indirect effects on archaeological remains for all sections of the Proposed Development would be assessed, supported by the results of the desk-based study already undertaken and by further desk-based assessment of construction access requirements and by field survey along the route to verify the findings of the desk-based study and to inform mitigation proposals.

### Further Baseline Assessment

#### Study Areas

- 9.5.2 The following study areas will be adopted for the cultural heritage assessment:
- OHL and Underground Cable infrastructure; a corridor nominally 200 m wide centred on the proposed alignment will form the study area for the identification of cultural heritage assets that could be directly affected by construction of the Proposed Development, including on-line construction access between pole or tower positions.
  - Off-line construction access routes: a corridor 50 m wide (to allow for potential micro-alignment) centred on the routes of proposed new access tracks (temporary or permanent) or existing tracks or paths that would be built or used to facilitate access to the Proposed Development will form the study area for the identification of cultural heritage assets that could be directly affected by access requirements.
  - An Outer Study Area for indirect effects (effects on setting): a study area extending 1.5 km either side of the preferred wood pole alignment, or 2.5 km for the steel lattice tower alignment, will be used, in combination with the Proposed Development zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) model, to identify those heritage assets with statutory or non-statutory designations (Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Gardens and Designed Landscapes, etc) that could have their settings adversely affected by the Proposed Development.

#### Desk-Based Assessment

- 9.5.3 Further desk-based assessment will be carried out covering the Proposed Development, including construction access routes. The following information sources will be consulted:
- HES Spatial Data Warehouse: for up-to-date data on the locations and extents of Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Inventory status Garden and Designed Landscapes and Inventory status Historic Battlefields;
  - Highland Council Historic Environment Record (HER): for up to date data for the Proposed Development Study Area;
  - The National Record of the Historic Environment (NHRE) database (Canmore): for any information additional to that contained in the HER;
  - Map Library of the National Library of Scotland: for Ordnance Survey maps and other historical map resources; and

- Historic Land-Use Assessment Data for Scotland (HLAMap): for information on the historic land use character of the Site and the surrounding area

### Field Surveys

#### *Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane*

- 9.5.4 The archaeological baseline of the Waternish peninsula, between Ardmore substation and Fairy Bridge, is well recorded, having been surveyed in detail during the 1990s by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS). The Proposed Development here was also targeted for a survey early in the alignment selection study because of the archaeological sensitivity identified during that initial work stage. The area was visited during the targeted field survey carried out in October 2020, when Trumpan church and burial ground (SM 949) and Dun Hallin (SM 916) were also visited to assess their settings. This site visit established that the remains are surviving as described by the RCAMHS survey.
- 9.5.5 The remains here have been well recorded and mapped in detail by RCAHMS in the 1990s, therefore no further survey work is proposed for that part of Section 0 that lies north of Fairy Bridge.
- 9.5.6 From Fairy Bridge to Edinbane Substation, the route passes through an area of shielings, at Ben Horneval, and a field system along the Allt a' Ghamhna, crossing open moorland before passing through commercial forestry just west of the Edinbane Substation. Targeted field survey in October 2020 visited the shielings but found the area covered in dense heather that precluded identification of low relief features. The shielings were consequently not recorded as they could not be easily located in the dense vegetation.
- 9.5.7 It is proposed that this part of the route will be subject to a walk-over survey to record details of the sites identified during the desk-based study, and to identify and record any not located by the desk-based study that could be directly affected by the Proposed Development.

#### *Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan*

- 9.5.8 From Edinbane Substation to North Sligachan the Proposed Development crosses open moorland, skirting around and passing through areas of commercial forestry, before passing through the remains of a former farmstead at Sligachan. Only occasional features were identified across this section during the desk-based study, suggesting possibly a low archaeological potential.
- 9.5.9 Terrain over this section is generally below 200 m and it is therefore possible that other un-recorded archaeological sites could be present.
- 9.5.10 This section will be subject to a walk-over survey to identify and record any cultural heritage sites not located by the desk-based study that could be directly affected by the Proposed Development.
- 9.5.11 Dun Arkaig, broch (SM 13662) will be visited to assess its setting and to determine, supported by a wireline visualisation, the likely impact on its setting.

*Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford*

- 9.5.12 From North of Sligachan to Broadford the route mainly follows the coastal fringe, passing along the river valley of the Abhainn Torra-mhichaig and following a line below about 150 m. It crosses open moorland where there are few identified heritage assets before passing through the well-recorded remains of Stollamus township, terminating at the substation west of Broadford. For the first part of this route, from North of Sligachan to just south of Luib, the route would be underground cabling. From south of Luib to Broadford, the route would be an OHL.
- 9.5.13 This section will be subject to a walk-over survey to identify and record any cultural heritage sites not located by the desk-based study that could be directly affected by the Proposed Development.

*Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea*

- 9.5.14 From Broadford to Kyle Rhea, the Proposed Development passes through commercial forestry (wherein lies Old Corry chambered cairns (SM 13673)) then crosses open moorland with only occasional, scattered cultural heritage sites, before reaching the C1239 road, where the Proposed Development follows a northern (coastal) alignment. Eastwards from the C1239, the Proposed Development passes through commercial forestry before crossing moorland and small woodland copses on steep ground around the north side of the headland. There is only one known cultural heritage asset along this section: Runicaleach, a depopulated township at the eastern end of the Proposed Development.
- 9.5.15 It is proposed that no walk-over of this section is carried out and that targeted visits to previously identified sites along the OHL alignment be undertaken where, and as far as, access along estate and forestry tracks allows.
- 9.5.16 Old Corry chambered cairns (SM 13673), Broadford Bay, chambered cairn 35m NE of Eirigh na Greine (SM 13724), Caisteal Maol (Castle Moyle), Kyleakin, Skye (SM 951), and Lochalsh Woodland Walks will be visited to assess their settings and to determine, supported by wireline visualisations, the likely impact on their settings. If visibility of the Proposed Development is indicated, visualisations will be provided in the EIA Report.

*Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea (Alternative Route)*

- 9.5.17 Eastwards from the C1239, the alternative route passes through Glen Arroch, along the route of the old drover's road from Broadford to Kyle Rhea, passing initially through an area of commercial forestry before crossing the Allt Mor river and crossing moorland on the south side of the glen, crossing the Kylerhea River at the east end of the glen and passing through commercial forestry on steep ground, finally passing through the depopulated Runicaleach township where the alternative route meets the eastern end of the preferred alignment. The ground along the eastern part of this alternative route was surveyed, for proposed forestry development, in 1989 and only relatively few heritage assets were identified. Targeted survey through Glen Arroch during the route and alignment stages of the project, failed to find any of the sites previously recorded along the alignment of the OHL, suggesting that they are low relief features, likely concealed within vegetation (bracken, scrub and tall grasses) that was dense at the time of the survey (October 2020).
- 9.5.18 It is proposed that no walk-over of this alternative route is carried out and that targeted survey to previously identified sites along the alternative alignment will be revisited where, and as far as, access along estate and forestry tracks allows.

*Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich*

- 9.5.19 From Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich the route rises through commercial forestry before passing over high and remote terrain where there are no recorded archaeological sites and where the terrain suggests a very low likelihood for new discoveries before dropping down into Glen More and then rising again to pass over high remote and steep terrain until it reaches the dam at the east end of Loch Cuaich. Very few archaeological sites have been identified along the section and the nature of the terrain followed by the route suggests a very low or negligible likelihood of new discoveries.
- 9.5.20 It is proposed that no walk-over of this section is carried out and that targeted visits to previously identified sites along the OHL be undertaken where, and as far as, access along estate and forestry tracks allows.
- 9.5.21 Bernera Barracks (SM 950), Dun Telve and Dun Troddan, brochs, Glenelg (SM 90152) and Dun Grugaig, dun, Gleann Beag (SM 914) will be visited to assess their settings and to determine, supported by wireline visualisations, the likely impact on their settings. If visibility of the Proposed Development is indicated, visualisations will be provided in the EIA Report.

*Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry*

- 9.5.22 From Loch Cuaich to Invergarry the route follows ground covered with heather moorland along the north side of Glen Garry, passing through areas of commercial forestry and crossed by numerous watercourses. Very few archaeological sites have been identified along the section and the nature of the terrain followed by the route suggests a very low or negligible likelihood of new discoveries.
- 9.5.23 It is proposed that no walk-over of this section is carried out and that targeted visits to previously identified sites along the OHL to be undertaken where, and as far as, access along estate and forestry tracks allows.

*Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus*

- 9.5.24 From Invergarry to Fort Augustus, the proposed underground cable route crosses open moorland southeast of Loch Lundie before passing through commercial forestry (Inchnacardoch Forest), passing to the north of Torr Dhuin Scheduled Monument (SM 794) and terminating at the substation at Auchteraw. There is settlement recorded in the open moorland between Loch Lundie and Inchnacardoch Forest and there is some potential for previously unrecorded remains to be present along that section of the cable route.
- 9.5.25 The underground cable, for the section outwith the commercial forestry, will be subject to a walk-over survey to record details of the sites identified during the desk-based study, and to identify and record any not located by the desk-based study that could be directly affected by the Proposed Development.

*Impact Assessment*

- 9.5.26 The proposed approach to the cultural heritage impact assessment will be the same for all sections of the project following the methodology detailed in the following paragraphs.
- 9.5.27 The archaeological and cultural heritage assessment would be carried out with reference to the following guidance documents:
- Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (2019) 'Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment'.
  - SNH & HES (2018) 'Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook'.
  - HES (2019) 'Designation Policy and Selection Guidance'.
  - HES (2016) 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting'.
  - Planning Advice Note (PAN) 2/2011: Planning and Archaeology.

- Principles of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (IEMA, IHBC & ClfA, 2021)
- Highland Council Standards for Archaeological Work (THC, 2012).

9.5.28 The assessment would consider the potential for significant effects associated with:

- Physical (direct) impacts of construction on cultural heritage assets of the Proposed Development and on ground works for construction access;
- Setting (indirect) effects on the experience, appreciation and understanding of an asset resulting from the introduction of the Proposed Development; and
- Cumulative effects.

9.5.29 Assessment of likely direct effects, effects on settings of designated heritage assets, including cumulative effects, of the Proposed Development on heritage assets would take into account the sensitivity of the heritage asset and its setting, where appropriate, and the likely magnitude of change, which would be combined to provide a likely significance of effect. The methodology that would be employed in the assessment, based on the guidance in the SNH/HES Guidance (2018), would be agreed through consultation with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and The Highland Council: Historic Environment Team (THC: HET).

9.5.30 Mitigation measures designed to prevent, reduce, or offset significant adverse effects would be set out and residual effects remaining following the implementation of proposed mitigation measures would be reported.

#### *Assessment of Effects on Setting*

9.5.31 Historic Environment Scotland's guidance document, 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment: Setting' (HES, 2016), notes that:

*"Setting can be important to the way in which historic structures or places are understood, appreciated and experienced. It can often be integral to a historic asset's cultural significance."*

*"Setting often extends beyond the property boundary or 'curtilage' of an individual historic asset into a broader landscape context".*

9.5.32 The guidance also advises that:

*"If proposed development is likely to affect the setting of a key historic asset, an objective written assessment should be prepared by the applicant to inform the decision-making process. The conclusions should take into account the significance of the asset and its setting and attempt to quantify the extent of any impact. The methodology and level of information should be tailored to the circumstances of each case".*

9.5.33 The guidance recommends that there are three stages in assessing the impact of a development on the setting of a historic asset or place:

- Stage 1: identify the historic assets that might be affected by the proposed development.
- Stage 2: define and analyse the setting by establishing how the surroundings contribute to the ways in which the historic asset or place is understood, appreciated, and experienced; and
- Stage 3: evaluate the potential impact of the proposed changes on the setting, and the extent to which any negative impacts can be mitigated.

9.5.34 Following this approach, the zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) for the Proposed Development will be used to identify those designated heritage assets from which there would be theoretical visibility of any part of the Proposed Development.

9.5.35 Scheduled Monuments, Category A and B Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, where present within 1.5 km (wood pole) and 2.5 km (steel lattice) of the Proposed Development, will be included in the assessment.

9.5.36 Consideration will also be given to designated heritage assets where there is no predicted visibility from the asset but where views of or across the asset are important factors contributing to its cultural significance. In such cases, consideration will be given to whether the Proposed Development could appear in the background to those views.

9.5.37 It is anticipated that visualisations will be provided for the following designated heritage assets:

- Trumpan Church, Burial Ground and Priest's Stone, Hallin (SM 949);
- Dun Hallin, Broch, Hallin (SM 916);
- Annait, Monastic Settlement on W bank of Bay River (SM 942);
- Dun Askaig, Broch (SM 13662); and
- Old Corry, cairns 820m NE of, Isle of Skye (SM 13673).

9.5.38 Visualisation requirements for other designated heritage assets will be determined following an initial review of the Proposed Development ZTV and where appropriate, viewpoints and visualisation types (photomontages or wirelines) would be agreed through consultation with HES and THC, informed by provision of draft wirelines.

## **9.6 Issues to be Scoped Out**

9.6.1 Assessment of the effect of the Proposed Development on maritime archaeological resources will be scoped out. These all lie offshore, below the waterline and will not be adversely affected by the Proposed Development.

9.6.2 Assessment of the effect of the Proposed Development on the settings of World Heritage Sites, Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes, and Inventory Historic Battlefields will be scoped out. There are no assets with those designations within 1.5 km of the Proposed Development.

9.6.3 The route through Section 6 will be mostly underground and there will consequently be no visibility from Torr Dhuin (SM 794) or from the Caledonian Canal (SM 6497). Assessment of potential impacts on their settings will therefore be scoped out.

9.6.4 Assessment of the effect of the Proposed Development on the settings of key heritage assets more than 1.5 km from the pole mounted sections of the Proposed Development, or more than 2.5 km from the steel lattice tower mounted sections, will be scoped out. None have been identified through initial analysis as having settings sensitive to adverse effects from the Proposed Development.

## 10. WATER ENVIRONMENT (HYDROLOGY AND HYDROGEOLOGY)

### 10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 This Chapter of the Scoping Report provides a brief overview of the water environment (hydrology and hydrogeology), the potential effects associated with the Proposed Development, and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report on a section by section basis.

### 10.2 Baseline Conditions

10.2.1 Baseline conditions relevant to the water environment are described below. Reference should also be made to Figures 2.0.1a to 2.6.3.

#### *Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane*

10.2.2 The superficial geology through the north of this section is dominated by peat and glacial deposits with bedrock outcropping in discrete locations typically associated with higher ground. The area is underlain by an impermeable bedrock dominated by basaltic lava flows with intrusives which account for the lines of ridges which have a strong north-west to south-east orientation. Most of incident rainfall will be shed as surface water flow, hence a large number of streams prevail, particularly on Waternish Peninsula.

10.2.3 By virtue of the nature of the geology, little groundwater is expected, and where present is likely to be limited to shallow weathered bedrock or found in discontinuous fractures and fissures at depth. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution.

10.2.4 Further south, there are a number of watercourses which drain southwards to Loch Bracadale that would require to be crossed by the Proposed Development, such as at Abhainn Bhaile Mheadhonaich, Glen Heysdal and Roskhill.

10.2.5 Private water supply infrastructure is likely to be present within this section. Surface water Drinking Water Protection Areas (DWPA) are also present at Trumpan, Stein and Balmeanach. The development proposals will need to take account of the safeguards required to maintain the wholesomeness of private water supplies and to minimise potential effects on DWPAs.

#### *Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan*

10.2.6 There are a number of watercourses that would require to be crossed by the Proposed Development, particularly at Glenmore and Glen Varragill. Private water supplies are anticipated in this area also, although not anticipated to be a development constraint.

10.2.7 Much of the Proposed Development is underlain by igneous rocks which are unlikely to contain significant quantities of groundwater. Groundwater is likely to be limited to shallow weathered bedrock or found in discontinuous fractures and fissures at depth. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution.

10.2.8 Like other sections, incident rainfall is likely to form surface water runoff rather than contribute to groundwater recharge.

10.2.9 Private water supply infrastructure is likely to be present within this section at Glenmore and Mugeary. The Proposed Development would also pass through the northern extent of a DWPA (Surface Water) at Beinn na Cloiche.

*Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford*

- 10.2.10 There are a number of watercourses particularly around Loch Sligachan where the steep slopes of the Cuillins generates some fast-flowing watercourses of various sizes, and waterfalls. These streams will have a rapid response to rainfall. Like other sections the superficial and solid geology under most of this section has a low bulk permeability and will not readily store or allow groundwater movement. Where this is the case groundwater is likely to be limited to shallow weathered bedrock or found in discontinuous fractures and fissures at depth. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution.
- 10.2.11 In the east of this section the superficial deposits where present comprise low permeability glacial till and peat. The underlying solid geology however is more permeable and comprises limestone and sandstone, and thus has greater potential to store groundwater and allow groundwater movement.
- 10.2.12 The Proposed Development crosses a surface water DWPA near Dunan / An Dùnan and at Stollamus. Private water supply infrastructure may be present within this section, for example at Sligachan, Sconser and Luib.

*Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea*

- 10.2.13 There are a number of watercourses that would require to be crossed by the Proposed Development, including the Abhainn Lusa and tributaries of the Kylerhea River. By virtue of the surface topography and locally steep slopes, incident rainfall in this section, like other sections, will preferentially form surface water runoff rather than contribute to groundwater recharge.
- 10.2.14 The Proposed Development crosses over a surface water DWPA near Harrapool. For the western extent of the Proposed Development, properties could be served by private water supplies from watercourses crossed by or within the vicinity.
- 10.2.15 Again, the superficial where present have a low bulk permeability and will not readily store or allow groundwater movement. Superficial deposits are, again, absent from higher elevations.
- 10.2.16 The underlying solid geology however is more permeable and comprises sandstone, and thus has greater potential to store groundwater and allow groundwater movement. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution.
- 10.2.17 Some forest felling may be required which, without appropriate safeguards, could locally alter or impair water quality as a result of forestry operations and acidification.

*Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea (Alternative Route)*

- 10.2.18 The hydrological and hydrogeological conditions for this alternative section are similar to Section 3. Rainfall will preferentially form surface water runoff. The superficial geology where present will have a low bulk permeability and hinder groundwater storage and movement.
- 10.2.19 The underlying solid geology is more permeable and comprises sandstone, and thus has greater potential to store groundwater and allow groundwater movement. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution.
- 10.2.20 Toward the east of this section a number of watercourses would need to be crossed and it is likely private water supplies are present at and near Kylerhea.



10.2.21 Some forest felling may be required which, without appropriate safeguards, could locally alter or impair water quality as a result of forestry operations and acidification.

*Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich*

10.2.22 The Proposed Development passes over a surface water DWPA associated with Loch Beinn a' Chaoinich and Loch a' Mhuilinn. Private water supply infrastructure is likely to be present in the surrounding area of Proposed Development (e.g. at Glenmore and Kinloch Hourn). Water sources will require to be assessed as safeguarded.

10.2.23 Again, by virtue of the surface topography and underlying geology there are numerous watercourses and the Proposed Development would cross a number of these.

10.2.24 As recorded in other sections the superficial geology is typically recorded as glacial till and shown by published mapping to be absent at higher elevations. In the west of the section the bedrock geology comprises sandstone, and thus has potential to store groundwater and allow groundwater movement.

10.2.25 Toward the east of the section the geology is metamorphic rock and is unlikely to contain significant quantities of groundwater as a consequence of its low bulk permeability though some shallow groundwater may be present in the upper weather surface of this unit. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution.

*Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry*

10.2.26 The Proposed Development follows an undulating route across the slopes above Loch Garry and Loch Cuaich. There are a number of watercourse crossings, particularly associated with gullies coming down the steep hill sides. A large water crossing occurs at Loch Cuaich.

10.2.27 The underlying geology is the same or similar to other sections and where present, at lower elevation typically glacial till. Low permeability metamorphic rock underlies the section, and as a result any groundwater is likely to be restricted to the upper weather surface of the bedrock. Protection of shallow groundwater will need to be afforded.

*Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus*

10.2.28 Many watercourses shed water from the hills in the area and will need to be crossed by the Proposed Development. A rapid response to rainfall is expected as a consequence of the relatively steep slopes and low permeability geology. Larger watercourses include the Invervigar Burn and Allt na Graidh.

10.2.29 Again, the bedrock is shown by published mapping to comprise predominantly metamorphic rock with isolated igneous intrusions. Similarly these rocks are unlikely to contain significant groundwater as a consequence of their low bulk permeability though some shallow groundwater may be present in the upper weather surface of the units. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution.

10.2.30 The Proposed Development in this Section crosses over a surface water DWPA to the north-west of Invergarry. Properties at Auchterawe are likely to be served by private water supplies.

