ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Scoping Report for Coire Glas Hydro Pumped Storage Scheme 400 kV Cable connection to grid

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REPORT VERSIONS

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Executive Summary

Coire Glas Hydro Pumped Storage Ltd. ('the Applicant') is proposing the development of a buried 400 kV cable connection at the Coire Glas site ('the Proposed Development'), located above the north-west shore of Loch Lochy in Lochaber in the Scottish Highlands. This connection will be comprised of two circuits, each made up of three cables with 2500 mm ^{2} surface area. The Proposed Development will connect the generating station, already consented under Section 36 of the Electricity Act (ref. ECU00000577) with deemed planning permission under Section 57(2) of the 1997 Act) (the 'principal consents'), to the electricity transmission network. A separate and relevant planning application submitted by the applicant is currently under consideration by The Highland Council (THC) for improvements to Kilfinnan Road (the 'Kilfinnan Road proposals') to support the construction of Coire Glas Hydro Pumped Storage project ('the Coire Glas Scheme'). The Kilfinnan Road Proposals are supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that is relevant to this Scoping Report. For the purposes of this report, it is assumed that the mitigation identified through EIAs for both the principal development consents and Kilfinnan Road proposals will be implemented.

This document requests an EIA Scoping Opinion from THC in consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees in relation to the scope of the EIA for the project. It provides the background to the Project, an overview of the development, a summary of the proposed EIA methodology, a preliminary list of embedded mitigation measures and the policy and legislative context.

1.1 Scoping Outcomes

Potential impacts which could result in significant effects, beneficial or adverse, from the construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Development, following the proposed implementation of embedded mitigation, have been identified and scoped into the EIA Report for further assessment. Generally, these include:

- **Landscape and Visual Impact-** the Proposed Development will involve new elements in the landscape that may have potential significant landscape and visual effects that require to be assessed.

- **Ecology and Ornithology-** the EIA for the Coire Glas Scheme identified a range of potential impacts on priority and sensitive habitats and protected species, including birds, in locations that this Proposed Development overlaps with. Up-to-date assessment is therefore required. Ecology and Ornithology are proposed to be addressed in separate chapters, as described below.

- **Noise and Vibration-** The construction of new cable joint bays adjacent to the road and HDD works have the potential for impacts on noise sensitive receptors and this is therefore scoped into the assessment.

- **Geology, Hydrology, Soils and Flood Risk-** the Proposed Development will involve boring, and forming new compounds, trenches and tracks. These aspects have the potential for effects on the water environment including groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTEs), and upon geology soils, including peat.

The following technical topics have been scoped out of further assessment, as explained in section 11.

- **Climate change**
- **Built and Cultural Heritage**
- **Air Quality**
- **Land use, tourism and recreation**
- **Traffic & Transport**
- **Socioeconomics**
- **Forestry**
- **Electrical and Magnetic Fields**
- **Risk Management**

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Applicant proposes to submit a planning application for the Proposed Development under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 2019) (Scottish Government, 2019) (the 'principal act'). The Proposed Development will directly contribute to the delivery of the Coire Glas Scheme by providing new transmission cables and is therefore defined as a National Development (Part 3, Annex B of National Planning Framework 4).

The planning history for this development provides a well-established principle for the development, as well as a strong understanding of the environmental baseline including EIA reports for the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals, both of which bring with them a suite of environmental safeguarding and mitigation relevant to the Proposed Development and this scoping report.

As the application is still at the initial stage in the process, a Search Area for the Site Boundary is used for this scoping report, within which a refined boundary may be identified for the EIA and planning application. Figure 1.1 illustrates the Search Area for the Site Boundary which has been used in the preparation of this report (a separate A3 version of Figure 1.1 is attached to this submission).

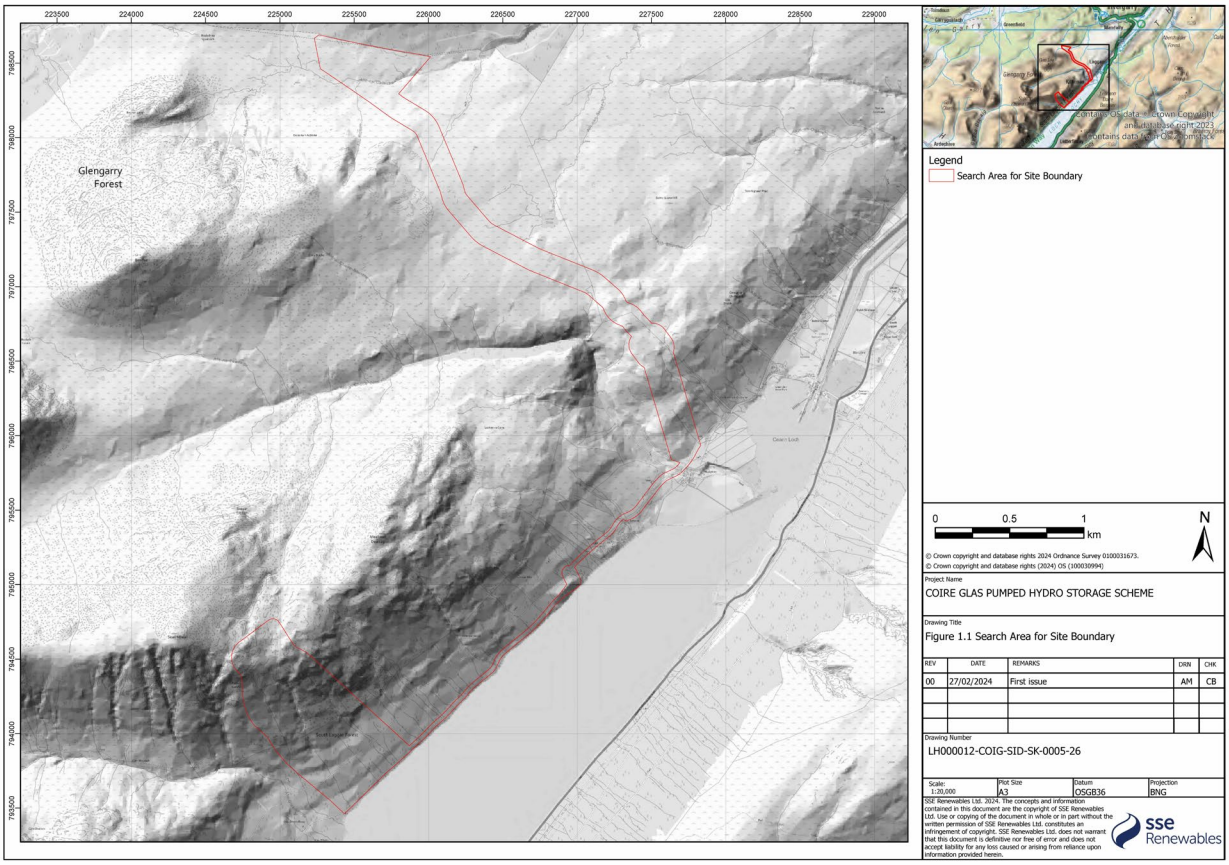

Figure 1.1: Search Area for Site Boundary

1.2 Background

The Coire Glas Scheme was consented in October 2020, which was a revised version of an earlier scheme consented in December 2013 under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989. The 2020 scheme increases the generating capacity of the original scheme.

The EIA for the Coire Glas Scheme assumed a grid boundary connection point within the underground power cavern of the generating station. This meant that a separate application by the electricity transmission network operator was anticipated to be made under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989. However, it is now the case that the Applicant requires to deliver a connection from the underground

power cavern to a surface switching station location approximately 4km northeast of the power cavern. This connection will provide the transmission network connection boundary point. The switching station and infrastructure for the onward connection to the electricity transmission grid will be the subject of a separate application by the transmission network operator, Scottish and Southern Energy Networks - Transmission.

1.3 The Applicant

SSE Renewables is preparing this scoping report on behalf of the Applicant, Coire Glas Hydro Pumped Storage Limited (CGHPSL), which is the Electricity Generation Licence holder (under Section 6A (5) of the Electricity Act 1989) for the Coire Glas Scheme.

SSE Renewables (SSER) is a leading developer, owner and operator of renewable energy across the UK and Ireland, with a portfolio of around 4GW of renewables. Part of the FTSE-listed SSE plc, its strategy is to drive the transition to a net zero future through the world class development, construction and operation of renewable energy assets.

1.4 The EIA team

The EIA Team is comprised of qualified, specialist subject matter experts summarised in Table 1.1.

Table Format	Title
EIA Co-ordinator	Ash Design and Assessment Limited
Landscape and Visual Assessment	Ash Design and Assessment Limited
Ecology	EnviroCentre
Ornithology	Atlantic Ecology
Noise and Vibration	TNEI Group
Geology, Hydrology, Soils and Flood Risk	SLR Consulting

Table 1.1: The EIA Team

2 EIA Scoping Approach and EIA Methodology

2.1 EIA regulations and guidance

A Screening Request has been submitted in parallel to this Scoping Report. The Scoping Report has been prepared following the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (As Amended).
In accordance with Regulation 17(2) the "scoping request" of which this EIA Scoping Report is part includes:

- "a description of the location of the development, including a plan sufficient to identify the land" – identified in Section 1 and Figure 1.1;
- "a brief description of the nature and purpose of the development and of its likely significant effects on the environment" – described in described in Section 3 of this Scoping Report;
- "such other information or representations as the developer may wish to provide or make".

The Applicant has proposed a scope of EIA which is proportionate, reasonable, and takes account of the site and development-specific context. This proposed scope is summarised in Chapter 12 of this Scoping Report.

2.2 EIA process

To ensure an iterative but proportionate EIA, mitigation is classified into three types:

- Embedded – mitigation which will be implemented regardless of the design process and the EIA to meet other legislative requirements or to deliver best practice methods and mitigation which is part of the proposed development's design; and
- Secondary – mitigation which requires further activity, identified through the EIA process, e.g. implementation through the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) or planning conditions.

2.3 Study area

The study area to be assessed by each technical discipline is different depending on the discipline and receptors and is described in individual sections of this report. However, all assessment is based on the Search Area for the Site Boundary shown in Figure 1.1.

2.4 Baseline environment

To appropriately scope the EIA, the baseline context has been gathered from desk-studies and publicly available information, including the EIAR for the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals.

It is important to note from the outset that the Proposed Development is required for the Coire Glas Scheme, and therefore should the latter not progress, the proposed development would not. It is therefore logical to make the following key assumptions in determining the baseline:

- Relevant elements of the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals, and the mitigation identified in their respective EIARs, will either be under construction or constructed when the Proposed Development commences; and
- Elements of this Proposed Development will be incorporated into the construction of the Coire Glas Scheme or Kilfinnan Road proposals wherever possible.

Where aspects of the baseline are unknown, the Scoping Report identifies surveys and /or studies proposed to be undertaken to provide this information.

The baseline environmental receptors for each technical topic of the EIAR will be determined through consultation with relevant stakeholders, including through feedback on this scoping report, as well as through a range of desk-based research and site survey.

Environmental receptors and their sensitivity will be identified. The methodology for determining sensitivity will differ between technical topics and will be based on several factors which may include (depending on the topic):

- statutory or non-statutory designation;
- prevalence;
- vulnerability;
- conservation status; and
- use of the proposed development area and its surrounds.

2.5 Assessment

The Applicant supports proportionate EIA, which means the assessment is scoped to focus on potential significant adverse environmental effects. It scopes out receptors which would not be impacted by the Proposed Development or impacts which can confidently be predicted not to result in significant adverse effects.

The following definitions are used throughout this report, and will be used in the EIAR to follow:

- Impact: The likely change to the characteristics/nature of the receiving environment (the 'receptor'),
- Effect: The significance of the impact, the level of which is determined by considering both the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the impact.

The exception to these definitions is the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which classifies the level of physical and perceptual change to the receiving environment as the 'magnitude of change' in line with the recommendations of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment third edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute, 2013). However, this terminology should be considered interchangeable with 'magnitude of impact'.

Within the EIAR, the assessment of effects for each environmental topic will consider the environmental impacts of the construction, operational and decommissioning stages of the Proposed Development.

To determine whether the potential effects of the Proposed Development are likely to be 'significant' several criteria are used. These significance criteria vary between topics but generally include:

- international, national and local designations or standards;
- relationship with planning policy;
- sensitivity of the receiving environment/ receptor population;
- magnitude of impact;
- reversibility and duration of the impact; and
- inter-relationship between impacts.

Effects that are assessed to be significant, prior to secondary mitigation but following the implementation of embedded mitigation, are identified within the EIAR. The significance attributed to the resultant effect is informed by professional judgement, as to the sensitivity of the affected receptor(s) and the nature and magnitude of the predicted changes/impacts. For example, a major adverse change/impact on a feature or site of low importance will have an effect of lesser significance than the same impact on a feature or site of high importance. Table 2.1 below is used as a guide to the relationship between the sensitivity of the identified receptor and the anticipated magnitude of an impact/change.

		Magnitude of Impact			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Sensitivity of Receptor	High	major	major	moderate	negligible
	Medium	major	moderate	minor	negligible
	Low	moderate	minor	minor	negligible
	Negligible	negligible	negligible	negligible	negligible

Table 2.1: Significance of Effects Matrix

The following terms are used in this scoping report and in the EIAR, unless otherwise stated, to determine the level of effects predicted to occur:

- **major beneficial or major adverse effect** – where the Proposed Development would result in a significant improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment;
- **moderate beneficial or moderate adverse effect** – where the Proposed Development would result in a noticeable improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment;
- **minor beneficial or minor adverse effect** – where the Proposed Development would result in a small improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment; and
- **negligible** – where the Proposed Development would result in no discernible improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment.

Using professional judgement and with reference to the Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment (IEMA, 2004), the EIA will consider effects of a moderate or major level to be significant. Those of minor or negligible effect are deemed to be non-significant.

Summary tables that outline the predicted effects associated with an environmental topic will be provided at the end of each technical chapter of the EIAR. Distinction will also be made between direct and indirect, short and long term, permanent and temporary, beneficial and adverse effects.

2.6 Embedded mitigation

This Scoping Report assumes that a range of mitigation measures will be embedded within the Proposed Development to meet other legislative requirements and to deliver best practice environmental safeguarding. These mitigation measures will be undertaken by the Applicant, no matter the findings of the EIA, or whether the measures are specifically required by the planning permission and are therefore an integral part of the Proposed Development. Appendix A summarises these anticipated measures in an Outline Schedule of Environmental Commitments (OSEC). Beyond this, further embedded mitigation will involve the avoiding or reducing potential significant effects through design development.

2.7 Secondary mitigation

Should significant effects be identified which cannot be mitigated through embedded mitigation, secondary mitigation will be identified to further remove/reduce the significant adverse effects. In addition, should environmental monitoring measures be required during the Proposed Development's lifecycle, anticipated to be 75 years or more, these will be identified in the EIAR.

This secondary mitigation, along with the embedded mitigation, will be compiled within a Schedule of Mitigation within the EIAR and the Applicant will commit to implementing these mitigation measures.

2.8 Assessment of residual effects

Following the identification of secondary mitigation measures, the assessment of effects will be re-assessed to determine the residual effects using the same methodology as the assessment of the potential effects, but assuming the implementation of the mitigation.

2.9 Approach to scoping of cumulative effects

A cumulative impact assessment (CIA) is a legal requirement under the 2017 EIA Regulations. A CIA provides consideration of the impacts arising from the Proposed Development alone and cumulatively with other relevant developments. Cumulative effects are therefore the combined effect of the Proposed Development in combination with the effects from other projects on the same receptor or resource.

Each technical chapter within the EIAR will undertake a cumulative assessment. Potential cumulative developments within the technical assessment study areas will be screened to determine whether there is potential for overlap of environmental effects with the Proposed Development. Where there is potential for cumulative effects to occur, each environmental receptor type will be screened and assessed, based on the technical expertise of the assessment team.

Operational developments are considered part of the environmental baseline conditions. Only developments which are submitted to planning, consented or under construction will be considered cumulatively. Developments which have not yet submitted a planning application (i.e. developments that are at Scoping or have submitted a Proposal of Application Notice) will not be included within the cumulative assessment due to the lack of certainty over their design and potential environmental effects.

This list of cumulative developments included in Table 2.2 below, will continually be updated throughout the assessment of the Proposed Development and any exceptional circumstances considered. However, the list will be "frozen" three months prior to the submission of the application to allow assessments to be made and reported within the EIAR.

Planning Application Reference	Proposal	Application Status
23/05393/FUL	Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme: Kilfinnan Road site access improvements over a length of approximately 4.6km from the A82 junction to the South Laggan Forest gate, comprising widening to form a two-way public road to serve the Coire Glas scheme during construction and thereafter, reducing the road width to single-track with passing places, and ancillary works.	Under Consideration
23/02874/S37	Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme Connection - Erection and operation of approximately 13 km of new double circuit steel structure 400 kV overhead transmission line between the consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme 3, and Fort Augustus substation - Land At Coire Glas North Laggan Spean Bridge	Under Consideration
18/01564/S36 (ECU reference: ECU00000577)	Construction and operation of a pumped storage hydro scheme between Loch Lochy and a new reservoir created at Loch a' Choire Ghlais, approximately 19km to the south-west of Fort Augustus in the Highlands, with a maximum generating capacity of up to 1500MW.	Approved by Scottish Ministers

Table 2.2: Projects identified at Scoping to be included in cumulative assessment

The Applicant would be grateful if the Planning Authority would review the list in Table 2.2 and confirm if there any additional projects which they are aware of or consider should be included in the assessment.