### **10.3 Potential Effects**

10.3.1 Construction and operation of the Proposed Development has the potential to result in the following effects without appropriate controls or mitigation:

*Construction*

- increased flood risk to areas downstream of the site during construction through increased surface water runoff;
- potential adverse change of surface and groundwater flow paths and contribution to areas of peat and Groundwater Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs), water dependent habitat and water supplies;
- disturbance of watercourses and loch edges from the construction of access tracks and other infrastructure;
- an adverse effect on surface water or groundwater quality from pollution, fuel, oil, concrete or other hazardous substances; and
- potential pollution impacts and adverse effect to public and private water supplies, including DWPA's.

*Operation*

- adverse changes to surface water flow paths, watercourse discharge rates and volumes, and alteration of watercourse geomorphology;
- as a result of an alteration of groundwater and surface water flow paths, an adverse effect on water abstractions and water dependent habitat;
- an adverse effect on surface water or groundwater quality from pollution, fuel, oil, concrete or other hazardous substances from site traffic associated with maintenance activities; and
- increased flood risk through increased surface water runoff from new impermeable areas.

*Dismantling of the Existing OHL*

10.3.2 The dismantling of the existing OHL is not likely to result in significant adverse effects on the water environment, subject to the implementation of an Environmental Management Plan for the dismantling works with appropriate safeguards for pollution prevention, and similar to those adopted for construction of the Proposed Development.

**10.4 Mitigation**

10.4.1 The review and analysis of data gathered during the EIA process will ensure that the Proposed Development and associated construction access and requirements are carefully sited to ensure potential effects on the water environment are minimised where practicable through design.

10.4.2 In addition, the Applicant has established best practice construction techniques and procedures that have been agreed with statutory consultees, including SEPA and SNH. These are set out within the Applicant's General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs). The Proposed Development would be constructed in accordance with these plans. Dismantling of the existing OHL would also be undertaken in accordance with these plans.

10.4.3 A contractual management requirement of the successful Principal Contractor would be the development and implementation of a comprehensive and site-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This document would detail how the successful Principal Contractor would manage the works in accordance with all commitments and mitigation detailed in the EIA Report, SSE's GEMPs, statutory consents and authorisations, and industry best practise and guidance, including pollution prevention guidance.

10.4.4 The CEMP will also outline measures to ensure that the works minimise the risk to soils, geology, groundwater and surface water, private water supplies and licensed water uses. A Construction Site Licence would also be required by the Controlled Activity Regulations and this will specify control and management procedures to ensure water resources, and GWDTE, are not impaired as a consequence of development.

## 10.5 Proposed Scope and Methodology of Assessment

10.5.1 An assessment of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on the water environment would be undertaken with reference to relevant legislation, policies and best practice guidance, including, but not limited to:

- EC Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).
- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), Scottish Executive, June 2014.
- Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003.
- Water Environment (Controlled Activities) Regulations 2011.
- Land Use Planning System – SEPA Guidance Note 31 (Guidance on Assessing Impacts of Development Proposals on Groundwater Abstractions and Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems), Version 3, SEPA, 11/09/2017.
- Good Practice during Windfarm Construction. A joint publication by Scottish Renewables, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Forestry Commission Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland and Marine Scotland Science. Version 4, 2019.
- Control of Water Pollution from Linear Construction Projects – Technical Guidance, C648, CIRIA, 2006.
- The SuDS Manual C753, CIRIA, 2015.
- Environmental Good Practice on Site C692, CIRIA, 2010.

10.5.2 A desk-based assessment of the Proposed Development will be undertaken initially and then a field programme of investigation undertaken to verify (or otherwise) the desk study. The desk study and field programme will be used to inform the emerging site design.

10.5.3 The hydrological assessment specialists will liaise closely with the project ecologists, geology/geotechnical specialists and engineers to ensure that appropriate information is gathered to allow a comprehensive impact assessment to be completed.

10.5.4 Having regard to the nature of the Proposed Development and key baseline characteristics, at this early stage it is considered that the assessment would include:

- A hydrological site walkover survey to determine the likely effects of the Proposed Development on the hydrological regime, including water quality, flow and drainage;
- Assessment of potential effects on identified licenced and private water supplies and water sources;
- Assessment of potential effects on designated sites;
- In consultation with the project geologists and ecologists, assessment of potential effects on water (including groundwater) dependent habitats, including peat habitat and GWDTE;
- Assessment of potential flood risk and drainage during construction and operation; and
- Assessment of potential cumulative or in-combination effects.

10.5.5 It is proposed an assessment is prepared for each section of the Proposed Development. The assessment will include all required temporary and permanent infrastructure, including access tracks, compounds, laydown areas etc., required during the construction and operational phase of the development life.

## 10.6 Issues to be Scoped Out

10.6.1 Having regard to the nature of the Proposed Development and key baseline characteristics, at this stage it is considered the following can be scoped out of further assessment:

- Detailed Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment. Published mapping confirms that most of the project is not located in an area identified as being at flood risk. A simple screening of potential flooding sources

(fluvial, coastal, groundwater, infrastructure etc.) would be presented in the EIA and measures that would be used to control the rate and quality of runoff will be specified in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

- Water quality monitoring would be scoped out of the EIA stage of work and water quality data is published by SEPA and can be used to characterise baseline water quality. However, if the assessment concludes that water quality monitoring is required prior to, during and post construction, this would be specified in the site CEMP.
- Increased flood risk caused by blockages to flow in watercourses during operation and maintenance of the Proposed Development. Any required watercourse crossings would be subject to maintenance requirements under the Controlled Activity Regulations.
- A Geomorphological Assessment would be scoped out of the EIA stage of work. As part of the proposed baseline surveys, photographs and records of key existing or baseline water features will be recorded and presented in the EIA.

10.6.2 It is also proposed to scope out a detailed assessment of the dismantling of the existing 132 kV OHL. These works would be subject to a dismantling Environmental Management Plan, and, as such, effects are not likely to be significant.

## 11. GEOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT (SOILS, PEAT AND GEOLOGY)

### 11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 This Chapter provides a brief overview of the geological environment (soils, peat and geology), and sets out the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

### 11.2 Baseline Conditions

11.2.1 Baseline conditions relevant to the water environment are described below. Reference should also be made to Figures 2.0.1a to 2.6.3.

#### *Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane*

11.2.2 The Carbon and Peatland Map 2016 identifies areas of Class 1 peatlands from the southern extents of the Waternish peninsula extending south and covering much of the land between Dunvegan and Edinbane substations.

11.2.3 The superficial geology is dominated by peat and glacial deposits with bedrock outcropping in places. The area is underlain by an impermeable bedrock dominated by basaltic lava flows with intrusives which account for the lines of ridges which have a strong north-west to south-east orientation. Most of the water will be shed as surface water flow, hence a large number of fast flowing streams prevail, particularly on Waternish Peninsula.

11.2.4 The An Cleireach Geological SSSI and Geological Conservation Review (GCR) Site is located within this section, close to Balmeanach, and part of a series of basalt lava flows, cut by an inclined sheet of basalt. The Proposed Development would cross this SSSI for approximately 200 m.

#### *Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan*

11.2.5 Published geological mapping suggests that Glacial Till is present at low elevations and is overlain by peat on the hillsides locally. The peat and Till is absent on the hilltops, where bedrock is present at surface. Priority peatland mapping suggests that Class 1 peatlands (strong likelihood of deep peat and areas of priority peatland habitats) are dominant throughout large areas of this section, particularly across the moorland at Achaleathan and to the west of Glenmore.

11.2.6 Peat probing along the route of the Proposed Development within Section 1 has confirmed that peat depths are often below 1 m, albeit there are some areas where deeper peat exists.

11.2.7 Much of the Proposed Development in this section is underlain by igneous rocks which are unlikely to contain significant quantities of groundwater. Groundwater is likely to be limited to shallow weathered bedrock or found in discontinuous fractures and fissures at depth. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution.

#### *Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford*

11.2.8 Published geological mapping suggests that bedrock is at or near the surface. Where superficial deposits are present there are large areas of peat mapped. Priority peatland mapping suggests that in the areas surrounding the Proposed Development, to the south of Am Meall and near Strollamus, Class 1 and 2 (strong likelihood of deep peat and priority peatland habitats) is present.

#### *Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea*

11.2.9 Priority peatland mapping suggests the Proposed Development would pass through areas of Class 1 (strong likelihood of deep peat and priority peatland habitats) between Harapool and the minor road to Glen Arroch, as

well as within parts of the Kinloch and Kyleakin Hills SAC. There are a number of water course crossings to consider, some of which comprise steep ravines (eastern extent of the Proposed Development).

11.2.10 Much of this section is dominated by steep slopes where superficial deposits are absent and bedrock outcrops. The bedrock below the Proposed Development is shown to be the Torridon Group, a sequence of sandstones and mudstones. There is potential for shallow groundwater to be present in the upper weathered surface of the bedrock and also for groundwater to be present at depth within this unit. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution. Across the lower slopes and through the valley, glacial till deposits are present, with areas of alluvium associated with watercourses and raised marine deposits along the coastline.

11.2.11 The Proposed Development crosses over a surface water drinking protection zone near Harrapool. For the western extent of the Proposed Development, properties could be served by private water supplies from watercourses crossed by or within the vicinity. Catchments to any groundwater wells, springs and GWDTE are likely to be similar to surface catchments.

11.2.12 Some forest felling may be required which, without appropriate safeguards, could locally alter or impair water quality as a result of forestry operations and acidification.

*Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea Alternative Option*

11.2.13 Much of this alternative route via Glen Arroch is dominated by steep slopes where superficial deposits are absent and bedrock outcrops. Across the lower slopes and through the valley, glacial till deposits are present, with areas of alluvium associated with watercourses and raised marine deposits along the coastline. There are limited peat deposits mapped. Forest felling is also likely to be required to the west of Kyle Rhea.

*Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich*

11.2.14 Much of this section of the project is dominated by steep slopes and outcropping rock.

11.2.15 Priority peatland mapping suggests that there are sections of Class 2 (strong likelihood of deep peat and priority peatland habitats) at intervals throughout the Proposed Development. Published mapping suggests that superficial deposits are absent with bedrock at or near surface for much of this section of OHL. Any areas of peat are shown to be small and discrete and to be typically at lower elevations.

11.2.16 The bedrock is shown by published mapping to comprise predominantly metamorphic rock. It is unlikely that this will contain significant groundwater as a consequence of its low bulk permeability though some shallow groundwater may be present in the upper weather surface of this unit. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution.

11.2.17 The Druim Iosal Geological SSSI and GCR is part of a low ridge at the end of Gleann Beag about 7 km from the village of Glenelg. The Druim Iosal SSSI is of national importance for its variety of metamorphosed sedimentary Lewisian rocks, which have unusual geochemistry, indicating an unusual origin, and an unusual history of metamorphism. The Proposed Development would cross this SSSI for a short section.

*Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry*

11.2.18 The Quoich Spillway Geological SSSI and GCR is located to the south of the minor road at Quoich dam, but is not anticipated to be impacted by the new OHL.

11.2.19 The superficial geology predominately comprises hummocky glacial deposits, though superficial deposits are absent over the highest ground. Isolated pockets of peat occur, coinciding with topographically low-lying areas.

*Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus*

11.2.20 The superficial geology predominately comprises hummocky glacial deposits, though superficial deposits are absent over the highest ground through Auchteraw Wood. Although bedrock is mapped at or close to surface, there are isolated pockets of peat within the corridor to the west of the forest towards Loch Lundie, coinciding with topographically low-lying areas. Priority peatland mapping suggests that there is Class 2 (strong likelihood of deep peat and priority peatland habitats) located on moorland near Loch Lundie.

11.2.21 The bedrock is shown by published mapping to comprise predominantly metamorphic rock with isolated igneous intrusions. It is unlikely that these rocks will contain significant groundwater as a consequence of their low bulk permeability though some shallow groundwater may be present in the upper weather surface of the units. It is recognised, without safeguards, that shallow groundwater is vulnerable to pollution.

**11.3 Potential Effects***Construction and Operation*

11.3.1 Construction and operation of the Proposed Development has the potential to result in the following effects without appropriate controls or mitigation:

- disturbance and loss of deposits of peat;
- ground instability (including peat slide risk) and contamination;
- impact to sensitive geological receptors (e.g., SSSI's); and
- an adverse effect on geological setting from pollution, fuel, oil, concrete or other hazardous substances.

*Dismantling of the Existing OHL*

11.3.2 The dismantling of the existing OHL is not likely to result in significant adverse effects on soils, peat and geology, subject to the implementation of an Environmental Management Plan for the dismantling works with appropriate safeguards.

**11.4 Mitigation**

11.4.1 The review and analysis of data gathered during the EIA process will ensure that the Proposed Development and associated construction access and requirements are carefully sited to ensure potential effects on geological constraints (including slope stability, deep peat and sensitive geological receptors) are minimised where practicable through design.

11.4.2 For example, it is expected that the following potential mitigation measures will be included in the design of the Proposed Development:

- a suitable buffer will be applied between infrastructure and watercourses;
- site specific peat probing will be used to identify areas of potential deep peat and these will be avoided where possible;
- a site-specific peat landslide and hazard risk assessment will be prepared and areas of potential increased peat slide risk will be avoided or mitigated; and
- if required, a peat management plan will be prepared to show how the integrity of peat will be safeguarded.

11.4.3 In addition, the Applicant has established best practice construction techniques and procedures that have been agreed with statutory consultees, including SEPA and NatureScot. These are set out within the Applicant's GEMPs. The Proposed Development would be constructed in accordance with these plans.

11.4.4 A contractual management requirement of the successful Principal Contractor would be the development and implementation of a comprehensive and site-specific CEMP. This document would detail how the successful

Principal Contractor would manage the works in accordance with all commitments and mitigation detailed in the EIA Report, SSE's GEMPs, statutory consents and authorisations, and industry best practise and guidance, including pollution prevention guidance.

11.4.5 The CEMP will also outline measures to ensure that the works minimise the risk to soils and geology.

### **11.5 Proposed Scope and Methodology of Assessment**

11.5.1 A desk-based assessment of the Proposed Development will be undertaken initially and then a field programme of investigation (peat probing, geomorphological inspection and confirmatory mapping) undertaken to verify (or otherwise) the desk study. The desk study and field programme will be used to inform the siting of infrastructure.

11.5.2 The geological assessment specialists will liaise closely with the project ecologists and hydrology/hydrogeology specialists to ensure that appropriate information is gathered to allow a comprehensive impact assessment to be completed.

11.5.3 The baseline assessment will include review of published geological maps, OS maps, aerial photographs digital terrain models (slope plans) and geological literature.

11.5.4 As part of the baseline assessment data requests would be made to The Highland Council (THC), SEPA and the British Geological Society (BGS), in order that a contemporary assessment of baseline conditions can be made. Ground investigations are currently being undertaken, and information from peat probing, trial pitting and drilling will be incorporated into the assessment. The data will be used to inform the following aspects:

- identify any areas susceptible to peat slide, using site specific peat thickness and Digital Terrain Mapping (DTM) data to analyse slopes;
- assist micro-siting pylons, tracks and other proposed infrastructure into areas of no peat or shallow peat where practicable, and avoid areas where there is a peat landslide hazard risk;
- if required show how any disturbed peat will be managed and safeguarded, by preparing a peat management plan;
- assess potential effects on geological receptors (SSSI's).

11.5.5 Having regard to the nature of the Proposed Development and key baseline characteristics, at this early stage it is considered that the assessment would include:

- The depth and distribution of peat;
- The nature of the underlying geology;
- A geological site walkover including peat probing survey (in appropriate sections of the route) to determine the likely effects of the Proposed Development on the geological regime;
- Assessment of potential effects on designated sites including SSSI's; and
- In consultation with the project geologists and ecologists, assessment of potential effects on water (including groundwater) dependent habitats, including peat habitat.

11.5.6 It is proposed an assessment is prepared for each section of the Proposed Development. The assessment will include all required temporary and permanent infrastructure, including access tracks, compounds, laydown areas etc., required during the construction and operational phase of the development life.

11.5.7 A qualitative risk assessment methodology will be used to assess the significance of the potential effects. Two factors will be considered: the sensitivity of the receiving environment and the potential magnitude should that potential impact occur.



11.5.8 This approach provides a mechanism for identifying the areas where mitigation measures are required, and for identifying mitigation measures appropriate to the risk presented by the Proposed Development. This approach also allows effort to be focused on reducing risk where the greatest benefit may result.

11.5.9 The sensitivity of the receiving environment (i.e., the baseline quality of the receiving environment as well as its ability to absorb the effect without perceptible change) and the magnitude of impacts will each be considered through a set of pre-defined criteria.

11.5.10 The sensitivity of the receiving environment together with the magnitude of the effect defines the significance of the effect, which will be categorised into levels of significance.

11.5.11 An assessment of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on the geological environment would be undertaken with reference to relevant legislation, policies and best practice guidance, including, but not limited to:

- SEPA Regulatory Position Statement - Developments on Peat (Scottish Environment Protection Agency, 2010).
- Good Practice during Windfarm Construction, 4th Edition (Scottish Renewables, Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot), Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Forestry Commission Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Marine Scotland Science and AEECoW, 2019).
- Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessments: Best Practice Guide for Proposed Electricity Generation Developments (Scottish Government, January 2017).
- Developments on Peatland - Guidance on the assessment of peat volumes, re-use of excavated peat and the minimisation of waste (Scottish Renewables & SEPA, 2012).
- Floating Roads on Peat - Report into Good Practice in Design, Construction and Use of Floating Roads on Peat with reference to Wind Farm Developments in Scotland (Forestry Commission Scotland & Scottish Natural Heritage, 2010).
- Managing Geotechnical Risk: Improving Productivity in UK Building and Construction (Institution of Civil Engineers, 2001).
- Ground Engineering Spoil: Good Management Practice CIRIA Report 179 (CIRIA, 1997).
- Scottish Roads Network Landslides Study Summary Report (Scottish Executive, 2005).
- Guidelines for the Risk Management of Peat Slips on the Construction of Low Volume/Low-Cost Roads on Peat (Forestry Commission, 2006).

*Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment and Peat Management Plan*

11.5.12 Phase I peat depth data will be obtained to inform the emerging site design and impact assessment as required by current best practice. As part of the programme of field work the following will be undertaken:

- a geomorphological mapping exercise to link the topographic features with the underlying geology and to visit those areas of the site that may be identified as potentially 'at risk from peat slide' or deemed to be in a sensitive setting;
- the thickness of the peat will be established by probing and the underlying sub-strata confirmed by inspections of watercourses; and
- signs of existing or potential peat instability will be recorded.

11.5.13 Output from the field surveys will comprise a record of investigation locations and summary of peat depths recorded.

11.5.14 If significant peat depths are proven a preliminary Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment (PLHRA) will be completed using the site survey data and slope analysis (using DTM data), highlighting areas that may be

impacted by a peat slide so that appropriate mitigation measures can be identified and included in the site design. A Peat Management Plan will be required where the peat is impacted significantly by construction and access issues.

## **11.6 Issues to be Scoped Out**

11.6.1 It is proposed to scope out a detailed assessment of the dismantling of the existing 132 kV OHL. These works would be subject to a dismantling environmental management plan and, as such, effects are not likely to be significant.

## 12. FORESTRY

### 12.1 Introduction

12.1.1 This Chapter of the Scoping Report provides a brief overview of the forestry baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

### 12.2 Baseline Conditions

#### *Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane*

12.2.1 Within Section 0, commercial plantations are limited within the vicinity of the Proposed Development. A plantation is present to the north east of Stein, as well as a plantation to the west of the Edinbane substation, through which the existing OHL is routed.

#### *Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan*

12.2.2 Commercial plantations within Section 1 include those at Glen Vic Askill, Glen Tungadal and Glen Varragill. The Proposed Development would require a new wayleave through each of these plantations over a short distance.

#### *Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford*

12.2.3 Commercial plantations within this section potentially affected by the Proposed Development is limited to forestry at Broadford, within the vicinity of Broadford Substation.

#### *Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea*

12.2.4 Some removal of forestry likely to be required to accommodate a new wayleave for the Proposed Development through commercial plantations at Broadford, to the south of Kyleakin and approaching the crossing towers at Kyle Rhea.

12.2.5 For the alternative route through Glen Arroch, if this option were progressed a new wayleave would be required through plantation forestry at Kyle Rhea.

#### *Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich*

12.2.6 The Proposed Development would require a new wayleave to be felled through conifer plantation at Druim na Leitire, to the south of the existing OHL. The Proposed Development also passes through an area identified for pinewood regeneration by Scottish Forestry.

#### *Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry*

12.2.7 A new or extended wayleave would be required as the Proposed Development is routed through forestry to the north of Loch Garry.