2.10 Community consultation and stakeholder engagement

This report has been prepared using the knowledge and background from the broad range of engagement and consultation with both consultees and the public in the consenting processes for the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals. As the application is of a National (Major) scale, pre-application is a statutory component in the process and will be undertaken prior to the submission of a planning application. The information gathered from this process will be used to inform the development of the design of the Proposed Development.

2.11 EIA Report

The EIA will be reported within an EIAR, the structure will follow the requirements of the 2017 EIA Regulations and other relevant good practice guidance, and comprise four main parts:

- a non-technical summary (NTS);
- the main EIA text, including:
  - an introduction,
  - a description of site selection and design development,
  - a description of the Proposed Development and good practice measures for construction, operation and decommissioning, and
  - a description of the EIA process and consultation undertaken;
- accompanying figures; and
- technical appendices.

The remainder of the document will present an assessment of each technical topic (e.g. landscape and visual assessment, noise etc.) with each provided as a separate technical chapter.

3 Description of Proposed Development

3.1 Proposed development

The draft description of development is outlined below, references to development zones are illustrated in Figure 3.1 (a separate A3 version of Figure 3.1 is attached to this submission). Appendix B provides an indicative illustration of the concept design for the Proposed Development.

“Installation of 8 km of 400 kV export/import electricity cables, made up of two circuits, each comprising 3 No. 2,500mm2 conductors (i.e. 6 cables in total), to connect the Coire Glas generating station to the National Grid. Development will include a new permanent access track, permanent cable joint bays (buried), and two temporary compounds at the upper and lower HDD Launch/Reception areas to be used during construction for welfare, parking, plant, spoil and materials storage, materials processing (crushing and screening) and mobile concrete batching. All elements will have associated earthworks. The Proposed Development is divided into six development zones:

Development Zone 1:
Cables mounted on walls through 1.5 km of tunnel from the underground Cavern Power Station to the Lower Reservoir Works at the shore of Loch Lochy;

Development Zones 2 and 3:
Cables routed through ducts buried under or adjacent to existing and unadopted access roads from the Lower Reservoir Works northeast to the north side of Kilfinnan Bridge. The two cable circuits will be laid out in trefoil formation in 0.65m wide trenches, spaced 1.5 m apart (total width 2.8m) within road. Cable joint bays (30 x 10 metre) for each of the circuits will be located along the western side of access roads at 500 or 800m intervals;

Development Zone 4:
Cables routed through 6 No. horizontally directional drilled (HDD) bores from the north side of Kilfinnan Bridge upslope to a location 800m north. Bores will be 0.4m wide, spaced at 8m centres (total width 40m);

Development Zone 5:
Cables routed through ducts buried under or adjacent to approximately 2 km of new access track to the point that the route intersects the consented Permanent New Access Track to the Dam. The two cable circuits will be laid out in trefoil formation in 0.65m wide trenches at each side of the access track (total width 9m) Cable joint bays (30 x 10 metre) for each of the circuits will be located along the western side of access roads at 500 or 800m intervals;

Development Zone 6:
Cables routed through ducts buried under or adjacent to the consented Permanent New Access Track to the Dam to a switching station (being delivered by others) for onward connection to the National Grid, spaced in the same arrangement as Development Zone 2, 3 or 5.

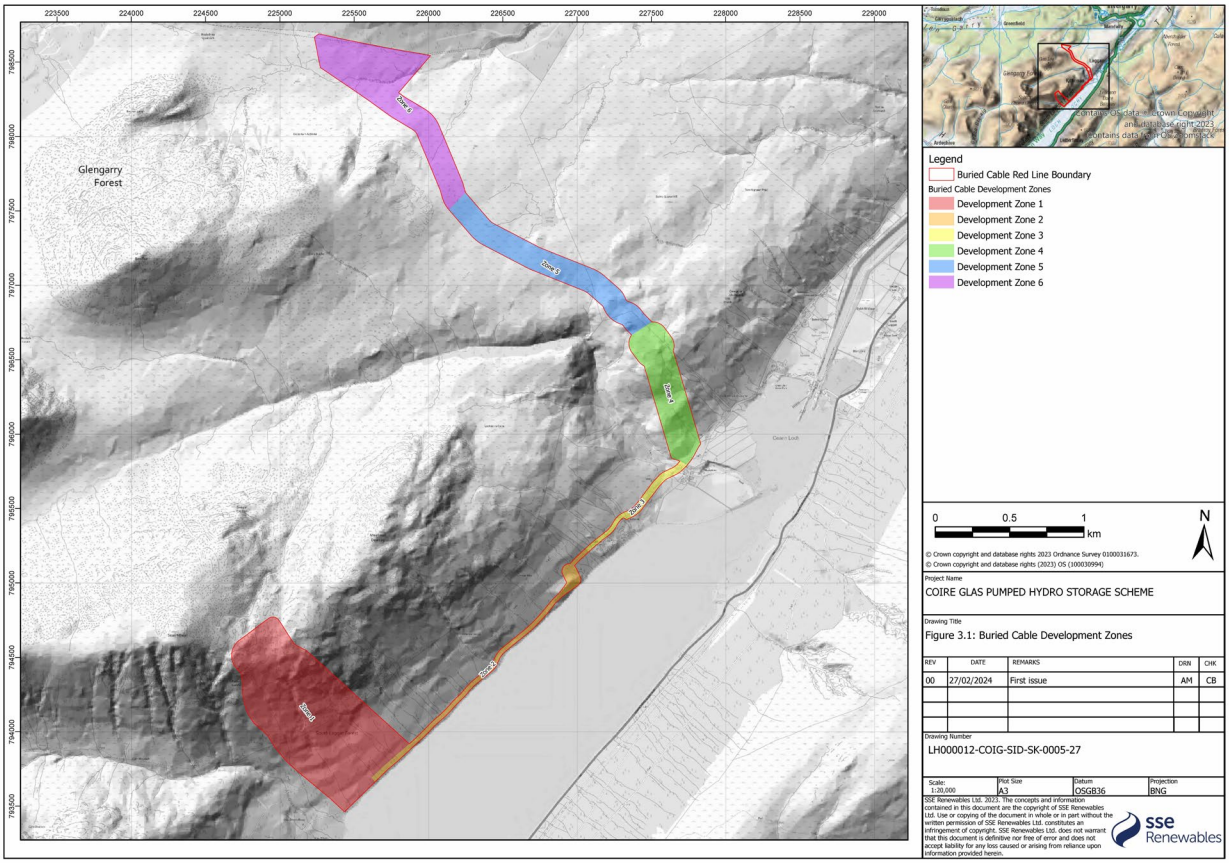

Figure 3.1: Buried Cable Development Zones

3.2 Construction stage

Construction of the Proposed Development is expected to involve a range of conventional earthwork, road construction and other civil engineering methods to form compounds, new access tracks and to upgrade existing roads (including installation of the buried cable), and cable joint bays. The HDD method has been selected for creating bores for installation of cables from Kilfinnan Bridge upslope to the north to a location south of Balmaglaster Hill to address issues of steep terrain in this area. For the purposes of this scoping report, it is assumed that the installation of all ducting along access roads (Development Zones 2 and 3) consented under the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals will take place at the time of construction of these developments, including all secondary mitigation identified by these two projects' EIARs.

3.3 Operational stage

The Proposed Development's purpose is integral to the Coire Glas Scheme, and it will therefore be managed, operated and maintained by CGPHSL for the lifetime of the generating station, currently anticipated to be in excess of 75 years.
During operation, access will be restricted to SSER staff only, but will be required for operation and maintenance activities 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, but will not be permanently staffed.

3.4 Decommissioning

For this Scoping Report it is assumed that the decommissioning will occur in-line or after the decommissioning of the Coire Glas Scheme, which is anticipated to be 75 years after the commencement of operation. Decommissioning of the Proposed Development is anticipated to take 6-12 months to complete.

The methodology for decommissioning will be similar to that described above for construction, but in reverse. It is anticipated that all the infrastructure will be removed, except for buried ducting, which will be left in situ.

4 Site Selection and Consideration of Alternatives

4.1 Need for the development

As outlined is section 1 the Proposed Development is fundamental to the Coire Glas Scheme, providing a connection between the generating station and the electricity transmission network and, ultimately, to consumers of that electricity.

4.2 Site selection process

To ensure an appropriate site was identified for the development, the following factors were important to consider:

1. **Fixed elements**- The generating station power cavern and future switching station are two fixed endpoints, the latter being selected following careful consideration and negotiation between the Applicant, Forest and Land Scotland and the transmission network operator;

2. **Feasibility of construction**- cables are large (2,500mm2 surface area), with a limited bending radius, requiring a large amount of space to manoeuvre cables along the route. Cables require to be buried in underground ducts, and have a maximum length of 500-800m, which is limited by the maximum size and weight of cable drum that can be transported to site, necessitating the use of cable joint bays, meaning suitable locations along the route are required;

3. **Accessibility for construction and operation**- installing cables and joining them involves a range of vehicles and plant, meaning space and access to joint bays is necessary for both construction, operation and maintenance;

4. **Distance**- the total length of the cable transmitting electricity from the generating station has a bearing on how efficient it is, with a shorter length being more efficient, sites that offer optimum distances between the fixed elements (1) are therefore preferable;

5. **Minimising public road disruption**- options than would require construction in the public road would be likely to involve delay or disruption to the travelling public and were therefore to be avoided if possible.

4.3 Alternatives considered

The connection of the cable is limited to the technology required to transmit the electricity generated by the Coire Glas Scheme. This means the alternative options considered were restricted to the different route options between the power cavern and grid connection boundary point.

A cable tunnel from the fixed elements (described at 5.2) was considered as an alternative but was discounted because the geotechnical challenges of drilling a tunnel for such a distance (approximately 4 km) are considered much greater than those associated with a buried cable.

As explained in Section 4, connecting the generating station to the transmission network is fundamental to the purpose of the Coire Glas Scheme and, therefore, a do-nothing scenario has not been included for consideration.

5 Policy and Legislation

5.1 Legislative context

A Planning Statement will be submitted in support the application for the Proposed Development, addressing relevant policy and legislation in detail. As outlined in section 1.1, the application will be submitted as a National Development through the principal act, which states: "Where, in making any determination under the planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination is, unless material considerations indicate otherwise, to be made in accordance with that plan." The development plan for the Proposed Development comprises:

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), 2023
- The Highland Wide Local Development Plan, 2012
- The West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan, 2019

5.2 NPF4

NPF4 forms part of the development plan for all parts of Scotland and comprises three parts: (1) a national Spatial Strategy with priorities and action areas; (2) policies for the development and use of land (all relevant policies for which should be considered as a whole in determining applications); and, (3) a series of annexes providing rationale for strategies and policies set out in parts 1 and 2 and how they should be implemented and applied.

Part 1 of NPF4 sets out that to address the unprecedented climate and nature crises we face, we need to make choices to prioritise the sustainable use of our natural assets, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions while benefitting communities and striving to create great places. It outlines spatial priorities to support the planning and delivery of sustainable places, where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; and create liveable places where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.

Part 2 of NPF4 sets out a strategy for Sustainable Places that supports the transition to net zero, nature-positive places which are more resilient to the impacts of climate change and supports the recovery and restoration of the natural environment. Of note is the emphasis on diversifying and expanding renewable energy generation, whilst ensuring positive effects for biodiversity, and encourage circular economy approaches to construction and development.

Part 3 sets out that the Proposed Development is defined as a National Development (Part 3, Annex B of National Planning Framework 4) because it will directly contribute to the delivery of the Coire Glas Scheme by providing new transmission cables. It also explains that such proposals require to be considered at a project level to ensure all statutory tests are met, as set out in Annex 1 of NPF4. This includes consideration against the provisions of the development plan.

The following is a summary of the relevant policies in National Planning Framework 4 which are considered relevant to the proposed development:

- Policy 1 – Tackling the climate and nature crisis
- Policy 3 – Biodiversity
- Policy 4 – Natural places
- Policy 5 – Soils
- Policy 11- Energy
- Policy 22 – Flood risk and water management
- Policy 23 – Health and safety
- Policy 29 – Rural development

5.3 Local development plan

It is understood that THC intends to gather evidence during 2023 in preparation of a new-style Highland Local Development Plan, which the application for the Proposed Development will have regard to. At the time of writing, The Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) (2012) sets out a range of planning policies considered relevant to the application:

- Policy 28: Sustainable Design
- Policy 55: Peat and Soils
- Policy 57: Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
- Policy 67: Renewable Energy Developments
- Policy 58: Protected Species
- Policy 59: Other Important Species
- Policy 60: Other Important Habitats
- Policy 61: Landscape Policy
- Policy 63: Water Environment
- Policy 64: Flood Risk
- Policy 66: Surface Water Drainage
- Policy 69: Electricity Transmission Infrastructure
- Policy 77: Public Access

The West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan) (2019) also forms part of the development plan, with a focus on regional and settlement strategies in the area, and primary focus on site allocations. Therefore, much of the content of this plan is not directly relevant to the Proposed Development other than aspects of the spatial strategy that may be relevant during the policy appraisal and the definition of Special Landscape Areas. Most of the Proposed Development sits within the Loch Lochy and Loch Oich SLA.

5.4 Highland Biodiversity Action Plan 2021-2026

The Highland Council and its partners has prepared a Biodiversity Action Plan for the region, which sets out key actions for nature and for habitats. This document is therefore relevant and helpful in undertaking the EIA for the Proposed Development, particularly in considering biodiversity enhancement, Ecology, Ornithology, and Geology, Hydrology, Soils and Flood Risk.

6 Landscape and visual impact

6.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents the proposed approach to the assessment of potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape and visual receptors, the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

6.2 Assessment methodology

The LVIA will be undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) (The Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013) (GLVIA3). This will separately address the potential effects of the Proposed Development on the landscape resource and and visual receptors within the agreed study area.

The LVIA will evaluate the sensitivity to change, magnitude and significance of effect for all landscape and visual receptors during construction and operational stages. The assessment of operational effects will assume the implementation of mitigation measures proposed with planting assumed to have been established for around 10 years. However, the potential for operational effects to vary over time will also be considered.

Potential effects will be presented as ratings of Negligible, Minor, Moderate and Major, taking into account sensitivity and magnitude ratings and on the basis of professional judgement. Where appropriate, interim ratings will be allocated (e.g. Minor to Moderate or Moderate to Major). Effects identified as being at a level of Moderate or greater are considered significant in accordance with the EIA Regulations.

In assessing operational effects of the Proposed Development it will be assumed that all mitigation identified for the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals will be implemented (subject to any modifications required for the Proposed Development), with any vegetation establishment assumed to be 10 years post-planting.

6.3 Study area

For the purposes of the LVIA, a study area of 2km from the finalised site boundary is anticipated to be sufficient to identify any potential significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development would largely be contained by the surrounding mountainous topography and the operational elements of the Proposed Development would be largely comprised of surface level or below-ground infrastructure. This means the most visible features expected are new tracks/roads, cable joint bay pillars and HDD portals. The landscape and visual effects of these elements are expected to be relatively localised.

6.4 Baseline environment and cumulative projects

Designated and Protected Landscapes

The Proposed Development is not located in any nationally designated landscapes. It is in proximity to two Wild Land Area (WLA) features, WLA 18: Kinlochhourn – Knoydart – Morar, approximately 6 km southwest and WLA 19: Braeroy – Glenshirra – Creag Meagaidh, approximately 2.5 km southeast. Given the likely localised effects of the Proposed Development within areas already influenced by existing development and land use, potential for notable effects to within these WLAs are considered unlikely and therefore it is considered that a Wild Land Area assessment is not required. This approach is consistent with the EIAs for the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals.

The majority of the Proposed Development is located within the Loch Lochy and Loch Oich Special Landscape Area (SLA). Special Qualities of the SLA are identified in the document ‘Assessment of Highland Special Landscape Areas (Horner + Maclennan and Wood, 2011) and include:

- **The Great Glen** – scale, striking linearity, long narrow lochs including, the imposing topography of the glen, the chain of lochs and the experience of the Great Glen Way, walking and cycling routes;
- **Classic Highland Scenery, Distinctive Mountain-top Views** – including, views from low lying locations over agricultural grazings and lochs to steep wooded slopes and rolling summits, and outstanding views from high elevations, most notably from Meall Dubh and Meall na Teanga; and
- **Intimate Drama** – including the intimate scale of features at close proximity to the lochs' shores, rolling pastures and human settlement which contrast with the sense of drama and grandeur of the wider glen.

Landscape Character

NatureScot has undertaken detailed review and classification of the various landscape areas and types of Scotland (SNH, 2019 [online]). Within this context, the Proposed Development would be located within Landscape Character Type (LCT) 239: Interlocking Sweeping Peaks, following close to its edge. It would also have the potential to indirectly affect LCT 235: Broad Forested Strath, and LCT 236: Smooth Moorland Ridges.