#### *Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus*

12.2.8 Within this section an extension to the existing wayleave would likely be required through Inchnacardoch Forest.

### 12.3 Potential Effects

12.3.1 The Proposed Development would require the felling of commercial forestry plantation during construction, and the creation of a managed wayleave once operational. The potential forestry effects associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development therefore includes:

- Temporary or Permanent woodland cover loss and fragmentation;
- Potential for wind throw risk and identification of wind firm boundaries;
- Potential for forest landscape impact and identification of forest landscape design boundaries; and
- Loss of timber volume production due to early felling.

#### *Dismantling of the Existing OHL*

12.3.2 The dismantling of the existing OHL provides an opportunity to reinstate existing wayleave corridors once the existing OHL has been removed. As existing wayleave corridors, and associated access, are present, no significant adverse effects on forestry are anticipated, subject to the implementation of an Environmental Management Plan for the dismantling works.

### **12.4 Mitigation**

12.4.1 The routing and alignment selection process for the Proposed Development has enabled consideration of likely significant effects on forestry throughout the evolution of the project to date.

12.4.2 In line with the Scottish Government's policy on control of woodland removal<sup>33</sup>, Compensatory Planting would be required for all areas of woodland loss associated with the Proposed Development. This would be discussed with Forestry and Land Scotland, other forestry owners and The Highland Council.

### **12.5 Proposed Scope and Methodology of Assessment**

12.5.1 The forestry assessment will focus on areas of commercial forestry through which the Proposed Development would be routed. Consideration will be undertaken on achieving resilience from tree fall e.g. Powerline tree 'Red Zone' assessment based on a pragmatic appraisal of the maximum growth height of trees. Tree growth height appraisal will consider all site and species factors. Where necessary forestry wind throw hazard and forest landscape assessment will be considered on the impact of woodland removal areas. Where wind throw and forest landscape impact is predicted, consideration will be made as to the requirement of felling to desirable wind firm and forest landscape boundaries.

12.5.2 This assessment will be based on the requirement to form an Operational Corridor (OC) while recognising the potential impact over broader forest management from the Proposed Development. The assessment will consider the OC only and is not proposed to address overall Forest Plans. Any felling undertaken outwith the OC would be solely under the control of the land owner, and the Applicant would not have any influence or control over such. Consequently, the assessment is limited to consideration of the effects of the Proposed Development on forest composition and yield.

### **12.6 Issues to be Scoped Out**

12.6.1 Secondary effects resulting from forestry activities, including effects on habitats and species, ornithology, hydrology and landscape and visual effects, would be considered within their respective chapters of this EIA Report and would not be included within the Forestry Chapter.

12.6.2 Effects related to the dismantling of the existing OHL would be scoped out of the assessment.

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<sup>33</sup> Scottish Government, (2019). *The Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal*. (online) Available at: <https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/285-the-scottish-government-s-policy-on-control-of-woodland-removal/viewdocument> (Last accessed: 26 March 2020).

## 13. TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

### 13.1 Introduction

13.1.1 This section of the Scoping Report provides a brief overview of the traffic and transport baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

### 13.2 Baseline Conditions

13.2.1 The following table sets out the main roads on the local road network that would likely be utilised to facilitate construction of the Proposed Development.

**Table 13.1 Local Road Network**

Topic	Local Road Network	Anticipated Construction Access Requirements
Section 0: Ardmore to Edinbane	A87(T), A863, A850, B886, C1227. Other minor roads providing local access.	The use of helicopters for the delivery of materials is likely to be utilised throughout this section to minimise vehicular access to each pole location, and therefore reducing the requirement for new tracks.
Section 1: Edinbane to North Sligachan	A87(T), A863, A850, B885. Other minor roads providing local access.	Generally, construction of stone access tracks is likely to be the preferred method of accessing each tower location within this section. Existing forestry tracks such as those in Tungadal and Glen Varragill forests would be used where practicable.
Section 2: North of Sligachan to Broadford	A87(T). Other minor roads providing local access.	Proximity to the A87 provides opportunities to minimise the length of new tracks from the local road network. Existing accesses would be utilised where possible. Construction of stone access tracks would likely be the preferred method of accessing this section.
Section 3: Broadford to Kyle Rhea	A87(T), A851, B8083, C1239. Other minor roads providing local access.	Generally, construction of stone access tracks is likely to be the preferred method of accessing each tower location within this section. To minimise construction traffic within the SAC, it is proposed that a number of towers would be constructed by helicopter. Whilst this construction technique does not avoid the requirement for temporary track infrastructure, it does considerably reduce the frequency of track use by construction vehicles
Section 4: Kyle Rhea to Loch Cuaich	A87(T), C1223. Other minor roads providing local access.	Access is restricted to a small number of existing single track minor roads at Glenelg and Kinloch Hourn. The area between Balvraid and Kinloch Hourn has no public road access at all, although there are some forestry and estate tracks, as well as walkers paths through this remote part of the route. In general, new temporary stone tracks are likely to be required to access many of the towers within this section, although there will be a focus on utilising existing tracks and paths where possible.

Section 5: Loch Cuaich to Invergarry	A87(T). Other minor roads providing local access.	<p>This is a sparsely settled rural area connected by the minor public road to Kinlochhour and the A87 road that leads northward to Loch Loyne.</p> <p>Given the presence of the existing OHL, the newly constructed Quoich to Aberchalder 132 kV wood pole OHL, and commercial forestry, there are many existing access tracks through this area. These existing tracks would be utilised where possible to minimise the requirement for new stone tracks.</p>
Section 6: Invergarry to Fort Augustus	A87(T), A82(T). Other minor roads providing local access.	<p>Existing access tracks are present within this section, typically to provide access to existing power lines, are well maintained and likely to be able to provide suitable construction access for this project with minimal upgrade requirements.</p>

### 13.3 Potential Effects

13.3.1 In accordance with the Institute of Environmental Management Assessment (IEMA) Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic, the thresholds above which there is considered to be the potential for significant effects are:

- on road links where traffic flows are predicted to increase by more than 30% (or where the number of heavy goods vehicles is predicted to increase by more than 30%); and
- traffic flows are predicted by 10% or more in any other specifically sensitive areas.

13.3.2 Where the predicted growth in traffic flow is below the thresholds, the IEMA guidelines suggest the significance of the effects can be stated to be negligible and further detailed assessment is not warranted.

13.3.3 Potential effects may include:

- Increased traffic flows;
- Severance;
- Fear and intimidation;
- Driver delay;
- Accidents and safety; and
- Pedestrian amenity and pedestrian delay.

### 13.4 Mitigation

13.4.1 A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) would be developed to ensure road safety for all other road users during construction works, and for suitable management of all abnormal loads involved. The CTMP would be developed in consultation with the local roads authority.

### 13.5 Proposed Scope of Assessment

13.5.1 The proposed scope for the traffic and transport assessment, which will be applicable to all sections of the project, includes:

- Where the relevant thresholds<sup>34</sup> are exceeded, an assessment will be provided as part of the EIA Report to include the likely number of construction traffic movements and the capacity of local roads to accommodate construction traffic, with reference to the potential effects of severance; fear and intimidation; accidents and safety; driver delay; pedestrian amenity; and pedestrian delay;
- Where thresholds for potential significant effects are not exceeded, no detailed assessment will be provided; however an outline Traffic Management Plan will be provided, along with a commitment to work with Transport Scotland and the local roads authority in order to agree detailed traffic management proposals for implementation during the construction phase;
- Baseline traffic numbers will be sought from THC and the Department for Transport (DfT) open traffic count site. It is anticipated that this will need to be supplemented by additional count data on a selection of local roads. Accident data would be sourced from Crashmap.co.uk, an online accident review resource;
- The assessment would be completed with reference to the IEMA guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic, and other relevant guidelines and policy; and
- A draft Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) would be produced as part of the EIA Report, to be developed and adopted by the Principal Contractor as a Condition of Consent.

### 13.6 Issues to be Scoped Out

13.6.1 The potential for the Proposed Development to give rise to traffic impacts would be limited to the construction phase only. No impacts are anticipated during the operational phase as the Proposed Development would not generate any new traffic, apart from during infrequent maintenance activities. On this basis, operational traffic assessment is scoped out of the EIA in its entirety.

13.6.2 Similarly, traffic impacts related to the dismantling of the existing OHL would not be of the same level as construction of the new OHL, and therefore are not likely to breach the thresholds requiring detailed assessment. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that a CTMP would be developed for the dismantling works.

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<sup>34</sup> As noted in the IEMA Guidelines for the Environmental Assessment of Road Traffic (1993)

## 14. SOCIO-ECONOMICS, RECREATION AND TOURISM

### 14.1 Introduction

14.1.1 This Chapter of the Scoping Report provides a brief overview of the socio-economic, recreation and tourism baseline conditions, the potential effects associated with the Proposed Development and the proposed scope of assessment methodology to be considered in the EIA Report.

### 14.2 Baseline Conditions

14.2.1 The economy in the region is dominated by the tourism sector, with accommodation and food services accounting for a quarter of all employment in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross in 2020. Other important employment sectors include wholesale and retail, and human health and social work<sup>35</sup>.

14.2.2 The main settlements within the vicinity of the Proposed Development include Portree, Broadford, Invergarry and Fort Augustus, all of which are linked by the A82 and A87 trunk roads. Other smaller settlements, rural communities and clusters of properties are present along the route.

14.2.3 The A87 is a highly trafficked and popular tourist route, providing a road link to Skye from the mainland.

14.2.4 There are a number of walking and cycling routes, many of which are noted as Core Paths by The Highland Council, or identified as Rights of Way and Wider Path Network paths. Scottish Hill Tracks and longer distance hill tracks are also present within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

14.2.5 Key visitor attractions and activities throughout the area include the main settlements noted above, and other attractions such as Dunvegan Castle, Sligachan, the Cuillins and Kyle Rhea, as well as a variety of walks, climbing, other outdoor activities, cultural and nature based attractions.

### 14.3 Potential Effects

14.3.1 The potential effects associated with the Proposed Development on socio-economic factors is typically related to the construction phase, including the creation of jobs and the indirect effects to the local supply chain and businesses.

14.3.2 Other potential effects on recreation and tourism assets can relate to the temporary or permanent disruption to recreational activities and sites, associated visual effects, and the consequential impact the proposed works on tourism related businesses.

### 14.4 Mitigation

14.4.1 An Outdoor Access Plan within the EIA Report would demonstrate how continued access for recreational users along Core Paths, and other walking / cycling routes in the area will be managed in a way that least affects their recreational users.

### 14.5 Proposed Scope of Assessment

14.5.1 The level of interaction between the Proposed Development and public access routes will vary throughout the route. An assessment on recreational activities during both construction and operation of the Proposed Development would be undertaken and reported within the EIA Report. An outdoor access plan would be prepared as part of the CEMP and signage would be erected at suitable locations to warn recreational users of construction traffic.

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<sup>35</sup> Highlands and Islands Area Profiles 2020, Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross



14.5.2 The Applicant and Principal Contractor will consider the potential effects on tourism related businesses during the phasing of construction works. An indicative programme will be set out in the EIA Report.

14.5.3 The potential for significant effects on the visual amenity of recreational and tourist receptors would be fully considered through the LVIA.

#### **14.6 Issues to be Scoped Out**

14.6.1 The Proposed Development would result in the creation of temporary jobs during the construction period. It is envisaged that a small proportion of the workforce would be from the local area. In addition, there would be potential beneficial effects through temporary increased spending on the supply of goods and services during construction. It is anticipated that these effects, while beneficial, are unlikely to be significant beyond the local area. In the long term, the Proposed Development would ensure security of electricity supply to the region and facilitate the increase in renewable generation planned for the area. These beneficial effects will be highlighted within the EIA Report, however no separate impact assessment chapter is proposed to cover these issues.

## 15. POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH

### 15.1 Introduction

15.1.1 This Chapter of the Scoping Report covers factors considered to fall under the heading of population and human health, as referenced under regulation 4(3) of the EIA Regulations. Given the nature of the Proposed Development, the potential and perceived effects on population and human health include:

- nuisance related to noise and vibration during construction and operation;
- perceived health effects related to electromagnetic fields (EMF); and
- potential effects of operation of the OHL on television and radio reception.

### 15.2 Baseline Conditions

15.2.1 The Proposed Development is located within a predominantly rural area. The main settlements that are within the general vicinity of the Proposed Development are limited to Broadford, Invergarry and Fort Augustus. Smaller settlements, individual dwellings and clusters or properties are also distributed along the length of the Proposed Development, albeit there are long sections of the route that are remote from any dwellings.

15.2.2 Generally following the route of the existing OHL, there are very few instances where the Proposed Development would be located within 200 m of properties along its length.

### 15.3 Potential Effects

15.3.1 At this preliminary stage, possible effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development include:

- noise and vibration during the construction phase;
- operational effects of noise from the OHL;
- perceived effects on human health associated with EMF; and
- operational effects of additional electromagnetic interference to medium and long wave (AM) radio signals.

15.3.2 OHL noise is generally associated with a phenomenon known as “corona discharge”. This is essentially a limited electrical breakdown of the air which, in the main, occurs during damp weather. Corona discharge will create a source of audible noise (a crackling sound occasionally accompanied by a low frequency hum in certain wet conditions). Power transmission line conductors are designed to minimise corona discharge, but this may be affected by minor surface irregularities caused by damage, insects, raindrops or pollution.

15.3.3 EMFs arise from electric charges and current flow. Exposure guidelines have been developed by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNRIP) to ensure protection of human health in different situations, occupational exposure and public exposure, which were adopted by the UK National Radiological Protection Board (now Public Health England and devolved administration bodies) for application in the UK<sup>36</sup>.

15.3.4 Electromagnetic interference to medium and long wave (AM) radio signals at properties within close proximity of the OHL could also occur.

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<sup>36</sup> Health Protection Agency.

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140714093648/http://www.hpa.org.uk/Publications/Radiation/NPRBArchive/DocumentsOfTheNRPB/Absd1502/#background>

## 15.4 Mitigation

15.4.1 The Applicant has established best practice construction techniques and procedures that have been agreed with statutory consultees, including SEPA and NatureScot. These are set out within the Applicant's GEMPs. The Proposed Development would be constructed in accordance with these plans.

15.4.2 A contractual management requirement of the successful Principal Contractor would be the development and implementation of a comprehensive and site-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This document would detail how the successful Principal Contractor would manage the works in accordance with all commitments and mitigation detailed in the EIA Report, SSE's GEMPs, statutory consents and authorisations, and industry best practise and guidance, including pollution prevention guidance.

## 15.5 Proposed Scope and Assessment Methodology

### Operational Noise

15.5.1 It is not anticipated that an assessment of operational noise would be required for the Proposed Development given the remoteness of the project (in places) and distance from properties. However, a review of noise sensitive receptors within 100 m of the OHL would be undertaken to determine whether detailed assessment is required at these receptors. Where this is determined to be required, consultation with the Environmental Health Department of The Highland Council would be sought to establish an appropriate and proportionate approach.

## 15.6 Issues to be Scoped Out

### Construction Noise and Vibration

15.6.1 Construction noise and vibration will be short term and intermittent and can be controlled through the implementation of a noise management plan, which would be developed as part of the CEMP prepared by the Principal Contractor.

15.6.2 As such, and given the remoteness of construction activity for much of the project, no detailed assessment of construction noise and vibration associated with plant noise or traffic is proposed as part of the EIA.

### Noise from Operational Maintenance

15.6.3 Any operational maintenance works required along the line will be short term and intermittent and are not anticipated to give rise to significant effects relating to noise and vibration. As such, this topic is proposed to be scoped out of the EIA.

### Noise from Dismantling of Existing OHL

15.6.4 Noise from dismantling activities of the existing OHL will be short term and intermittent Any operational maintenance works required along the line will be short term and intermittent and can be controlled through the implementation of a noise management plan, which would be developed as part of the CEMP prepared by the Principal Contractor. As such, this topic is proposed to be scoped out of the EIA.

### Noise from Underground Cable

15.6.5 There are no predicted noise effects from the operation of an underground cable. As such, this topic is proposed to be scoped out of the EIA.

### Digital Radio and Television Interference

15.6.6 Corona discharge is unlikely to cause significant interference to VHF reception (i.e. FM radio or digital radio and television which operate in the UHF range). Micro-gap discharge can affect digital television and radio

reception, but is not considered to be a source of long term annoyance as equipment is built and maintained to high standards and any such discharge would be the subject of remedial action. It is therefore proposed to scope out impacts to digital television, digital radio and FM radio reception from the EIA.

### **EMFs**

15.6.7 EMFs arise from electric charges. Transmission lines comply with the government policy of adopting the guidelines of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) on exposure to EMFs. SSEN believe that compliance with government policy on levels of exposure to EMFs, which in turn is based on the advice of the government's independent scientific advisers, the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) (now part of the Health Protection Agency), ensures the appropriate level of protection for the public from these fields. The NRPB keeps the results of EMF health studies under constant review to ensure that the guidelines for limiting exposure are based on the best available scientific information. It is therefore concluded that no likely significant effect on human health associated with EMFs is predicted, and it is therefore proposed to scope this out of the assessment in its entirety from the EIA Report.

### **TV and Radio Reception**

15.6.8 Potential effects from OHLs on TV signals are due to physical obstruction of the signal. The Proposed Development would not represent a significant obstruction and it is not anticipated that any adverse effects on TV reception would be experienced. The operation of high voltage OHLs can generate electromagnetic fields over a wide range of frequencies, from power (50 Hz) to radio frequencies. It is anticipated that the Proposed Development would emit low-level radio frequency interference (RFI) but that in practice little radio and television interference would arise, except when directly beneath the OHL. Therefore, this topic would not be addressed in the EIA Report and the Applicant considers it can be scoped out of the EIA Report in its entirety.

## 16. OTHER ISSUES SCOPED OUT OF EIA

### 16.1 Introduction

16.1.1 This Chapter provides the rationale for excluding certain effects on specified environmental topics from the EIA.

### 16.2 Land Use and Agriculture

#### Baseline Conditions

16.2.1 A number of poles and towers along the route are on land which is used for agricultural activity. No land capable of supporting Arable Agriculture (Class 1, 2 or 3) has been identified. Therefore, the agricultural land within the vicinity of the Proposed Development is generally deemed to be of low sensitivity.

16.2.2 Other common land uses within the vicinity of the Proposed Development include moorland, scrub and forestry.

#### Potential for Significant Effects

16.2.3 Potentially significant effects which can arise on land use from developments of this type include temporary or permanent loss of publicly used land; temporary or permanent severance and impact on the viability of existing activities; re-utilisation of redundant and vacant land; and impacts on land designated for future development.

#### Issues Scoped Out

16.2.4 Land use impacts associated with the Proposed Development are anticipated to be minimal. The construction work may result in some temporary loss of land or access restriction, however it is considered that this can be adequately managed through wayleave agreements with the relevant land owners. The permanent loss of land to pole / tower locations would be negligible and it would remain possible for grazing to continue around and under poles / towers during their operational lifetime. It is thus proposed that this topic is scoped out of the EIA Report in its entirety.

16.2.5 Dialogue would be maintained by the Applicant and the Principal Contractor with landowners, local tenants and property owners throughout the construction period to ensure any potential disruption as a result of the proposed works is kept to a minimum.

### 16.3 Air Quality and Climate Change

#### Baseline Conditions

16.3.1 Local air quality is a combination of background air quality, representative of general levels of pollution away from busy roads and industrial activity, and added emissions from local emission sources such as road traffic. Due to the generally rural nature of the Proposed Development and sensitive receptors, contribution from road traffic and polluting industrial sources are minimal. Current and predicted annual average and short term NO<sub>2</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> within the region are compliant with all applicable objectives.

#### Potential for Significant Effects

16.3.2 Potentially significant effects which can arise on air quality and climate change from developments of this type relate primarily to generation and dispersal of dust and airborne particulate matter from plant, construction traffic and construction activities.

- 16.3.3 In the context of the EIA process climate change is considered both in relation to the contribution of the proposed development to increasing or decreasing gaseous emissions with global warming potential (GWP), and in relation to climate change adaptation.
- 16.3.4 Emissions associated with the proposed development will be limited to temporary and short term emissions of exhaust gases from vehicles and construction plant, and the potential for the release of carbon dioxide as a result of dewatering and exposing peat and peat soils during construction. Neither source is considered likely to be significant in terms of GWP.
- 16.3.5 With regard to climate adaptation, consideration will be given the potential implications of climate change on the OHL design and the design of tower support structures (e.g. design for increased flood risk and adverse weather); however no potential for significant impacts have been identified.