The Proposed Development is closely associated with other parts of the Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme and therefore it is proposed that local Landscape Character Zones (LCZs) defined in the Coire Glas Scheme EIAR, which were also used for the LVIA in the EIA for the Kilfinnan Road Proposals, also be used as the basis for the landscape character assessment for the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development is located across several of these LCZs which would therefore be directly affected as follows:

1. LCZ 1: Steep-sided Valley with Loch;

2. LCZ 2: Settled Valley Floor; and

3. LCZ 7: Rolling Moorland.

Further indirect effects may occur to other LCZs within the study area: LCZ 3 (Mountain), LCZ 4 (Corrie) LCZ 6 (Wooded Glen) and LCZ 9 (Rounded Moorland Hills). However, potential effects to LCZ 5 (Steep-sided Glen) and LCZ 10 (Forest) are unlikely due to limited or no likely visibility of the Proposed Development.

Visual Receptors

Potential visual receptors who may gain views of the Proposed Development include residents, travellers and recreational users present in and around nearby buildings and using roads and recreational resources.

Potential building-based, visual receptors including residents and visitors in and around buildings in the vicinity of Kilfinnan Farm, Laggan Locks, Balmaglaster and South Laggan on the floor of the Great Glen. There may also be potential for views from the vicinity of Corriegour Lodge Hotel.

Potential route-based receptors include travellers on the A82 alongside the shore of Loch Lochy where there are open views across the loch and up towards Kilfinnan Farm. Views would also be likely for travellers on the Kilfinnan Road as well as boat users of the Caledonian Canal, including those on Loch Lochy.

Recreational route-based receptors include users of the Great Glen Canoe Trail (broadly following the route of the Caledonian Canal) and Great Glen Way, part of which follows the route of the Proposed Development around Kilfinnan Farm. Both these routes are included on a list of Scotland's Great Trails. Views of the Proposed Development may also be obtained from other paths and tracks within the local area, including Core Paths, Scottish Hill Tracks and the mountain ascent route to Ben Tee which commences near Kilfinnan Farm.

6.5 Potential development impacts

The Proposed Development would be partially accommodated under tracks and roads forming parts of the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals, which have been previously assessed and

therefore the majority of landscape and visual effects anticipated in relation to the Proposed Development would be temporary. Additional areas of effect would occur in relation to jointing bays likely to require associated earthworks or areas of rock cut, earthworks or compound areas at the terminal points of the proposed directional drilling section, and a new permanent track across the upper moorland plateau which would follow the proposed cable route to the upper directional drill area.

Potential landscape and visual impacts would therefore include:

- Temporary and longer-term landscape impacts arising from changes to the fabric of the landscape through changes in vegetation cover or landform, and the introduction of other new man-made features compound areas and a new track;
- Temporary and longer-term changes to the landscape's character, where changes to the fabric of the landscape could lead to changes in landscape patterns and the experience of the landscape;
- Temporary and longer-term impacts to visual receptors, including local residents, travellers on key routes, and recreational users of the landscape; and
- Potential cumulative impacts with wider aspects of the Coire Glas Scheme.

6.6 Mitigation measures

By locating as much of the Proposed Development as possible within the envelope of the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals, the extent of new development would be minimised (mitigation by design). As the design development continues, and the EIA progresses, landscape and visual considerations will be integral to ensuring the Proposed Development safeguards landscape and visual receptors. Where additional landscape and visual effects are likely, additional mitigation measures will be employed such as planting and earthworks, to screen and filter the Proposed Development and, where possible, to integrate new features positively into the landscape.

6.7 Receptors and impacts scoped in and out of the assessment

Landscape Assessment

The Landscape Character Assessment will include assessment of the Proposed Development in relation to the LCZs identified within the Coire Glas Scheme LVIA which fall within the proposed study area. This assessment would also consider the related wider National LCTs. This will include the direct effect of potential physical change to landscape elements, experiential effects on the character of the Proposed Development site and surrounding areas, and potential indirect effects to the broader landscape resource.

The landscape character assessment will also consider the potential for effects to the Special Qualities of the Loch Lochy and Loch Oich SLA. However, it is proposed that any WLA assessment will be scoped out of the assessment.

Visual Assessment

The visual assessment will comprise a receptor-based assessment, considering the potential for effects on visual amenity within the study area. This will take into consideration all visual receptors located at residential properties and workplaces, recreational sites and those using roads, Core Paths and other recreational routes throughout the study area. Consideration will also be given to potential visual effects on boat users using the Caledonian Canal / Great Glen Canoe Trail.

Cumulative Assessment

As the Proposed Development would form part of the wider works for the Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme, the consideration of cumulative landscape and visual effects with other parts of Coire Glas, and the Coire Glas Grid Connection would also be considered within the LVIA.

Table 6.1 below summarises the potential impacts proposed to be scoped in and out of the EIAR.

Potential Impact	Potential Receptor	Construction	Operation	Decommissioning
Effects on Loch Lochy and Loch Oich SLA	Special Qualities of SLA	✓	✓	x
Effects on landscape character.	LCZ 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 9.	✓	✓	x
Visual Effects	Occupants of properties around Kilfinnan Farm, Laggan Locks, Balmaglaster, South Laggan and Coiregour Lodge Hotel	✓	✓	x
Visual Effects	Travellers on public roads and users of recreational routes and recreational outdoor spaces.	✓	✓	x
Cumulative Effects	Relevant landscape and visual receptors	✓	✓	x

Table 6.1: Summary of landscape and visual impacts scoped in (✓) and scoped out (x)

6.8 Scoping questions to consultees

1. Do consultees agree that an initial study area of 2 km from the Search Area for Site Boundary is appropriate for the LVIA?
2. Do consultees agree that the LVIA should assess cumulative effects of the Proposed Development with the Coire Glas Scheme, Kilfinnan Road Proposals and Coire Glas Grid Connection?
3. Do consultees agree with the conclusion that a Wild Land Assessment is not required?

7 Ecology

7.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the potential ecological issues relevant to the Proposed Development and presents the proposed approach for the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) which will be undertaken as part of the EIAR. The EcIA will assess the potential for likely significant effects on features above a certain value during the construction, operational and decommissioning stages of the Proposed Development.

7.2 Assessment methodology

The scoping assessment takes cognisance of existing ecological information, gathered as part of the SSE Renewables projects outlined below;

- EnviroCentre Report 13539 Kilfinnan Road Ecological Appraisal (September 2023); and
- Kilfinnan Road Upgrade EIA. Highland Council Reference: 23/05393/FUL (November 2023)

Revised Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme. Highland Council ref no.18/01564/S36 (March 2018).

Data received (February 2024) from a biological records request to the Highland Biological Record Centre (HRBC) has also been reviewed to inform the assessment.

No ecological field surveys specific to this Proposed Development have been undertaken to inform this Scoping Assessment. Recommendations for further survey are provided in Section 7.8.

7.3 Study area

The study area considered for scoping, with respect to the biodiversity aspects, varies per element. Consideration of designated sites was limited up to 10 km from the Proposed Development site. Non-statutory designated sites were limited to within 2 km of the site.

As no specific ecological surveys were undertaken to inform this assessment, a review of biological records requested from the Highland Biological Records Centre were considered within 2km of the Proposed Development. Records of habitats and protected species data relevant to the search area shown in Figure 1.1 (and appropriate buffers) were identified within the desk study review of the SSE Renewables projects, outlined above in Section 7.2 were also considered.

7.4 Baseline environment and cumulative projects

Designated sites

No statutory or non-statutory designated sites, designated for ecological features, occur within the Proposed Development footprint.

One Special Protection Area (SPA) and three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are located within 10km of the Proposed Development and are outlined in Table 7.1 below.

The Parallel Roads of Lochaber SSSI is located 3km south of the Proposed Development, at its closest point but is not considered in this scoping assessment, as it is designated for geological features.

Name of site and designation	Distance of designated site from Proposed Development (km)	Qualifying interest features
West Invernesshire Lochs SPA and SSSI	3.1 km north of Proposed Development at its nearest point.	Comprises a grouping of eight freshwater lochs, set in upland terrain. The lochs are in favorable condition. The boundaries of the SPA and SSSI align, and both are designated for the same qualifying features listed; • Breeding Black- throated Diver (*Gavia artica*); and • Breeding Common Scoter (*Melanitta Nigra*)
South Laggan Fen SSSI	2.9 km east of the Proposed Development at its nearest point.	Much of the site supports fen and swamp vegetation with associated open water, grassland and woodland. It is notable for its lowland fen with moderate nutrient levels, diversity of vegetation types and flora species. The habitat has been as assessed as favorable, however management regime changes (removal of seasonal grazing) since previous assessment may have altered the condition assessment. The SSSI is designated for; • Fen, marsh, swamp – Transitional fen
Garry Fall SSSI	3.7 km north of Proposed Development at its nearest point.	An area of semi-natural woodland on the west side of a gorge feature with near vertical slopes. The slope tops are fringed with Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), with the rest of the woodland considered deciduous comprising a mixture of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), downy birch (*Betula pubescens*) and bird cherry (*Prunus padus*). The ground flora includes a variety of ferns and a number of plant species typical of richer soils. The woodland is rich in mosses, liverworts and lichens, which grow densely on boulders, trees and dead wood. Two nationally scarce species occur and many of the species present are confined largely to the west of the country, some particularly to the Atlantic coast and grow here in a more easterly location than usual. Due to the presence of rhododendron and non-native conifers, the woodland feature is considered in unfavourable and declining condition. The SSSI is designated for; • Upland mixed ash woodland; and • Bryophyte assemblage.