#### **Issues Scoped Out**

- 16.3.6 The Proposed Development has limited potential to impact upon air quality. There is a potential to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust and construction traffic exhaust emissions. However, the nature of construction activities means these would be localised, short term and intermittent. Potential effects would further be minimised through the implementation of mitigation measures, in particular the project CEMP and relevant GEMPs.
- 16.3.7 The Proposed Development would contribute to connecting renewable electricity generation capacity to the transmission network, in turn displacing emissions associated with fossil fuel based electricity generation elsewhere.
- 16.3.8 As such, this issue is scoped out of the EIA and no assessment of air quality and climate change is proposed as part of the EIA Report.

#### **16.4 Accidents and Disasters**

##### **Potential for Significant Effects**

- 16.4.1 Potentially significant effects which can arise in relation to accidents and disasters from developments of this type include severe weather events and structural damage to towers, as well as the potential for risks during the construction phase.

##### **Issues Scoped Out**

- 16.4.2 Given the nature of the Proposed Development, the potential for effects related to the vulnerability to accidents and disasters are likely to be limited to those associated with unplanned power outages, due to extreme weather or structural damage. Crisis management and continuity plans are in place across the SSE Group. These are tested regularly and are designed for the management of, and recovery from, significant energy infrastructure failure events. Where there are material changes in infrastructure (or the management of it) additional plans are developed.
- 16.4.3 Furthermore, the Principal Designer would need to fully assess risks and mitigate as appropriate during the construction stage as part of the requirements of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2015).
- 16.4.4 Where there are major road, rail or built up area crossings under the section of the route being upgraded, it is likely that a form of mechanical protection, such as scaffolding or other approved method, would need to be supplied and erected to provide protection to members of the public and property in case of equipment failure.

16.4.5 Potential significant effects relating to the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to accidents and disasters is therefore proposed to be scoped out of the EIA Report in its entirety.

## 17. NEXT STEPS

### 17.1 Inviting Comments

17.1.1 SSEN Transmission invites consultees to comment on the following:

- What environmental information do you hold or are aware of that will assist in the EIA described here?
- Do you agree with the proposed approach for baseline collection, and that the range of surveys across particular topics is sufficient and appropriate to inform the assessment of environmental effects?
- Is there any other relevant existing baseline data that should be taken into account?
- Are there any key issues or possible effects which have been omitted?
- Do you agree with the list of issues to be scoped out, and the rationale behind the decision?

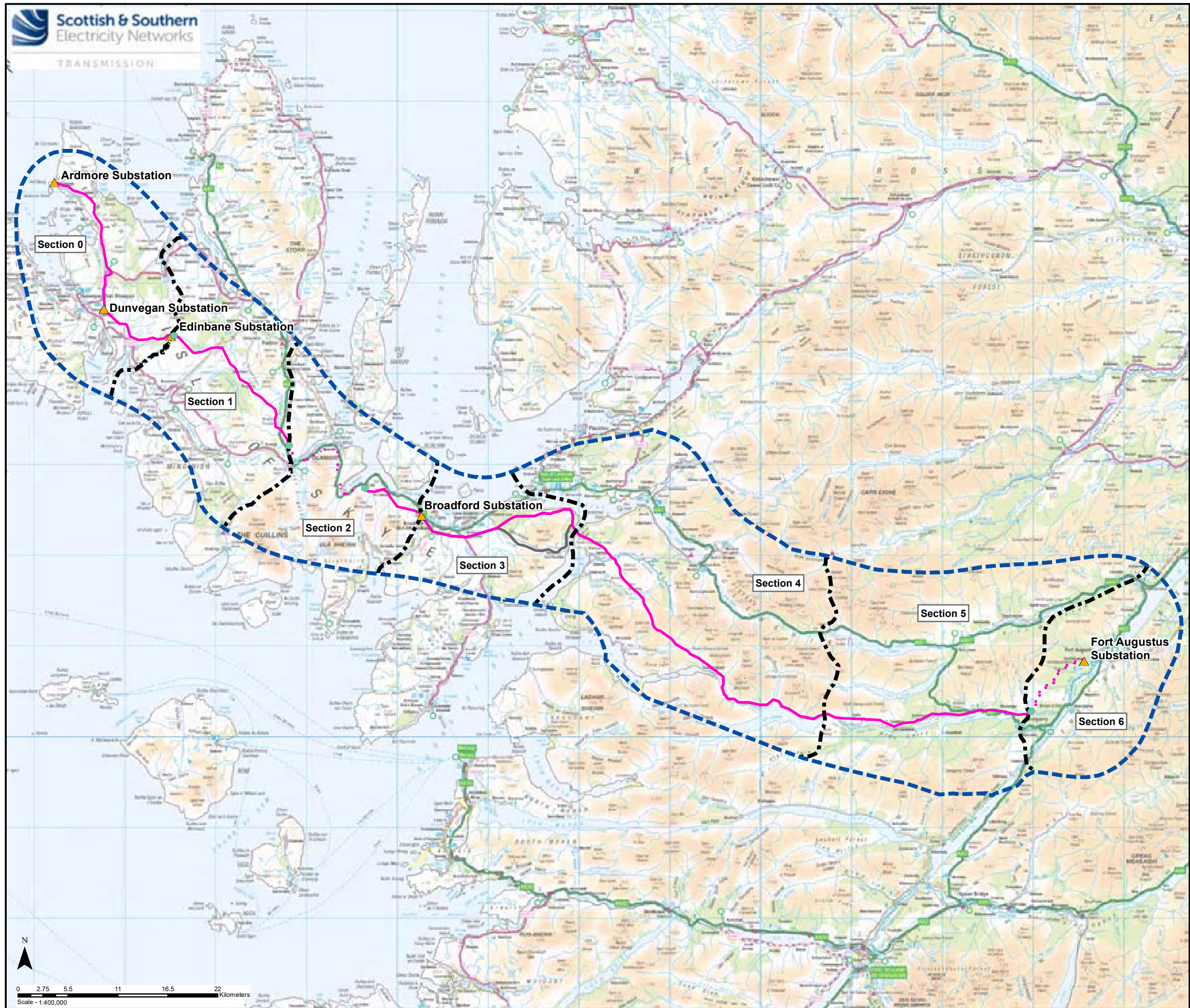
17.1.2 All responses should be addressed to:

Energy Consents Unit  
Scottish Government  
4th Floor  
5 Atlantic Quay  
150 Broomielaw  
Glasgow  
G2 8LU







17.1.3 The Scoping Opinion provided will be used to finalise the scope of the EIA and the specific approach to the individual assessments.

17.1.4 All comments received will be included in the EIA Report for reference, unless consultees request otherwise.





**Key**

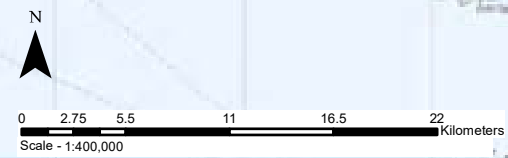
-  Corridor
-  Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
-  Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
-  Alternative Route
-  Cable Sealing End Compound
-  Substation

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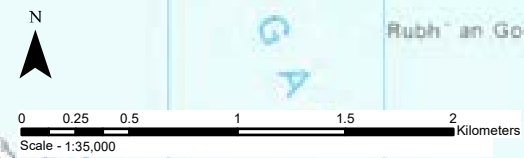
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- Key**
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  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
  - ▲ Substation



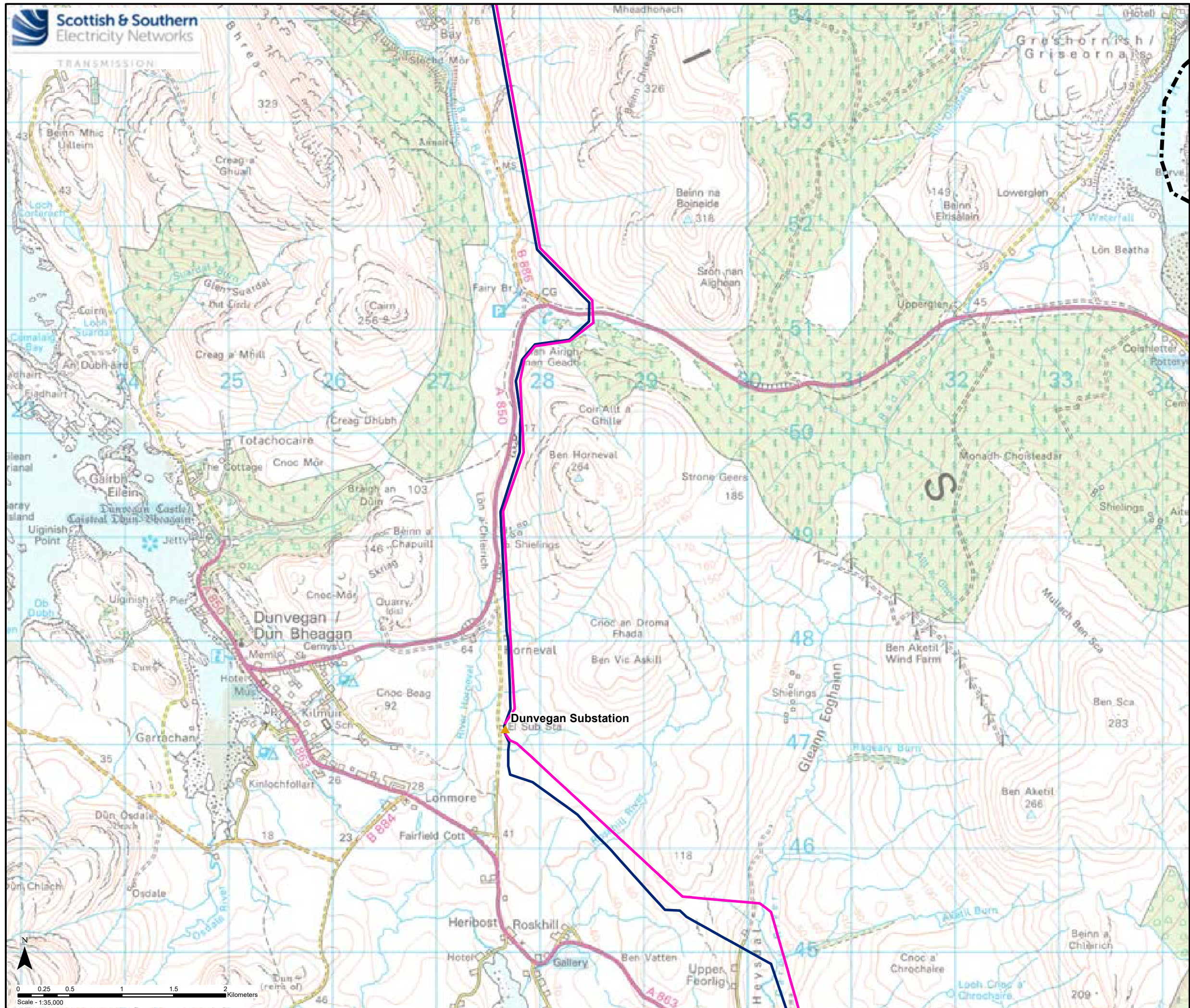
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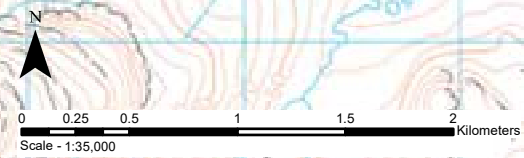
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Design Solution Section 0

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- Key**
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
  - ▲ Substation



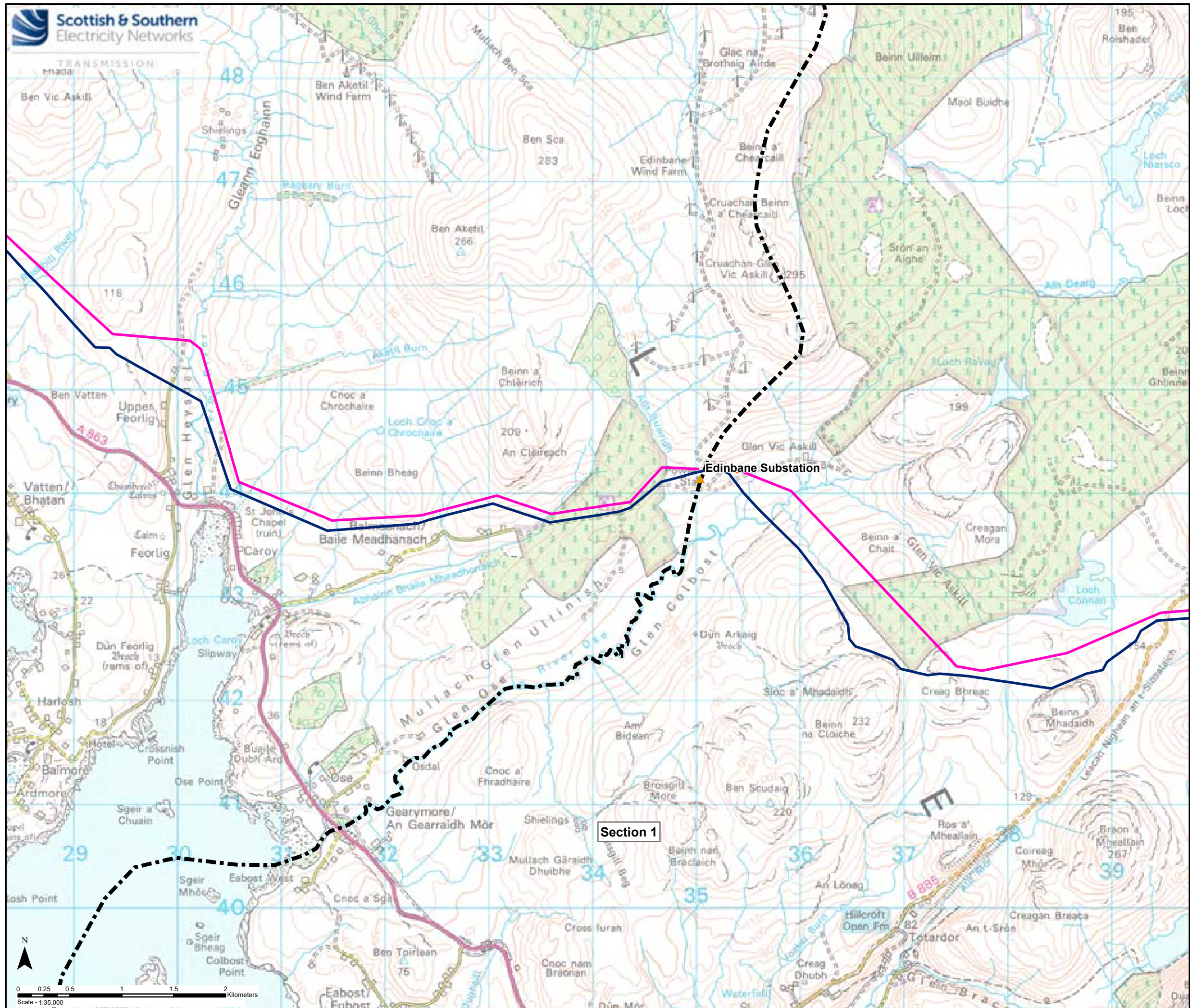
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Title: Figure 2.0.1b - Preferred Alignment and  
Design Solution Section 0

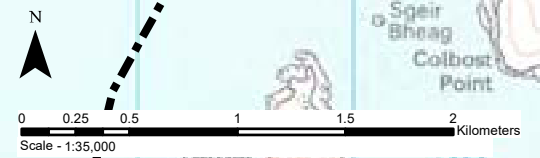
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- Key**
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
  - ▲ Substation

Section 1



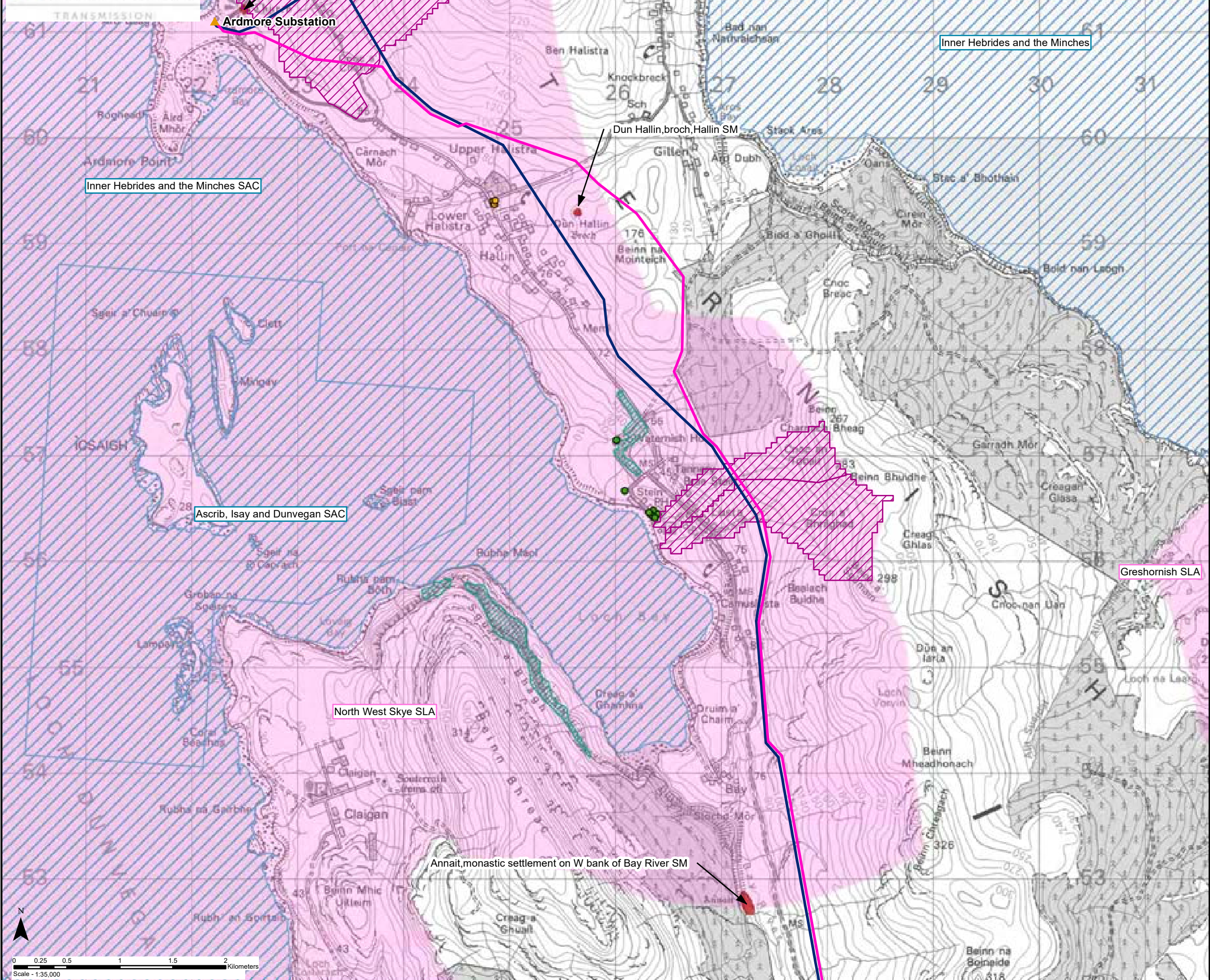
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Title: Figure 2.0.1c - Preferred Alignment and Design Solution Section 0

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- Key**
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
  - ▲ Substation
- Environmental Designations and Protected Areas**
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - Site Included on the Inventory of Ancient and Long Established Woodland (AWI)
  - Drinking Water Protected Area
  - Wild Land Area (WLA)
  - Special Landscape Area (SLA)
  - Site Included on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDL)
  - Scheduled Monument (SM)
  - Listed Building (LB) Category A
  - Listed Building (LB) Category B
  - Listed Building (LB) Category C

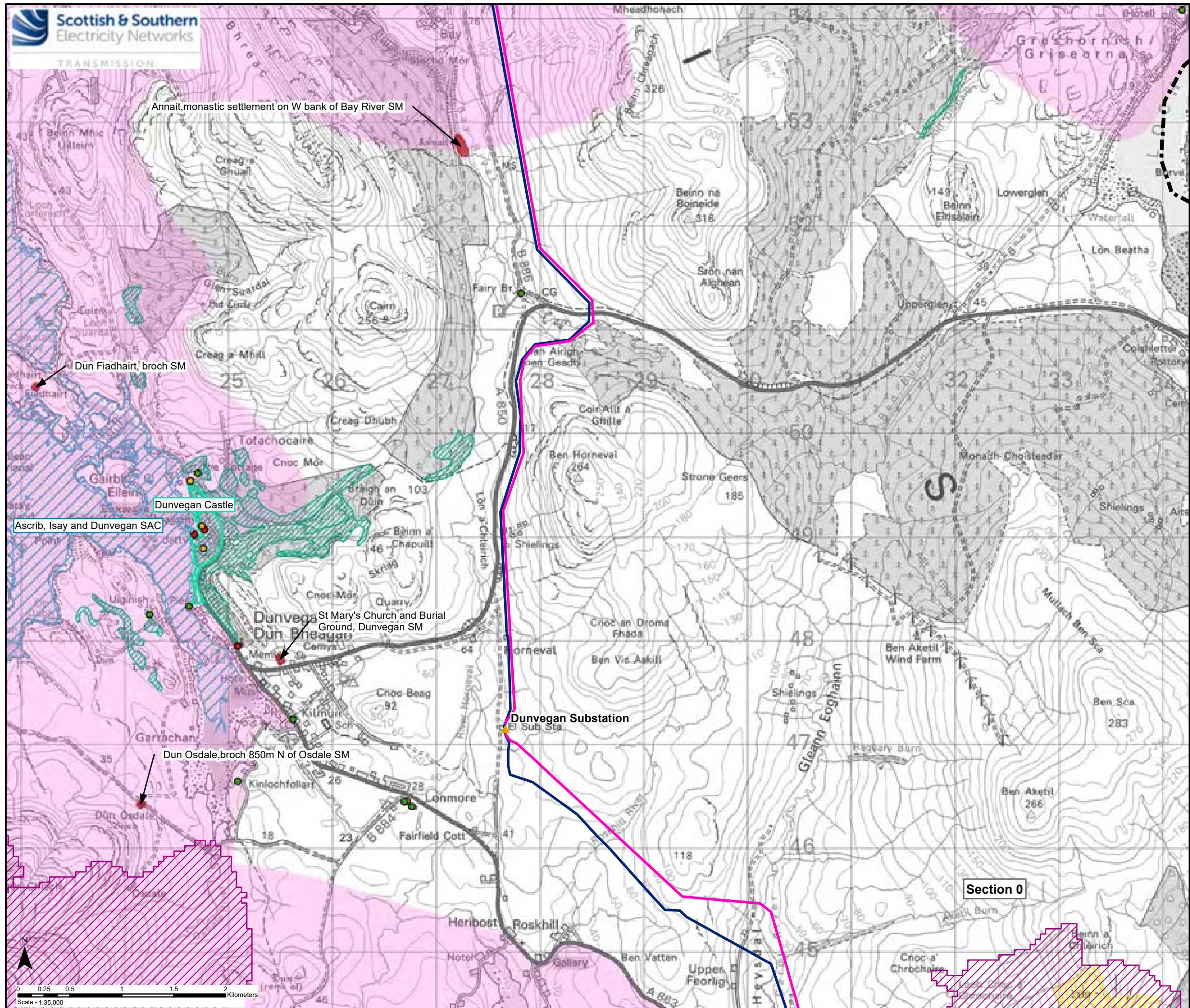
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Title: Figure 2.0.2a - Environmental Designations and Protected Areas Section 0

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- ### Key
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
  - ▲ Substation
- ### Environmental Designations and Protected Areas
- ▨ Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - ▨ Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - ▨ Site Included on the Inventory of Ancient and Long Established Woodland (AWI)
  - ▨ Drinking Water Protected Area
  - ▨ Wild Land Area (WLA)
  - ▨ Special Landscape Area (SLA)
  - ▨ Site Included on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDL)
  - Scheduled Monument (SM)
  - Listed Building (LB) Category A
  - Listed Building (LB) Category B
  - Listed Building (LB) Category C

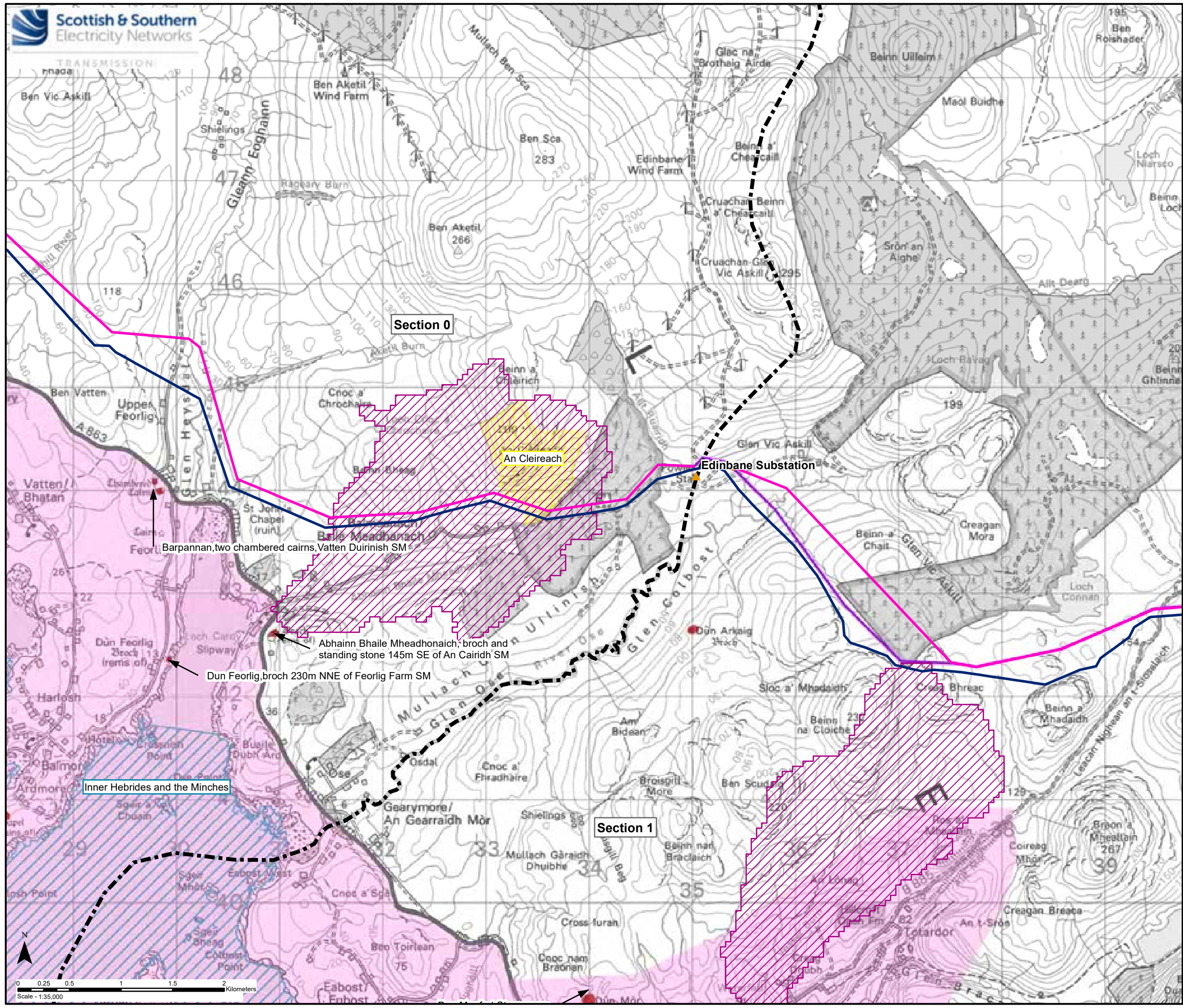
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Title: Figure 2.0.2b - Environmental Designations and Protected Areas Section 0

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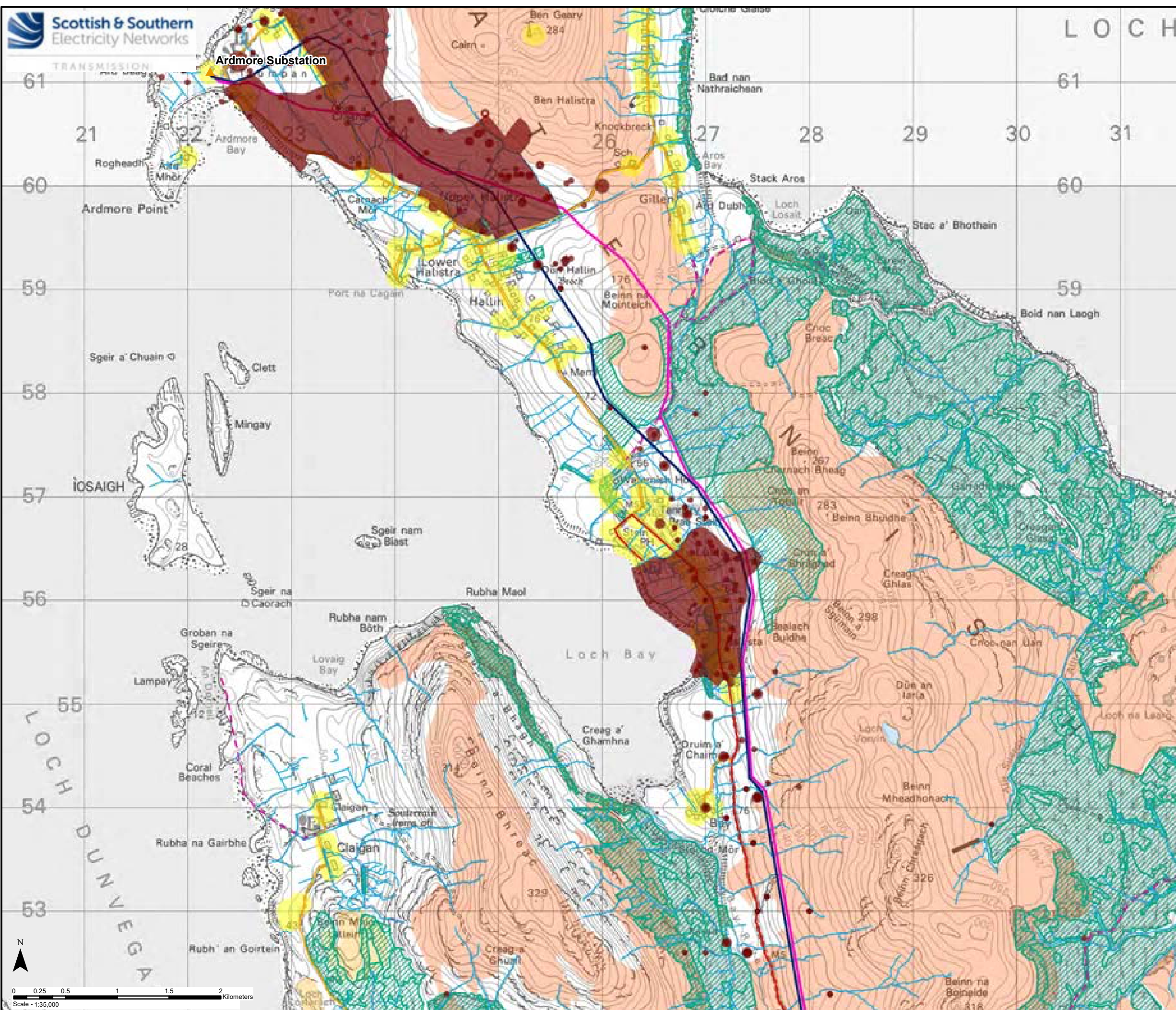
- ### Key
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
  - ▲ Substation
- ### Environmental Designations and Protected Areas
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - Site Included on the Inventory of Ancient and Long Established Woodland (AWI)
  - Drinking Water Protected Area
  - Wild Land Area (WLA)
  - Special Landscape Area (SLA)
  - Site Included on the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDL)
  - Scheduled Monument (SM)
  - Listed Building (LB) Category A
  - Listed Building (LB) Category B
  - Listed Building (LB) Category C

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Title: Figure 2.0.2c - Environmental Designations and Protected Areas Section 0

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**Key**

- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- Cable Sealing End Compound
- ▲ Substation

**Constraints**

- Class 1 Peatland
- Class 2 Peatland
- National Forest Inventory Woodland
- Watercourse
- Waterbody
- Historic Environment Record (HER) Site
- HER Linear Feature

Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS)

- Native Woodland
- Nearly-native Woodland
- Open Land Habitat
- Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

Potential Visual Receptor Locations

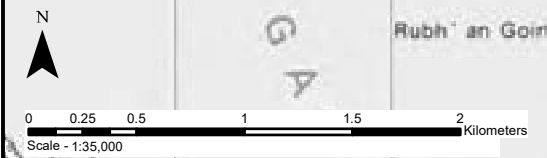
- Built Properties (100m Buffer)
- Public Road (A Road, B Road, Minor Road)
- Core Path
- Scottish Hill Track

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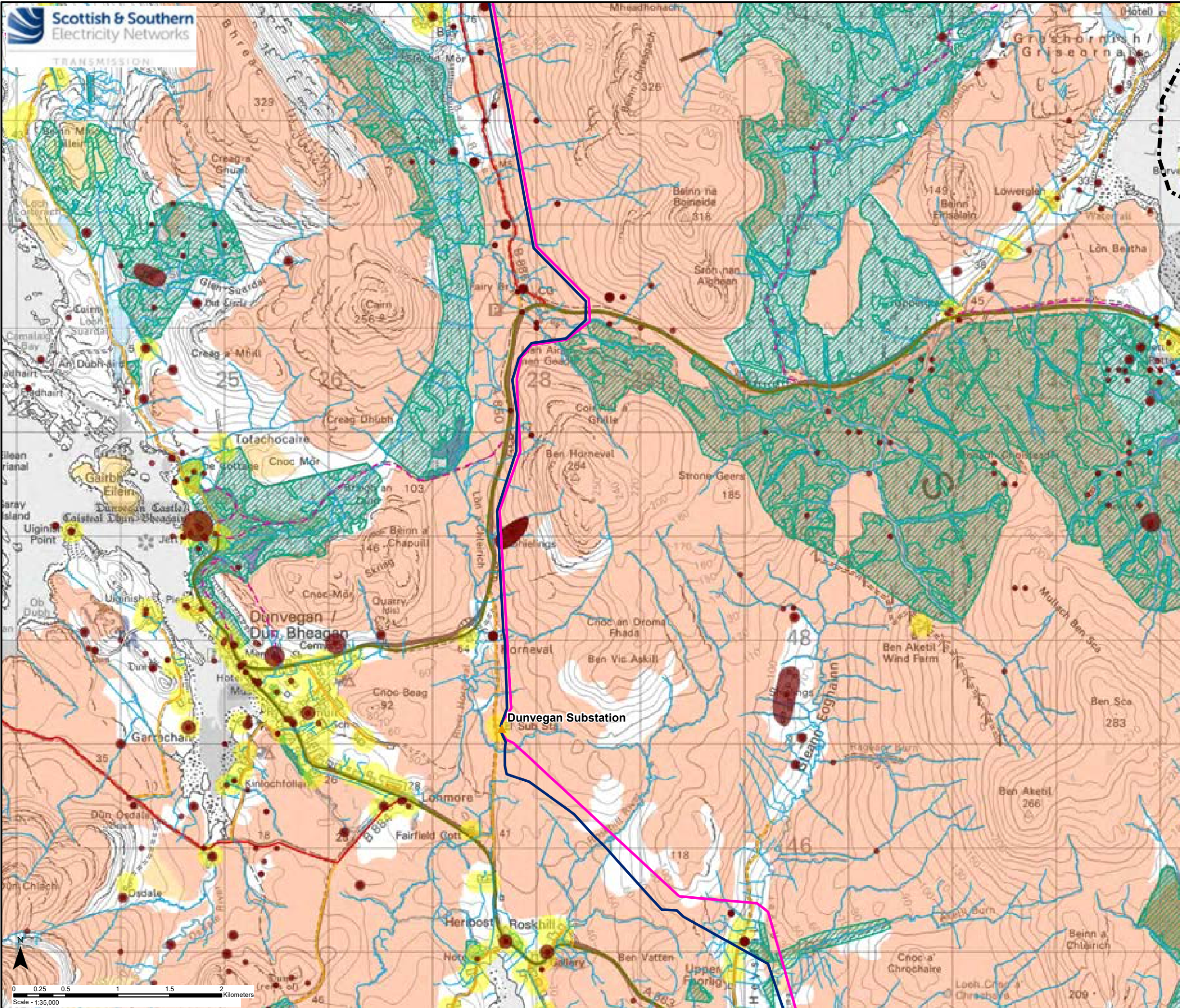
Project No: LT91  
Project: Skye Reinforcement Project Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.0.3a - Other Environmental Constraints Section 0

Drawn by: SK 02/12/2021  
Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.0.3a-1.0.0







**Key**

- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- Cable Sealing End Compound
- ▲ Substation

**Constraints**

- Class 1 Peatland
- Class 2 Peatland
- ▨ National Forest Inventory Woodland
- Watercourse
- Waterbody
- Historic Environment Record (HER) Site
- HER Linear Feature

Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS)

- Native Woodland
- Nearly-native Woodland
- Open Land Habitat
- Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

Potential Visual Receptor Locations

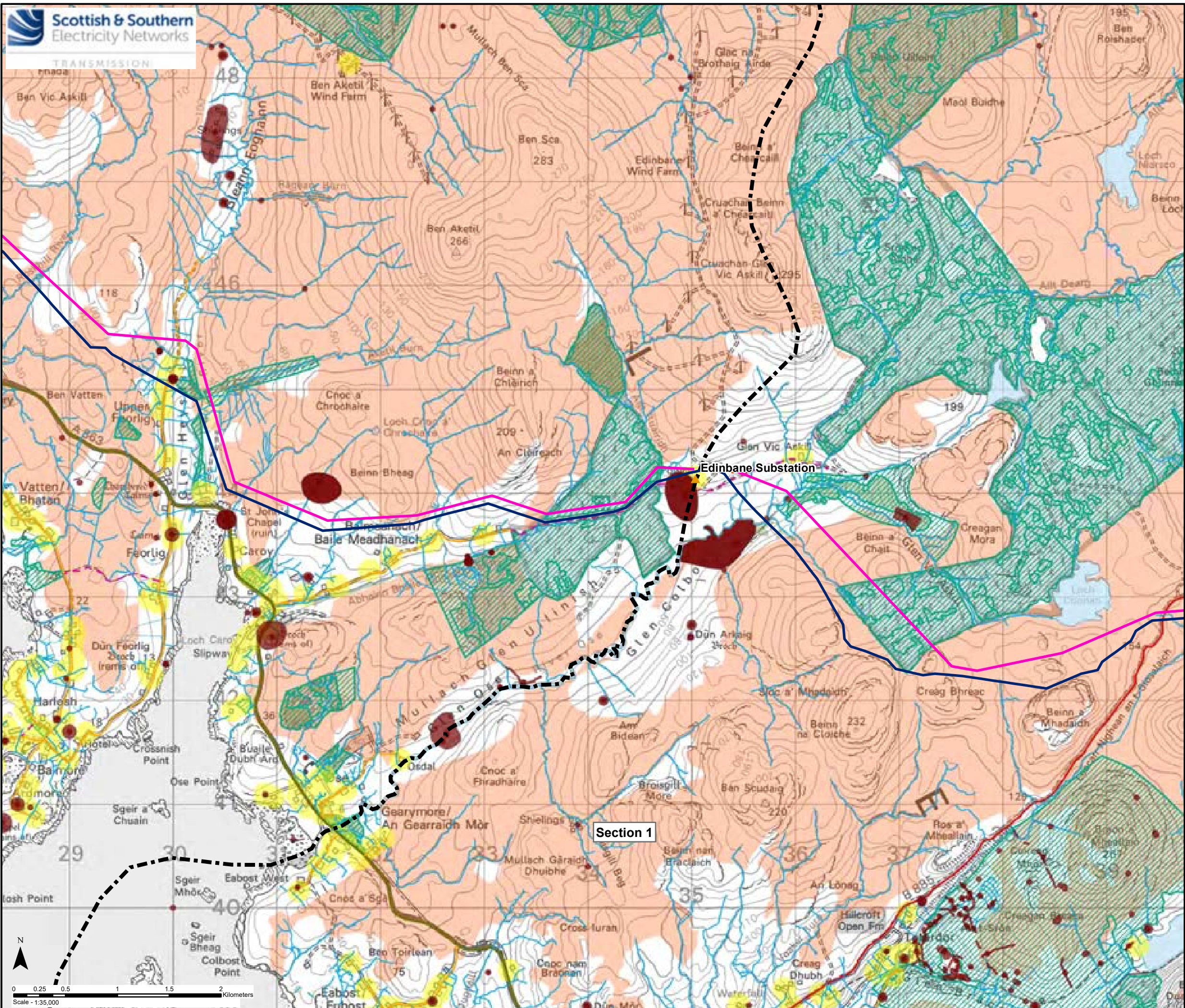
- Built Properties (100m Buffer)
- Public Road (A Road, B Road, Minor Road)
- Core Path
- Scottish Hill Track