Table 7.1: Statutory nature conservation designations

Terrestrial Habitat

A desk study review of the Kilfinnan Road Proposals' EIA[1] found a section of the habitat survey area (Zone 3, according to Figure 2.1), parallel to Loch Lochy, overlapped with the proposed cable route development. Where the proposed cable route Search Area for Site Boundary is orientated northwest to southeast, towards the foot of Meall nan Ruadag and Sean Mheall, habitat data from the Coire Glas Scheme EIA desk study overlapped with Zones 4, 5 and 6, according to Figure 3.1.

Upland habitats

Habitat information collated as part of the Coire Glas Scheme EIA maps upland habitats which correlate to Zones 4,5 and 6 according to Figure 3.1. As the finalised Proposed Development route is yet to be confirmed, it is not possible to conclusively identify which upland habitats the route may transect.

Based on Phase 1 Habitat Survey plans, the Proposed Development will likely transect Blanket Bog habitat. Blanket Bog stands in the vicinity of the proposed cable route consist of M17b *Trichophorum germanicum-Eriophorum vaginatum* blanket mire *Cladonia* sub-community, with the community constants abundant. Blanket bogs are considered an Annex 1 habitat and therefore of international importance.

Marsh grassland communities were identified in wetter areas of lower ground, as rush-pastures in damper fields and valley floors, and where general groundwater movement occurred down slopes. These were typically dominated by rush species, Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Tufted hair-grass and, more locally, Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*).

Dry dwarf shrub heath (upland heathland) was recorded in what is potentially Zone 6 of the Proposed Development route. Upland heathland is a Scottish Biodiversity List habitat and therefore of national importance.

An area of wet dwarf shrub heath was recorded near Fuaran na Sguabaich spring. Wet dwarf shrub heath more than 25% cover of *ericoids* and/or small *Ulex* species. However, it differs from dry heath in that *Molina caerulea* is often abundant and it generally contains some *Sphagnum compactum* or *Sphagnum tenellum* and less frequently other *Sphagna*. Upland heathland is a Scottish Biodiversity List habitat and therefore of national importance.

Coniferous plantation

The southern limit of the Proposed Development is coniferous plantation woodland, comprising; sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), larch (*Larix decidua*) and Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*). Due to the density of the planting and consequent shading, limited understorey vegetation is present. Based on aerial imagery, the coniferous woodland extends beyond the area surveyed as part of the Kilfinnan road upgrade project, parallel to Loch Lochy. Approximately 0.8 km^2 occurs within the Search area for the Site Boundary of the Proposed Development. Coniferous plantations are common and widespread habitats with little conservation value; however, they provide habitat for a variety of species such as birds, pine marten and red squirrel. The coniferous woodland is considered of site importance.

Broadleaved semi-natural woodland

A small area of broadleaved semi-natural woodland (approximately 0.014km^2) occurs within the Search Area for Site Boundary of the Proposed Development and has been previously surveyed as part of the Kilfinnan road upgrade project. The woodland occurs to the direct north of the Highland Lodges and Great Glen Lodges, with a central grid reference NN 27233 95414. Birch (*Betula* sp.) is the dominate tree species within the woodland.

Broadleaved semi-natural woodland also occurs along the riparian corridor of the Kilfinnan Burn to the northwest of the hamlet. The Proposed Development route will pass to the east of the riparian woodland with only a small section occurring within it.

[1] Kilfinnan Road Upgrade EIA. Highland Council Reference: 23/05393/FUL (November 2023)

Broadleaved semi-natural woodland is considered a Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL) priority habitat and therefore of national importance.

Continuous bracken

Historic habitat survey identified within the desk study, overlapping the Proposed Development shows several sections of continuous bracken habitat. Bracken is a common and widespread habitat which provides cover for ground nesting birds and reptile and is considered of site importance.

Improved grassland

A small area of improved grassland, to the direct north of Kilfinnan Bridge was recorded as part of historic survey and is within the Proposed Development boundary. Improved grassland is a widespread and common habitat. Whilst they are floristically poor, the short, cropped grass can host invertebrates such as worms which in turn provide foraging resource for birds and mammals and is therefore considered of site importance.

Bare ground

The Great Glen Way, a single width, gravel track, runs parallel to Loch Lochy and within the Proposed Development boundary. Bare ground is not considered of ecological importance.

Flush

As part of historic habitat surveys, an area of basic flush was identified at central grid reference: NN 27805 95964. The habitat is within the Proposed Development boundary. This habitat is part of the Annex I habitat 7230 Alkaline Fens and therefore of international importance.

Invasive non-native species

A biological records request to the Highland Biological Records Centre in February 2024, identified no records of invasive non-native species (INNS) within the boundary of the Proposed Development. Additionally, no records of INNS were identified within the section of the cable route surveyed as part of the Kilfinnan road upgrade project.

Faunal Species

Faunal species are transient and can move between favoured habitats regularly throughout and between years. These results provide a snapshot of field signs present in the survey area between 2018 and 2023, identified through desk study of previous SSE Renewables reports, listed above. Additionally, EnviroCentre Limited site knowledge based on previous and current site work in the locality and records from the Highland Biological Records Centre has been reviewed to inform the scoping assessment.

Pine marten (Martes martes)

HBRC results highlight two scat findings along the Great Glen Way, within the boundary of the proposed cable route. Pine marten scats were identified within coniferous woodland to the west of the southern limit of the cable route, approximately 250m, based on desk study of previous SSE Renewables project reports. A pine marten was also sighted by an EnviroCentre Limited ecologist in June 2023 at Kilfinnan Bridge, which is within is within the Proposed Development boundary.

The plantation woodland along the southern extent is unlikely to offer suitable den sites via cavities within tree trunks but there may be opportunities for den creation under the root plates of windblown trees. Nearby buildings, mature broadleaved trees or rocky crags may also be used. The woodlands and surrounding habitat are likely to host a variety of foraging resources such as small mammals, insects, birds, fungi and berry-producing shrubs and trees.

It is considered that pine marten will utilise the habitat within and adjacent to the proposed cable route. Pine marten are protected under the WCA and are therefore considered to be of national (UK) importance.

Red squirrel (Sciurus vulgaris)

No records of red squirrel were returned from the HBRC data request. However, an EnviroCentre Limited ecologist sighted an individual red squirrel, in September 2023, in the woodland directly adjacent to the northern limit of the Proposed Development, at grid reference NN 26390 98631.

The coniferous plantations and smaller broadleaved woodland patches within and adjacent the Proposed Development boundary is considered to offer suitable red squirrel foraging and a resource for drey creation throughout the year. Red squirrel are considered likely to be present within and adjacent the proposed development.

Red squirrel are protected under the WCA and are therefore considered to be of national (UK) importance.

Otter (Lutra lutra)

No recent records (within the last decade) were returned from the HBRC desk study. However, otter are known to be active within the area, with fresh, dry and intact spraints being found beneath Kilfinnan Burn bridge by EnviroCentre Limited ecologists undertaking surveys in the locality in March and April 2023. EnviroCentre Limited also has knowledge of an otter couch c.100m south of Kilfinnan bridge, under a tree root on the bank of Kilfinnan Burn. Anecdotal records also indicate an otter cub was seen on the Great Glen Way (which is within the Proposed Development boundary).

Within the Coire Glas Scheme EIA, a single lie-up was recorded within the study area along the Allt na Cailliche. Signs of otter were also recorded along the Allt na Cailliche and Allt Glas Dhoire.

Otter is a European Protected Species and are therefore of international importance.

Water vole (Arvicola amphibius)

No recent records (within the last decade) were returned from the HBRC desk study. However, water vole are known to be active within the area. Within the Revised Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme EIA, water vole burrows were recorded at three locations near the proposed route of the permanent access track from Glen Garry to the upper reservoir. Burrows were recorded on two tributaries of Allt a'Choire Ghlais and along Allt na Cailliche. with ten burrows identified in total across the three locations.

Water vole are protected under the WCA and are therefore considered to be of national (UK) importance.

Reptiles

Two recent records of common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) were returned from the HBRC desk study. The records were located in moorland habitat , approximately 2km west of the Proposed Development site. EnviroCentre have observed common lizard in the moorland habitat to the west of the Proposed development during spring 2023. A slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) was also recorded basking on the gravel track adjacent Loch Lochy by EnviroCentre Limited in May 2023.

The habitat is considered highly suitable for these species as well as adder (*Vipera berus*), particularly along the Great Glen Way (within the Proposed Development). The terrain either side of the existing road is sloped and south facing slope, which is ideal for basking reptiles. The habitat is varied with areas of stone piles, bracken and scrub as well as more open grassland, suitable for basking, foraging and refugia.