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Project No: LT91  
Project: Skye Reinforcement Project Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.0.3b - Other Environmental Constraints Section 0

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Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.0.3b-1.0.0



**Key**

- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- Cable Sealing End Compound
- ▲ Substation

**Constraints**

- Class 1 Peatland
- Class 2 Peatland
- ▨ National Forest Inventory Woodland
- Watercourse
- Waterbody
- Historic Environment Record (HER) Site
- HER Linear Feature

Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS)

- Native Woodland
- Nearly-native Woodland
- Open Land Habitat
- Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

Potential Visual Receptor Locations

- Built Properties (100m Buffer)
- Public Road (A Road, B Road, Minor Road)
- Core Path
- Scottish Hill Track

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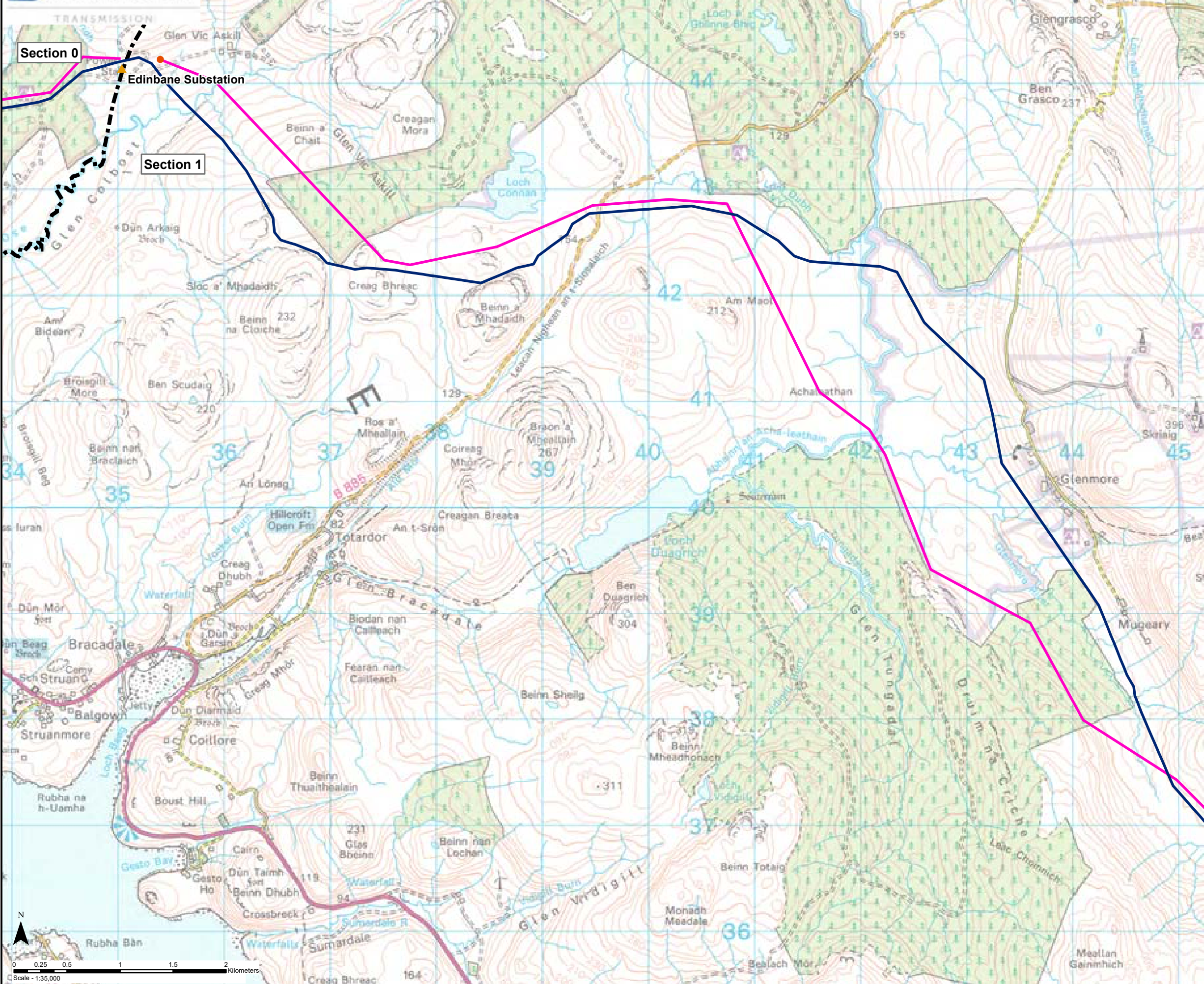
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Project: Skye Reinforcement Project Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.0.3c - Other Environmental Constraints Section 0

Drawn by: SK 02/12/2021  
Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.0.3c-1.0.0



Section 1



- Key**
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - ⋯ Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
  - ▲ Substation

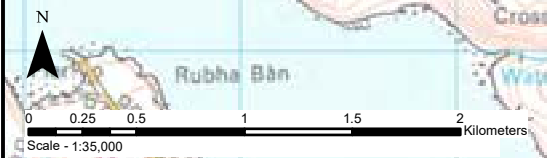
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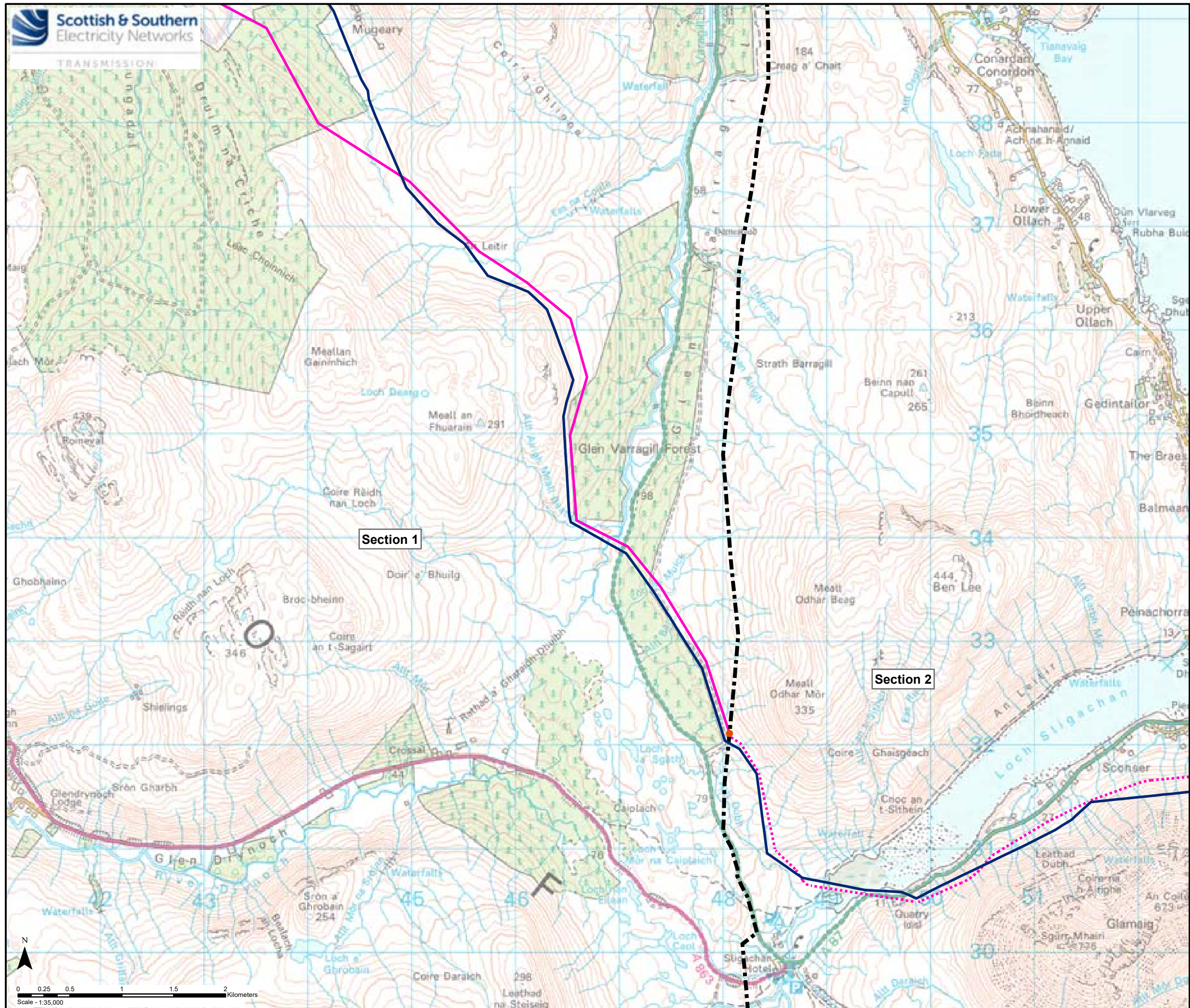
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Project: Skye Reinforcement Project  
Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.1.1a - Preferred Alignment and Design Solution Section 1

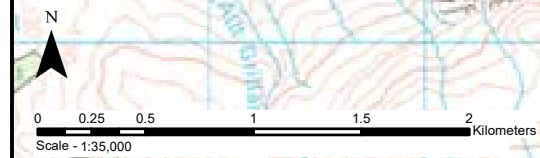
Drawn by: SK 01/12/2021

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- Key**
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - ... Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
  - ▲ Substation



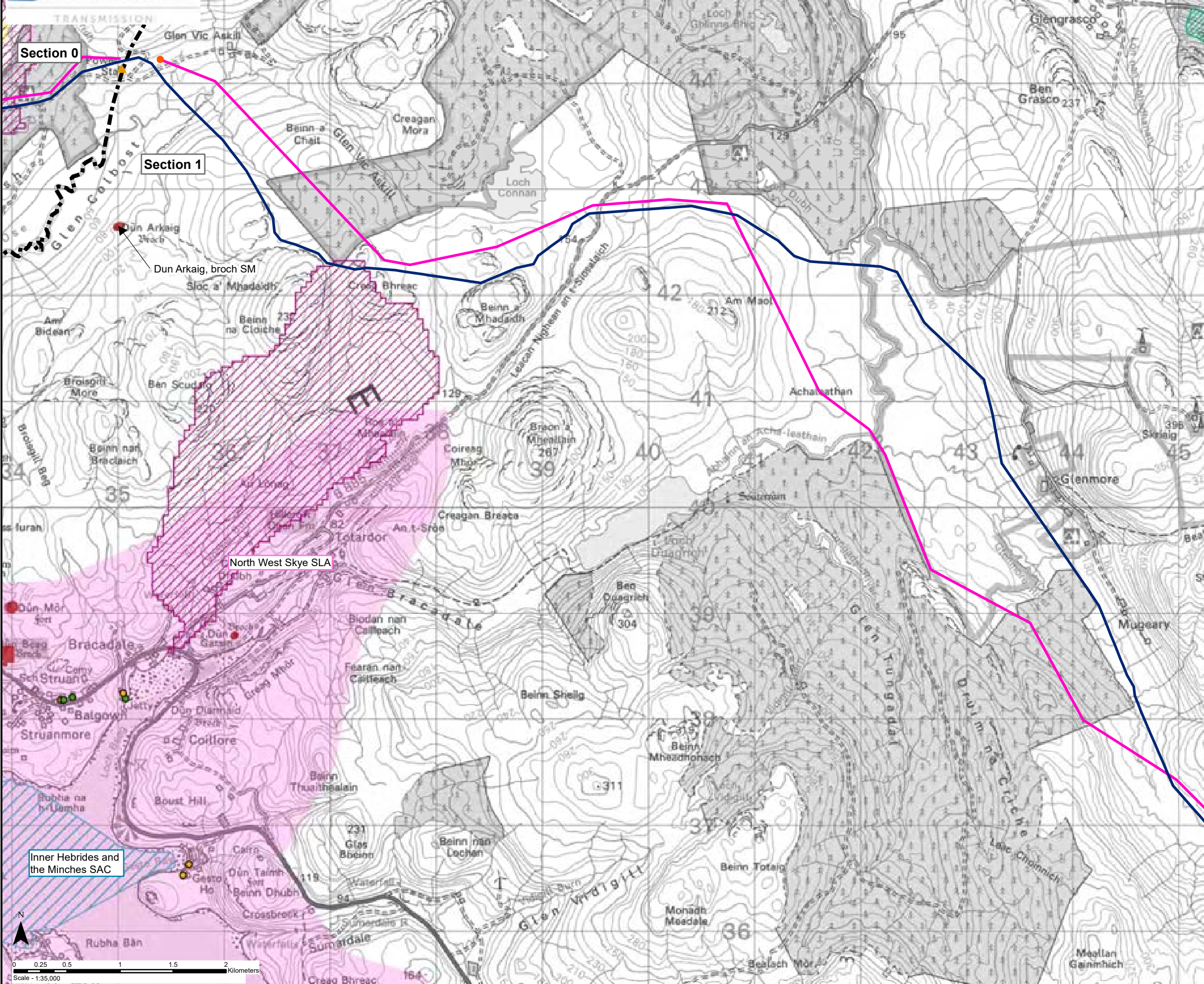
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Project No: LT91  
 Project: Skye Reinforcement Project Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.1.1b - Preferred Alignment and Design Solution Section 1

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Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.1.1b-1.0.0



- Key**
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
  - ▲ Substation
- Environmental Designations and Protected Areas**
- ▨ Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - ▭ Special Protection Area (SPA)
  - ▨ Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - ▨ Site Included on the Inventory of Ancient and Long Established Woodland (AWI)
  - ▨ Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA)
  - ▨ National Scenic Area (NSA)
  - ▨ Wild Land Area (WLA)
  - ▨ Special Landscape Area (SLA)
  - ▨ Scheduled Monument (SM)
  - Listed Building (LB) Category A
  - Listed Building (LB) Category B
  - Listed Building (LB) Category C

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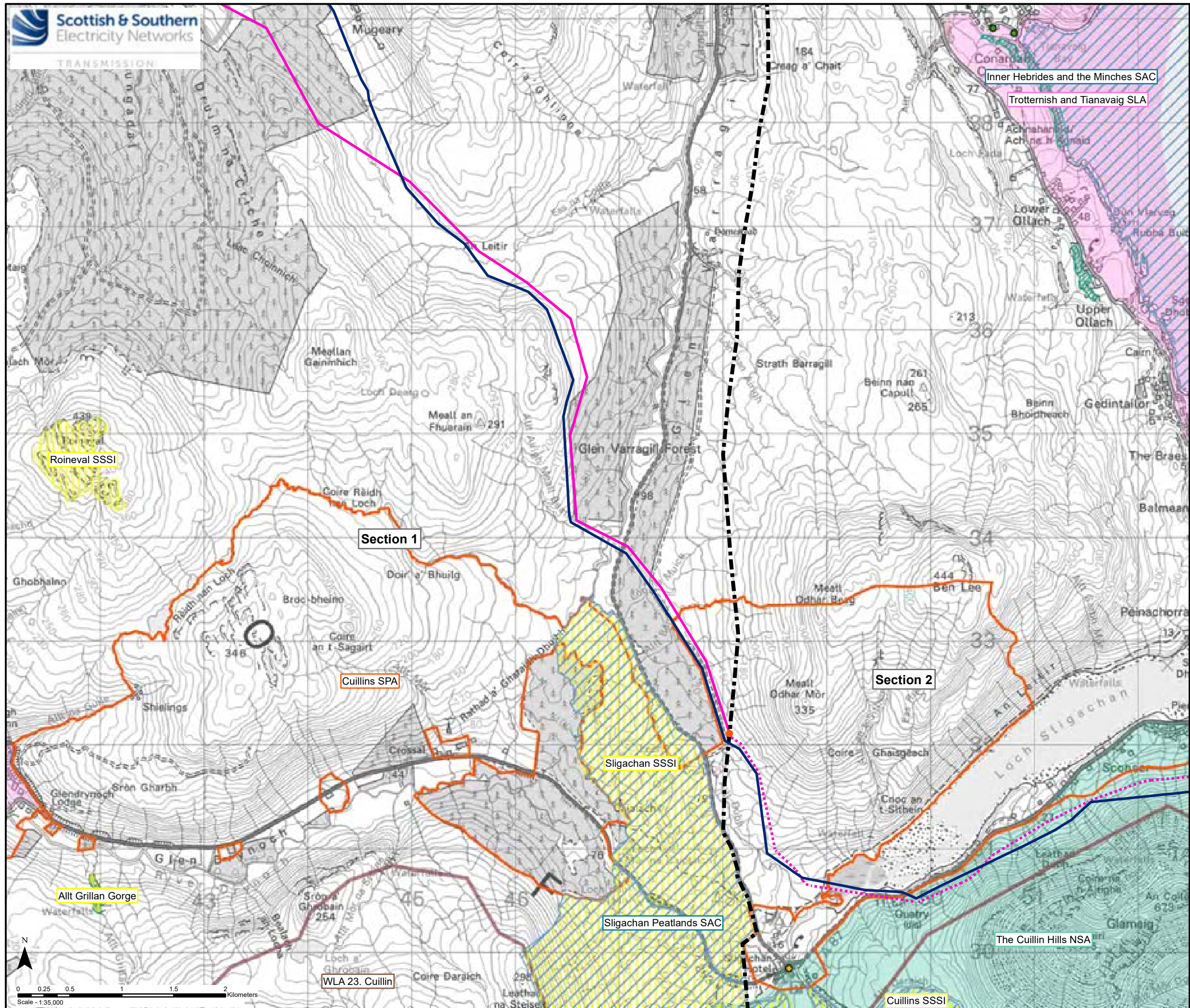
Project No: LT91  
Project: Skye Reinforcement Project Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.1.2a - Environmental Designations and Protected Areas Section 1

Drawn by: SK 01/12/2021

Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.1.2a-1.0.0





**Key**

- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- ... Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
- Cable Sealing End Compound
- ▲ Substation

**Environmental Designations and Protected Areas**

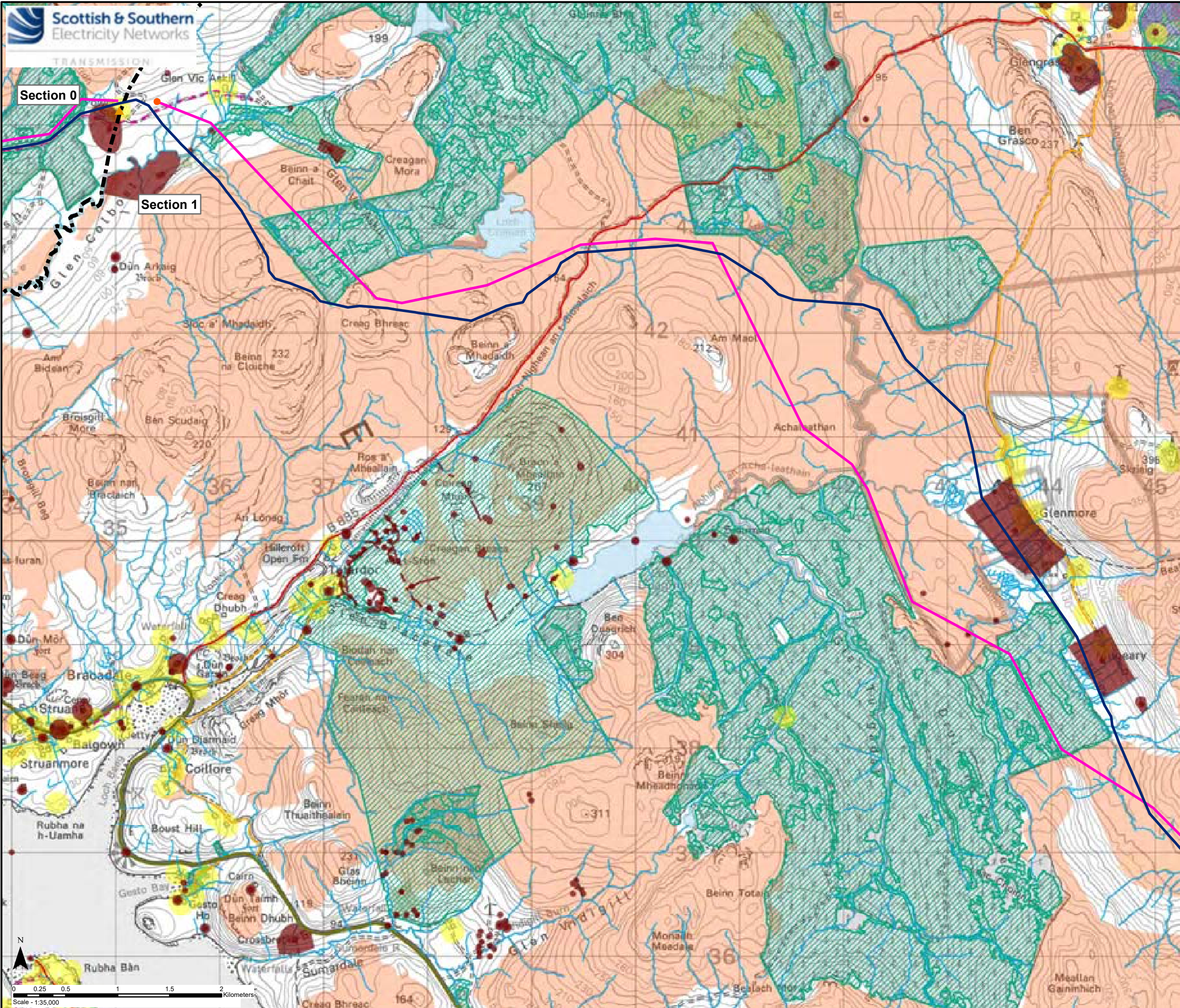
- ▨ Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- ▭ Special Protection Area (SPA)
- ▨ Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- ▨ Site Included on the Inventory of Ancient and Long Established Woodland (AWI)
- ▨ Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA)
- ▨ National Scenic Area (NSA)
- ▭ Wild Land Area (WLA)
- ▨ Special Landscape Area (SLA)
- Scheduled Monument (SM)
- Listed Building (LB) Category A
- Listed Building (LB) Category B
- Listed Building (LB) Category C

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Project No: LT91  
Project: Skye Reinforcement Project Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.1.2b - Environmental Designations and Protected Areas Section 1

Drawn by: SK 01/12/2021  
Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.1.2b-1.0.0



**Key**

- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
- Cable Sealing End Compound
- ▲ Substation

**Constraints**

- Class 1 Peatland
- Class 2 Peatland
- National Forest Inventory Woodland
- Watercourse
- Waterbody
- Historic Environment Record (HER) Site
- HER Linear Feature

**Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS)**

- Native Woodland
- Nearly-native Woodland
- Open Land Habitat
- Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

**Potential Visual Receptor Locations**

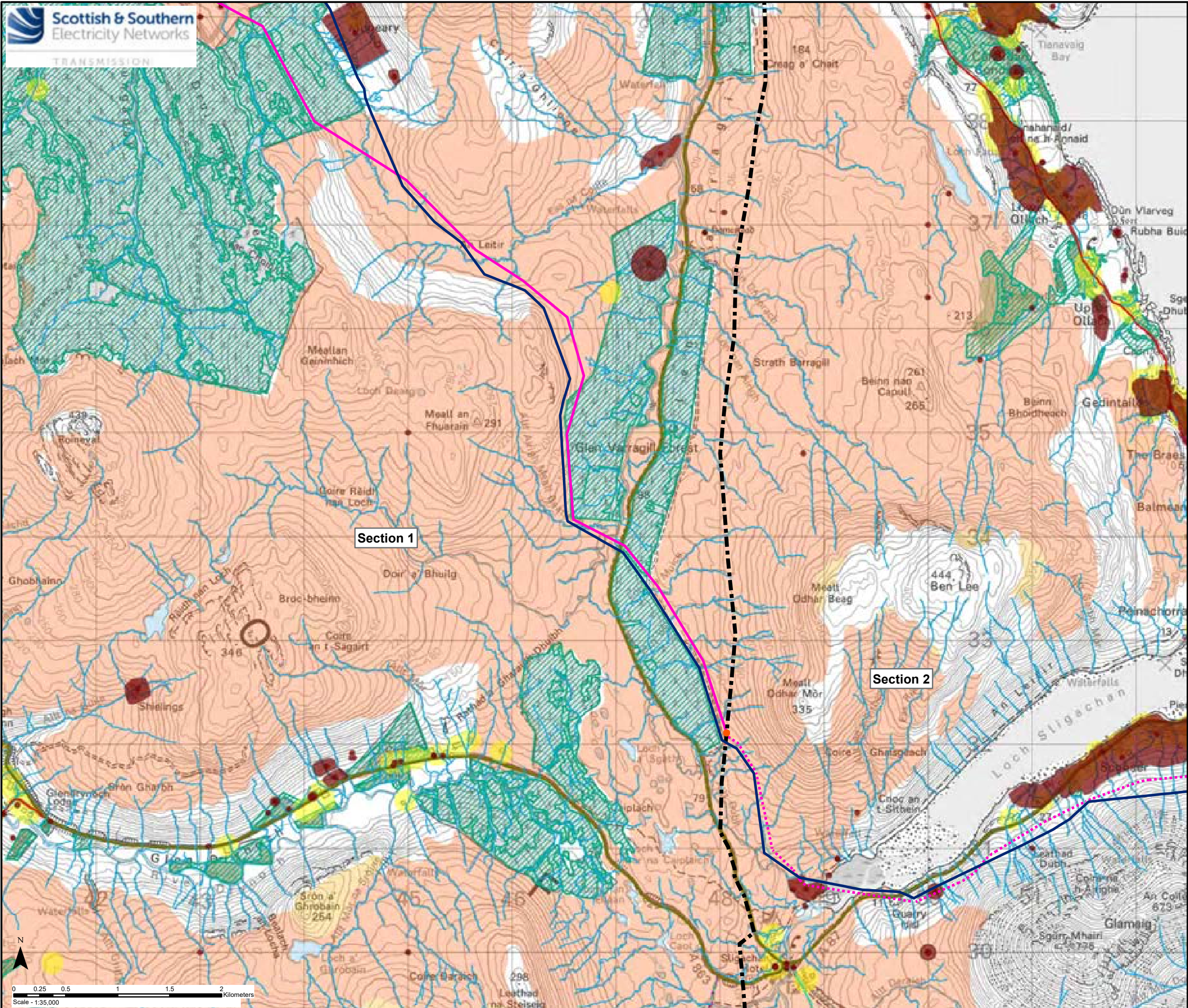
- Built Properties (100m Buffer)
- Public Road (A Road, B Road, Minor Road)
- Core Path
- Scottish Hill Track

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Project No: LT91  
 Project: Skye Reinforcement Project Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.1.3a - Other Environmental Constraints Section 1

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 Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.1.3a-1.0.0



**Key**

- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
- Cable Sealing End Compound
- ▲ Substation

**Constraints**

- Class 1 Peatland
- Class 2 Peatland
- National Forest Inventory Woodland
- Watercourse
- Waterbody
- Historic Environment Record (HER) Site
- HER Linear Feature

**Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS)**

- Native Woodland
- Nearly-native Woodland
- Open Land Habitat
- Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

**Potential Visual Receptor Locations**

- Built Properties (100m Buffer)
- Public Road (A Road, B Road, Minor Road)
- Core Path
- Scottish Hill Track

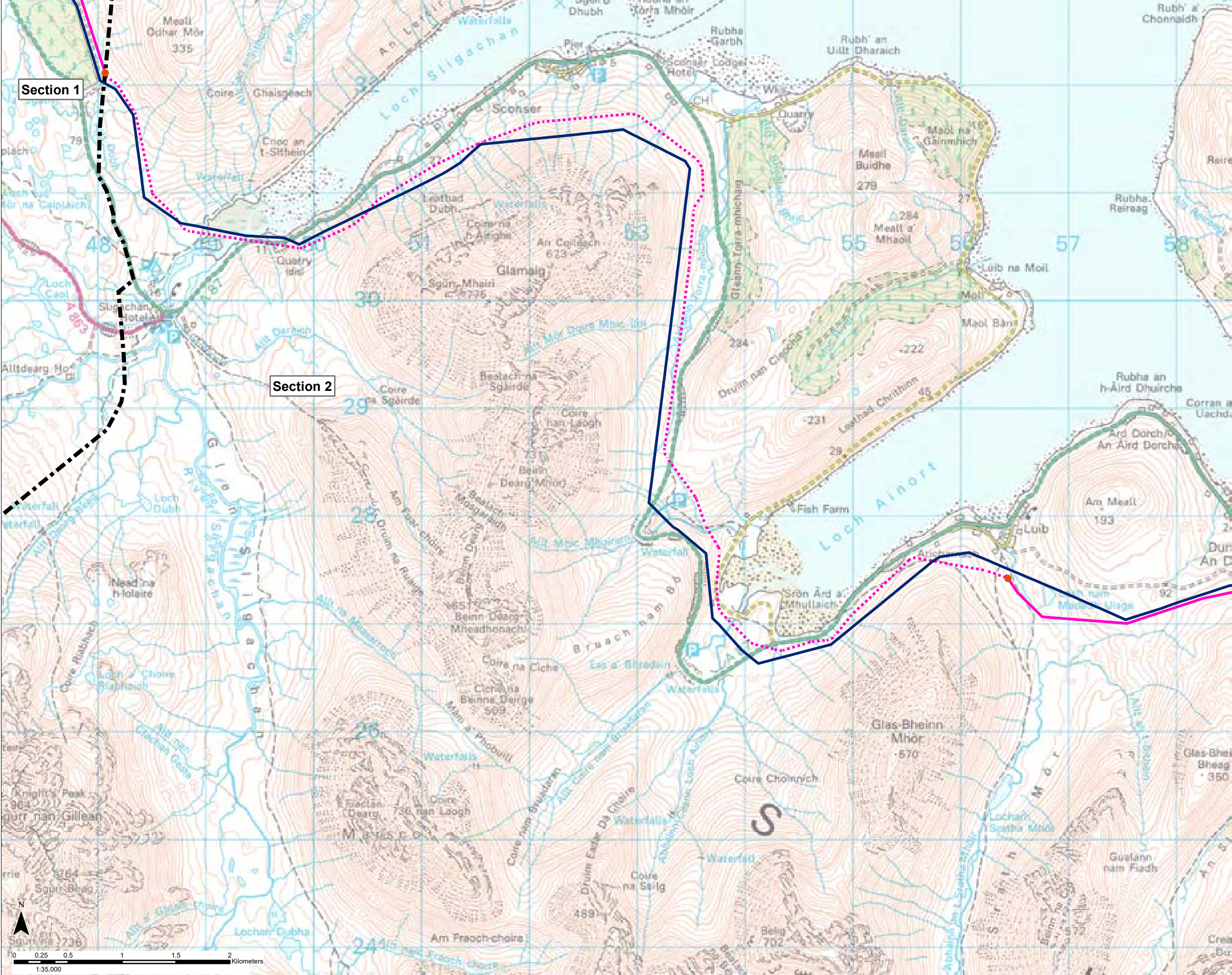
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Project No: LT91  
Project: Skye Reinforcement Project Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.1.3b - Other Environmental Constraints Section 1

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Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.1.3b-1.0.0





**Key**

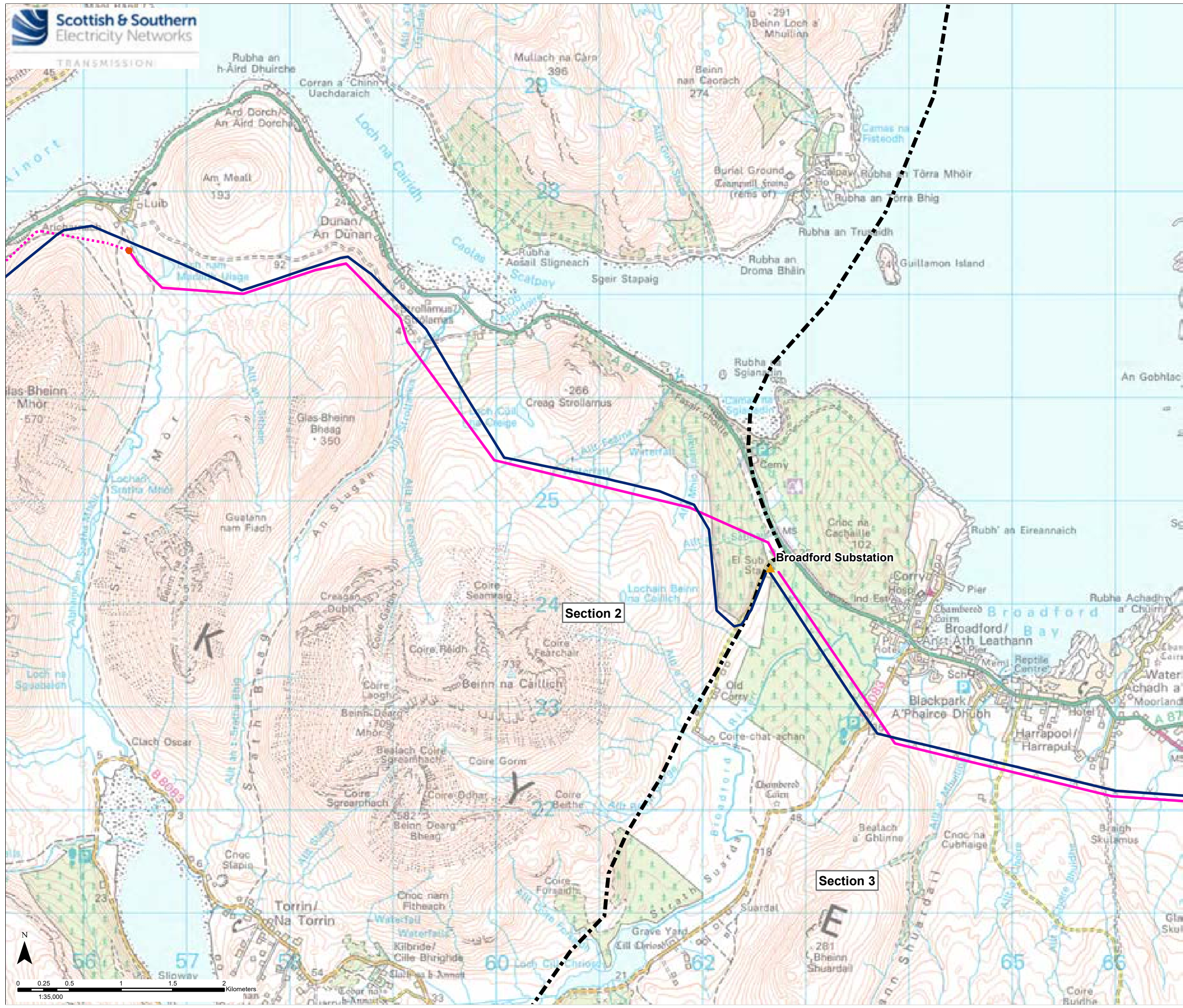
- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- ... Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
- Cable Sealing End Compound
- ▲ Substation

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Project No: LT91  
Project: Skye Reinforcement Project  
Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.2.1a - Preferred Alignment and Design Solution Section 2

Drawn by: SK 01/12/2021  
Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.2.1a-1.0.0



- Key**
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - ⋯ Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
  - ▲ Substation

Section 2

Section 3

Broadford Substation

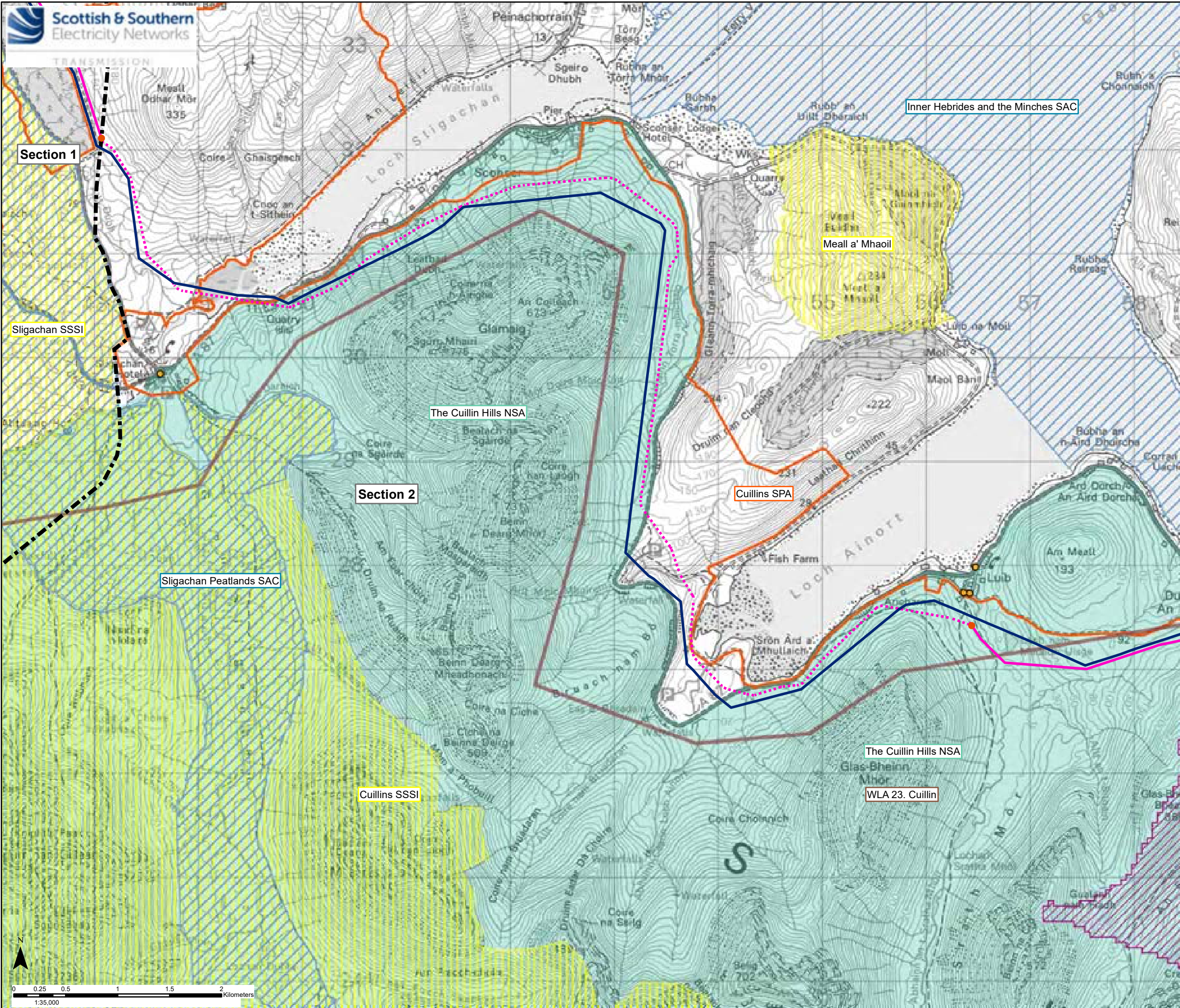
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Project No: LT91  
Project: Skye Reinforcement Project  
Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.2.1b - Preferred Alignment and  
Design Solution Section 2

Drawn by: SK 01/12/2021

Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.2.1b-1.0.0



- Key**
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - ⋯ Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
  - ▲ Substation
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
- Environmental Designations and Protected Areas**
- ▨ Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - ▭ Special Protection Area
  - ▨ Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - ▨ Site Included on the Inventory of Ancient and Long Established Woodland (AWI)
  - ▨ Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA)
  - ▭ Wild Land Area
  - Scheduled Monument (SM)
  - Listed Building (LB) Category
  - Listed Building (LB) Category B
  - Listed Building (LB) Category C