Adder, common lizard and slow worm are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended and therefore are of national importance.

Bats

No records of bat were returned from the HBRC data request.

EnviroCentre Limited ecologists identified a transitional roost for up to 3 *pipistrelle* bats within Kilfinnan Bridge during surveys conducted in May 2023.

There are several buildings and trees adjacent to the Proposed Development which are suitable for a variety of roosting bats. The woodland habitat along the shore of Loch Lochy within the Proposed Development Route is highly suitable for foraging and commuting bat.

The open moorland habitat which the Proposed Development crosses, is considered less suitable for bat foraging.

Bats are a European Protected Species and are therefore of international importance.

Invertebrates

No recent records (within the last decade) of invertebrate species with conservation protection status were returned from the HBRC desk study.

No records of invertebrates by EnviroCentre Limited ecologists surveying in the vicinity of the Proposed Development have been noted.

No reference of invertebrates was included in previous reporting for SSE Renewables projects in the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

SSE have provided records relating to dragonflies in the vicinity of the Proposed Development. White faced darter (*Leucorrhinia dubia*) has been recorded breeding in bog habitat directly adjacent to the proposed cable route, near Lochan Diota. White faced darter is listed as Endangered in the British Odonata Red List 2008 and considered of national importance.

Azure hawker (*Aeshna caerulea*) has also been sighted and recorded breeding and near Lochan Diota and Fuaran na Sguabaich, in proximity to the proposed cable route. Azure hawker is listed as Vulnerable in the British Odonata Red List 2008 and found only in Scotland, with a scattered distribution in the Highlands. The soecies is therefore considered of national importance.

An adult northern emerald (*Somatochlora arctica*) was recorded in the east of the proposed cable route, near the woodland at the foot of Meall nan Ruadag. The range of the species is restricted to northwest Scotland. Northern emerald dragonfly is listed as near threatened in the British Odonata Red List 2008 and therefore considered of national importance.

7.5 Mitigation by design

The following good practice mitigation is recommended based on the current level of available site information:

- Any lighting used during installation works should be sympathetic to wildlife and not illuminate adjacent green space on site, which will impact crepuscular or nocturnal species in the vicinity.
- The semi-natural broadleaved woodland, within and adjacent the cable route, is considered of national importance and therefore every effort should be made to retain and minimise any impacts to it, including the root protection zones. Where felling cannot be avoided, compensatory tree planting should replace lost species and habitat.
- The coniferous plantation woodland, within and adjacent the cable route, is considered of site importance and therefore effort should be made to retain and minimise any impacts to it, including the root protection zones. Where felling cannot be avoided, compensatory tree planting should replace lost species and habitat.
- SEPA's Pollution Prevention Guidelines should be implemented throughout works, when working near water courses and water bodies.
- Works causing loud noise and vibration May to August inclusive (main activity season) should be limited to daylight hours to avoid intolerable disturbance to foraging and commuting bats in the locality.
- All site personnel should be made aware of ecological constraints (i.e. otter, pine marten, red squirrel, bats, invertebrates, and reptiles) present in and around the site within the site induction/ toolbox talk.

- If trenching is scheduled to take place during winter months, a vegetation check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist 48 hours prior to clearance, to identify any potential constraints pertaining to.
- Any trenches created during the works should not be left open for mammals to become trapped. Appropriate covers should be fitted at the end of every working day. At the very least, a shallow sloping edge or some form of ramp should be placed in the excavations to allow any animals to climb out.

7.6 Potential development impacts

The following potential impacts may occur because of the proposed underground cable route installation if appropriate mitigation is not implemented.

Terrestrial Habitat

- Loss/ altering/ or damage to nationally important broadleaved semi-natural woodland habitat to facilitate the installation of the cable route.
- Loss/ altering to damage to internationally important blanket bog habitat to facilitate the installation of the cable route.
- Loss/ altering/ or damage to nationally important dwarf shrub heath habitat to facilitate the installation of the cable route.
- Loss /altering/ or damage to locally important coniferous plantation woodland habitat to facilitate the installation of the cable route.
- Temporary loss of improved grassland to facilitate the installation of the cable route, considered of site importance.
- Temporary loss of continuous bracken habitat to facilitate the installation of the cable route, considered of site importance.
- Pollution of watercourses and/or wetland habitats via silted surface water run-off or a fuel or oil spill.
- Degradation or loss of wetland habitats (basic flush) if existing hydrological flows of water are disrupted by the installation of the cable route.
- Spread of *Rhododendron* if biosecurity protocols are not implemented.
- Damage to trees to be retained if tree protection measures are not in place.
- Damage to vegetation in retained habitats and/or soil compaction through vehicle tracking, inappropriate storage materials out with the working area.

Protected Species

- Loss and/ or fragmentation of suitable habitat for bats, birds, otter, water vole, pine marten, red squirrel, invertebrates and reptile habitat as a result of temporary and/ or permanent habitat loss as detailed above.
- Death, injury or disturbance of bats, birds, pine marten or red squirrel if trees are removed without appropriate survey and mitigation.
- Death, injury or disturbance of bats, birds, otter, water vole, pine marten, red squirrel and reptiles in relation to increased vehicle/ plant movements to facilitate the cable installation.
- Disturbance to bats, birds, pine marten, red squirrel, reptiles, water vole or otter if activities producing significant levels of noise such as excavators, are undertaken for prolonged periods within proximity of rest sites.
- Disturbance of foraging and commuting nocturnal and crepuscular species such as bats, otter and pine marten if artificial lighting is used during the construction period.
- Death or injury of reptiles if refugia such as rock piles or dense bracken are removed during the hibernation period.
- Loss/altering/ or damage to wetland habitat supporting nationally important dragonfly species, to facilitate the cable route installation.

7.7 Cumulative development impacts

A review of The Highland Council Planning Portal (reviewed in February 2024) was undertaken to identify any planning applications which could have cumulative effects on ecological receptors.

Planning applications identified related to the wider work as part of the Coire Glas hydro pumped storage scheme, connected to this Proposed Development.

Planning Application Reference	Proposal	Application Status
23/05393/FUL	Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme: Kilfinnan Road site access improvements over a length of approximately 4.6km from the A82 junction to the South Laggan Forest gate, comprising widening to form a two-way public road to serve the Coire Glas scheme during construction and thereafter, reducing the road width to single-track with passing places, and ancillary works.	Under Consideration
23/02874/S37	Corrie Glas Pumped Storage Scheme Connection - Erection and operation of approximately 13 km of new double circuit steel structure 400 kV overhead transmission line between the consented Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme 3, and Fort Augustus substation - Land At Coire Glas North Laggan Spean Bridge	Under Consideration
18/01564/S36 (ECU reference: ECU00000577)	Construction and operation of a pumped storage hydro scheme between Loch Lochy and a new reservoir created at Loch a' Choire Ghlais, approximately 19km to the south-west of Fort Augustus in the Highlands, with a maximum generating capacity of up to 1500MW.	Approved by Scottish Ministers

Table 7.2: Summary of cumulative developments

7.8 Additional mitigation measures

Full mitigation and enhancement measures will be determined through the EIA process following all appropriate ecological survey work is undertaken as outlined below. Good practice mitigation is however recommended in this Scoping Report based on the current level of available site information.

As no ecological surveys specific to this Proposed Development have been undertaken and gaps occur in available knowledge taken from desk study, further survey is recommended, as listed;

- Protected species surveys (otter, water vole and invertebrates); and
- Habitat survey of areas not previously surveyed, including National Vegetation Classification (NVC) of priority or groundwater dependant terrestrial ecosystem habitats.

Additional targeted protected species surveys may be required dependant on results of initial surveys. At this stage, further survey for bats, reptiles, pine marten and red squirrel are scoped out as long-term habitat loss associated with the Proposed Development is not anticipated. Additionally, mitigation recommendations for those specific species are unlikely to change based on additional survey.

A Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Assessment will be undertaken, and corresponding Biodiversity Enhancement Plan will be prepared, following the SSE Renewables Methodology[2].

[2] https://www.sserenewables.com/media/xr0as45w/user-guide.pdf

CIEEM EcIA guidance[3] will be followed in relation to assessment of impacts for the receptors taken forward in scoping.

7.9 Receptors and impacts scoped in and out of the assessment

Table 7.3 below summarises the potential impacts proposed to be scoped in and out of the EIAR.