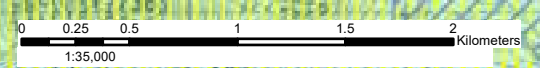
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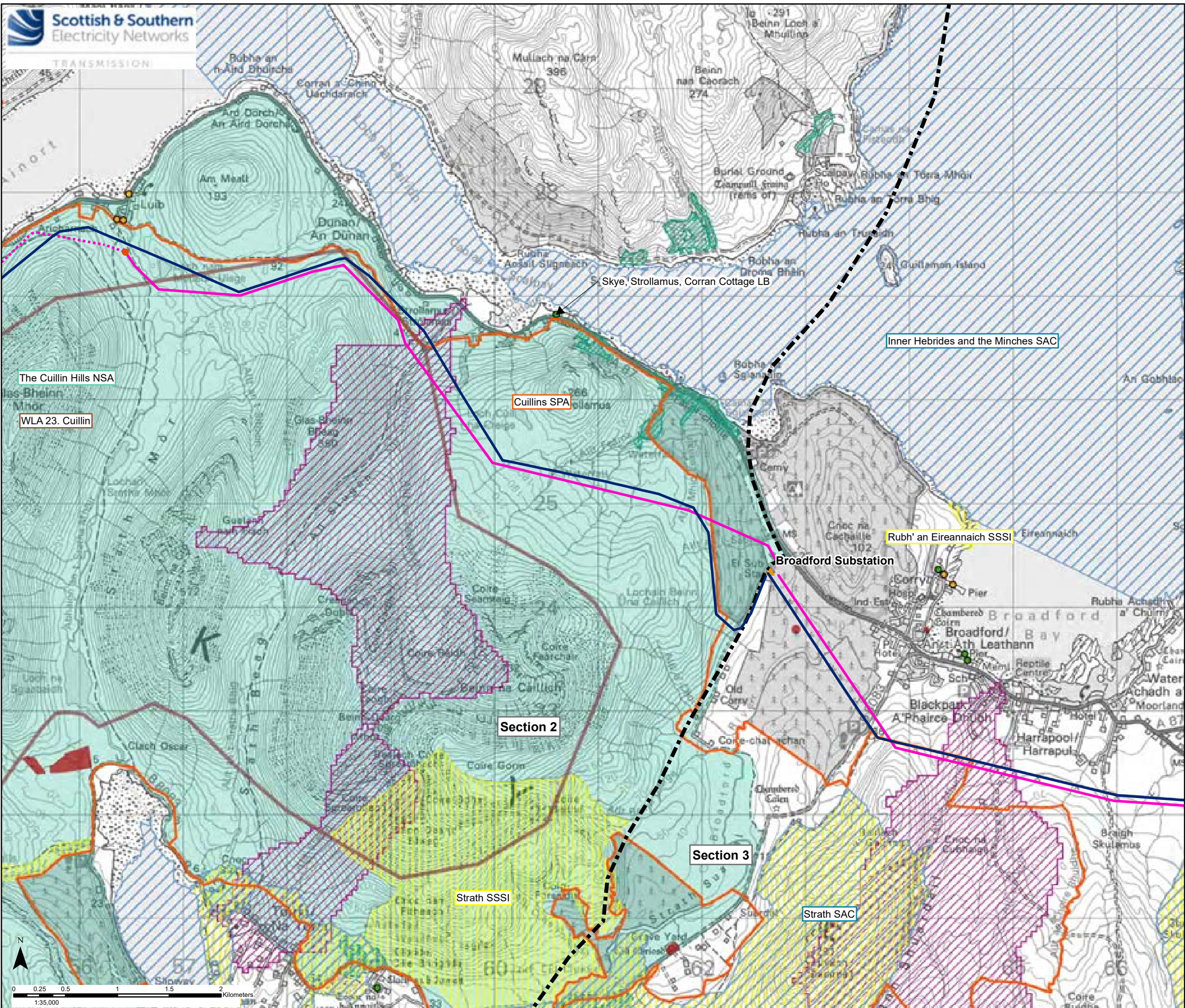
Project No: LT91  
Project: Skye Reinforcement Project  
Consultation Document (Alignment)

Title: Figure 2.2.2a - Environmental Designations and Protected Areas  
Section 2

Drawn by: SK 01/12/2021

Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.2.2a-1.0.0





- Key**
- Section Divider
  - Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
  - Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
  - ⋯ Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
  - ▲ Substation
  - Cable Sealing End Compound
- Environmental Designations and Protected Areas**
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - Special Protection Area
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - Site Included on the Inventory of Ancient and Long Established Woodland (AWI)
  - Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA)
  - Wild Land Area
  - Scheduled Monument (SM)
  - Listed Building (LB) Category
  - Listed Building (LB) Category B
  - Listed Building (LB) Category C

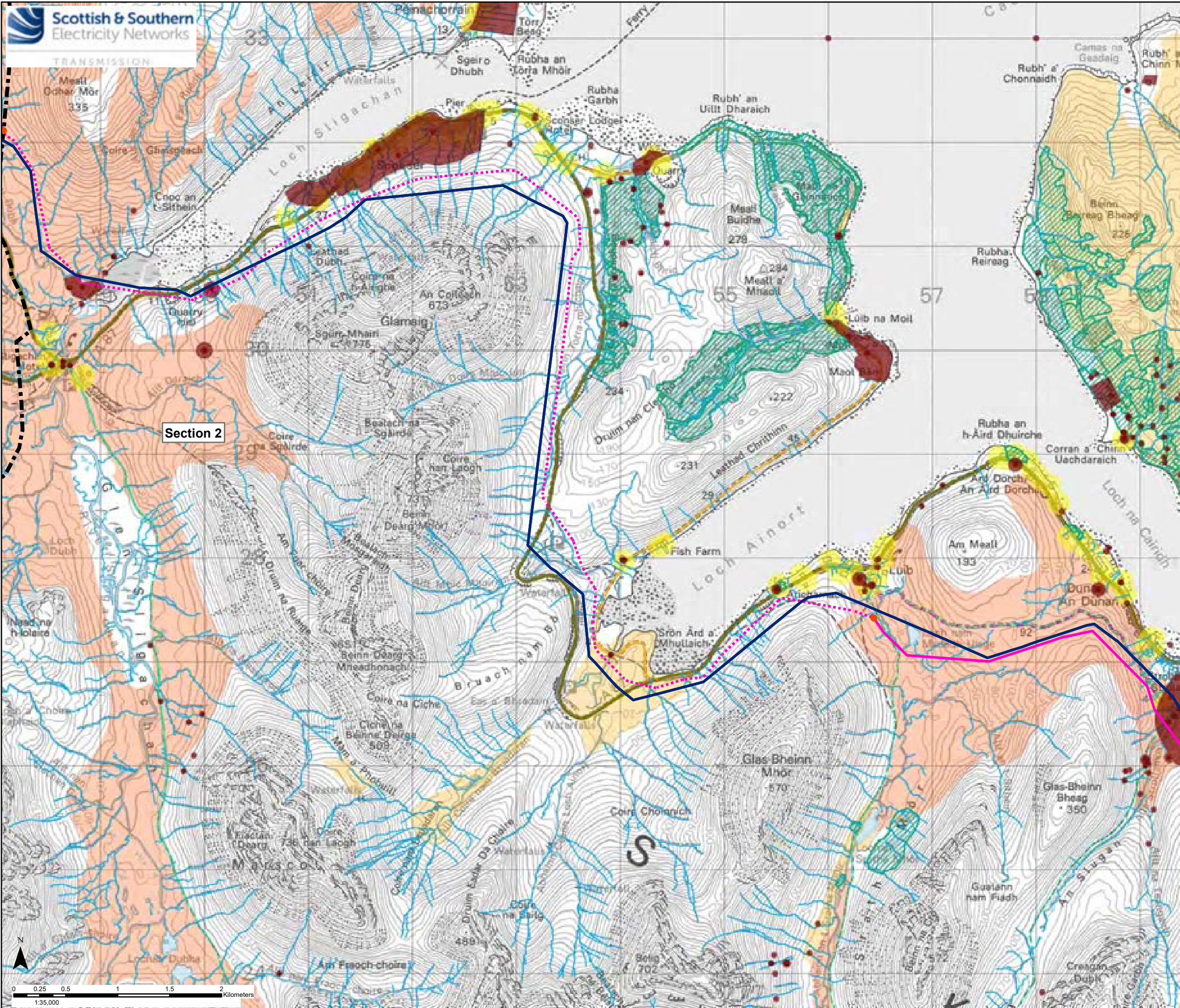
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Project No: LT91  
Project: Skye Reinforcement Project  
Consultation Document (Alignment)

Title: Figure 2.2.2b - Environmental Designations and Protected Areas Section 2

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Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.2.2b-1.0.0



Section 2

**Key**

- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- ... Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
- Cable Sealing End Compound
- ▲ Substation

**Constraints**

- Class 1 Peatland
- Class 2 Peatland
- Watercourse
- National Forest Inventory Woodland
- Waterbody
- Historic Environment Record (HER) Site
- HER Linear Feature

**Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS)**

- Native Woodland
- Nearly-native Woodland
- Open Land Habitat
- Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

**Potential Visual Receptor Locations**

- Built Properties (100m Buffer)
- Public Road (A Road, B Road, Minor Road)
- Core Path
- Scottish Hill Track

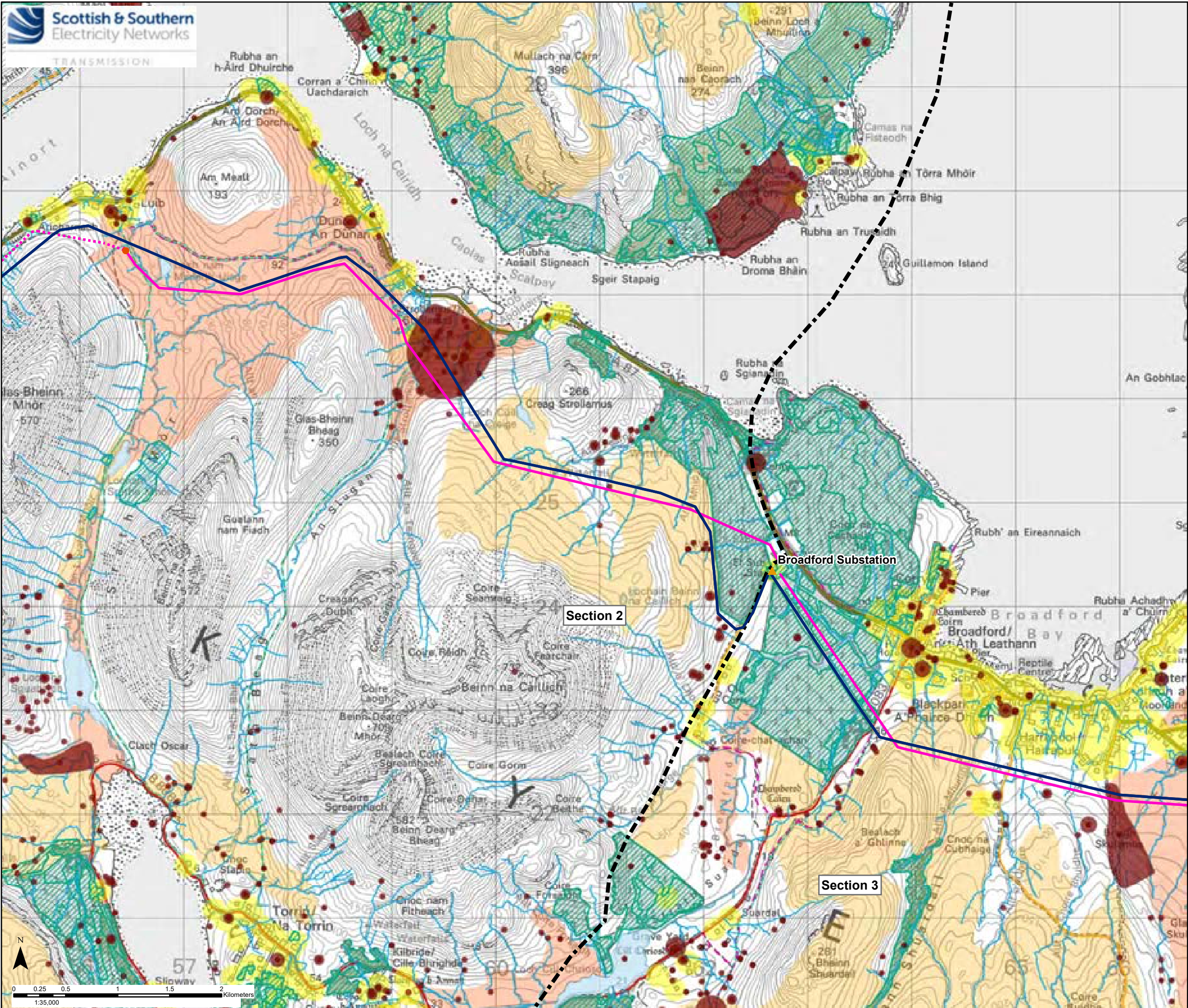
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Project No: LT91  
 Project: Skye Reinforcement Project Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.2.3a - Other Environmental Constraints Section 2

Drawn by: SK 01/12/2021

Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.2.3a-1.0.0



**Key**

- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- ... Preferred Alignment (Underground Cable)
- Cable Sealing End Compound
- ▲ Substation

**Constraints**

- Class 1 Peatland
- Class 2 Peatland
- Watercourse
- National Forest Inventory Woodland
- Waterbody
- Historic Environment Record (HER) Site
- HER Linear Feature

**Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS)**

- Native Woodland
- Nearly-native Woodland
- Open Land Habitat
- Planted Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)

**Potential Visual Receptor Locations**

- Built Properties (100m Buffer)
- Public Road (A Road, B Road, Minor Road)
- Core Path
- Scottish Hill Track

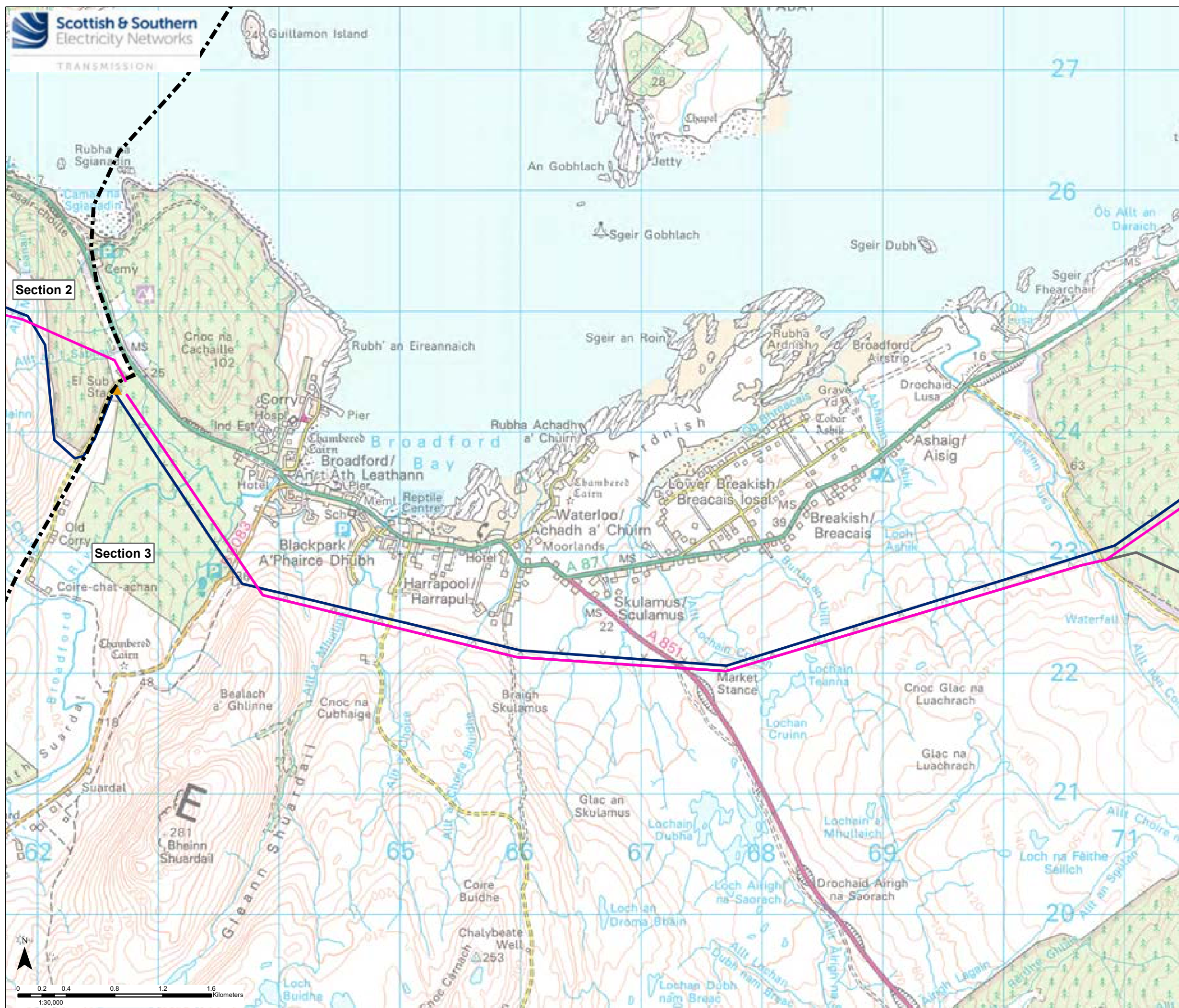
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 Project: Skye Reinforcement Project Scoping Report

Title: Figure 2.2.3b - Other Environmental Constraints Section 2

Drawn by: SK 01/12/2021

Drawing: 119026-D-SCO-2.2.3b-1.0.0



**Key**

- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- Alternative Route
- ▲ Substation

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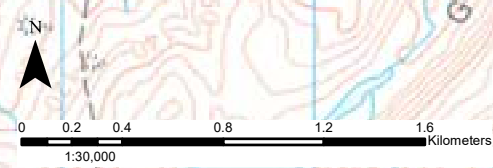
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Project: Skye Reinforcement Project  
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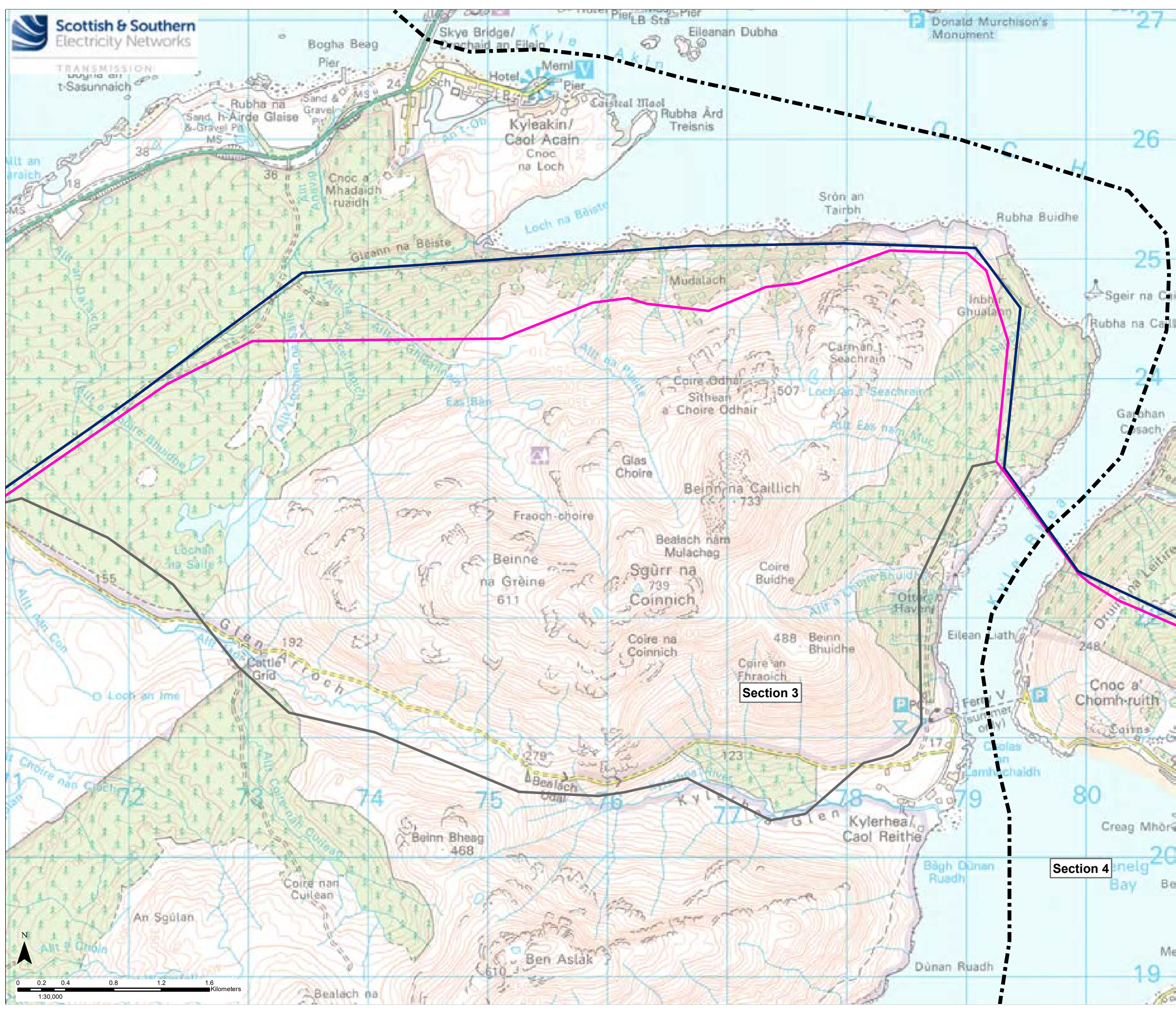
Title: Figure 2.3.1a - Preferred Alignment and Design Solution Section 3

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Section 2

Section 3





**Key**

- Section Divider
- Existing 132 kV OHL (to be replaced)
- Preferred Alignment (Overhead Line)
- Alternative Route
- ▲ Substation

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Title: Figure 2.3.1b - Preferred Alignment and  
Design Solution Section 3

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