Potential Impact	Potential Receptor	Construction	Operation	Decommissioning
Designated sites				
Permanent or temporary impact to qualifying features of designated sites within 10km of the Proposed Development, associated with construction and operational activities.	West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA and SSSI	x	x	x
	South Laggan Fen SSSI	x	x	x
	Garry Fall SSSI	x	x	x
Terrestrial habitats				
Temporary loss of improved grassland habitat, to facilitate the installation of the cable route.	Habitat of site importance	x	x	x
Loss/altering/ or damage to coniferous woodland habitat to facilitate the installation of the cable route. (Coniferous woodland is likely to be felled in the future as part of managed felling operations).		x	x	x
Loss of continuous bracken habitat to facilitate the installation of the cable route.		x	x	x
Loss/altering/ or damage to broadleaved semi-natural woodland habitat to facilitate the installation of the cable route.	Habitat of national importance	✓	x	✓
Loss/altering/ or damage to marshy grassland habitat to facilitate the installation of the cable route.		✓	x	✓
Loss/altering/ or damage to dwarf shrub heath habitat to facilitate the installation of the cable route.		✓	x	✓
Degradation or loss of basic flush habitat if existing hydrological flows of water are disrupted by the installation of the cable route.	Habitat considered of international importance	✓	x	✓

[3]CIEEM EcIA Guidance. Available at: https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-ecological-impact-assessment-ecia/ (Accessed February 2024)

Potential Impact	Potential Receptor	Construction	Operation	Decommissioning
Degradation or loss blanket bog habitat if existing hydrological flows of water are disrupted by the installation of the cable route.		✓	x	✓
Protected Species				
Loss and/or fragmentation of suitable habitat for protected species because of temporary and permanent habitat loss as detailed above.	Bats	✓	x	✓
	Birds	✓	x	✓
	Pine marten	✓	x	✓
	Red squirrel	✓	x	✓
	Dragonfly species	✓	x	✓
	Reptile species (adder, slow worm and common lizard)	✓	x	✓
	Otter	✓	x	✓
	Water vole	✓	x	✓
Death, injury or disturbance of protected species if trees or ground vegetation are removed without appropriate survey and mitigation.	Bats	✓	x	✓
	Birds	✓	x	✓
	Pine marten	✓	x	✓
	Red squirrel	✓	x	✓
	Dragonfly species	x	x	x
	Reptile species (adder, slow worm and common lizard)	✓	x	✓
	Otter	✓	x	✓
	Water vole	✓	x	✓

Table 7.3: Summary of Ecology impacts scoped in (✓) and scoped out (x)

7.10 Scoping questions to consultees

1. Do consultees agree with the receptors and impacts scoped out of the EIA?
2. Do consultees agree with the proposed ecological survey scope and methodology?
3. Are there any developments or infrastructure schemes which should be taken into account when considering potential cumulative ecological impacts?

8 Ornithology

8.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the potential ornithological issues relevant to the Proposed Development and presents the proposed approach for assessing impacts on Ornithology receptors in the EIAR. The EIAR Ornithology chapter will assess the potential for likely significant effects on high-conservation-value bird receptors, and the habitat used by these species, during the construction, operational and decommissioning stages of the Proposed Development.

8.2 Assessment methodology

The proposed general approach to EIA for the Proposed Development and the intended assessment methods are described in Chapter 2 and are essentially the same as for the Coire Glas Scheme EIA. Elements of the approach and methods specific to Ornithology are listed.

- Assessment will be based on a consideration of impacts on bird species receptor populations, in particular the regional or national receptor population of a species as appropriate. Following NatureScot guidance, regional populations will be defined as the (breeding) population in Natural Heritage Zone 7 (Northern Highlands).
- Where data allow, EIA will adopt a quantitative approach to impact assessment in preference to a qualitative approach.
- The EIA will identify any knowledge gaps of importance. Where there is significant uncertainty, the precautionary principle will be adopted.
- Irrespective of the significance of an impact, consideration will be given to how impacts on bird receptors might be avoided or reduced through best practise mitigation measures.
- The EIA will consider if there are practical measures that might reasonably be put in place that would benefit birds of high conservation value in the vicinity of the Proposed Development, and thereby achieve biodiversity gains.

8.3 Study area

The study area for Ornithology is defined on the basis of a species appropriate buffer of up to 2 km around the Proposed Development's red line boundary. The size of the buffer chosen will be appropriate to the bird species under consideration, reflecting a species' behaviour and its sensitivity to disturbance and in accordance with NatureScot guidance.

For bird species of relatively low disturbance sensitivity (the majority of species) the study area is defined by a 500m buffer. For more sensitive species including black grouse and most of the breeding raptor species potentially present the study area is defined by a buffer of 1 km.

One species is potentially present that has a particularly high sensitivity to disturbance, golden eagle. For this species alone, a study area defined by a buffer of 2 km is appropriate. Historical information on the breeding locations of this species show that there are no historical nest sites within 2 km of the Proposed Development however the study area is likely to be used for foraging.

The Proposed Development is located in an rugged upland landscape, ranging in altitude from approximately 50 m to 380 m. The dominant habitats are a mix of dry and wet heath moorland habitats. There is also some small areas of freshwater wetland habitat in the form of a small streams, freshwater lochan, a few freshwater pools and small areas of bog.

8.4 Baseline environment

Desk study

The desk study similar to that undertaken for the Coire Glas Scheme 2018 EIA Report will be undertaken that examines published information on bird species occurrence and status relevant to the Proposed Development site.

A provisional examination of the results of previous survey work undertaken for the Coire Glas Scheme and published literature (Balmer *et al*., 2013; Forrester *et al*., 2007) shows that a number of bird species potentially breed in the study area, including a number of species high conservation value (Table 8.1).

For the purpose of the EIAR, high-conservation-value bird species are defined as breeding bird species meeting at least one of the following criteria:

- Species listed on Schedule 1 (S1) of the Wildlife and countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- Species listed on Annex I (AI) of the EU Birds Directive; and,
- Species listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern 5 Red List (Stanbury *et al*., 2021)

Black grouse lek sites (the locations used by displaying males in the early spring) are a habitat features of particular relevance to the EIAR on account of the importance of such sites for this species' conservation and the birds' high sensitivity to disturbance when attending leks.

The Highland Raptor Study Group (HRSG) will be consulted with regard to historical information on the breeding sites of raptor species that could be potentially affected by the Proposed Development. A previous information request to HRSG in 2022 returned no historic records of any Schedule 1 raptor species breeding within 2 km of the Proposed Development.

Outside the breeding season, Proposed Development and its immediate vicinity are anticipated to have relatively low ornithological interest compared to the breeding season with many fewer species likely to be present. Outside the breeding season, the bird species that could potentially be present will have relatively low sensitivity to disturbance compared to the breeding season. For these reasons, no bird survey work is proposed to be undertaken outside the breeding season.

Species	Habitat preference and potential occurence	High conservation value species and criteria[4]
Red-throated diver	Freshwater loch. Habitat potentially suitable but no previous records.	Yes, A1, S1
Golden eagle	Likely forages over Proposed Development site, possibly nesting within 2 km.	Yes, A1, S1
Merlin	Moorland. Likely forages over Proposed Development site, possibly breeds within 1 km.	Yes, A1, S1, BoCC-5 Red List
Kestrel	All habitats usually nests on cliffs and crags. Likely forages over Proposed Development site, possibly breeds within 1 km.	Yes, BoCC-5 Red List
Buzzard	Breeds woodland, forages farmland and moorland. Forages over Proposed Development site, likely breeds within 1 km.	No
Greenshank	Wet bog habitat. Habitat potentially suitable but no previous records.	Yes, S1
Golden plover	Moorland and blanket bog. Habitat potentially suitable but no previous records.	Yes, A1
Dunlin	Blanket bog. Habitat potentially suitable but no previous records.	Yes, A1, BoCC-5 Red List
Woodcock	Birch woodland and moorland edge. Likely present.	Yes, BoCC-5 Red List
Black grouse	Moorland and upland birch woodland. One lek site known within 1km.	Yes, BoCC-5 Red List

[4] 'S1', Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1 species; 'A1', EU Birds Directive Annex 1 species; and, 'BoCC-5', B Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (Stanbury *et al.,* 2021).

Species	Habitat preference and potential occurence	High conservation value species and criteria[4]
Red grouse	Moorland. Common.	No
Mallard	Rivers and freshwater wetlands. Common.	No
Cuckoo	Moorland / birch woodland edge. Common.	Yes, BoCC-5 Red List
Hooded crow	All habitats. Common.	No
Raven	All habitats. Common.	No
Chaffinch	Woodland. Very common.	No
Lesser redpoll	Birch woodland. Common.	Yes, BoCC-5 Red List
Skylark	Moorland. Habitat potentially suitable but no previous records.	Yes, BoCC-5 Red List
Willow warbler	Woodland edge. Very common.	No
Tree pipit	Moorland / birch woodland edge. Common.	Yes, BoCC-5 Red List
Meadow pipit	Moorland. Very common.	No
Wheatear	Stony moorland and grassland. Common.	No

Table 8.1: List of bird species potentially breeding in the vicinity of the Proposed Development and their habitat preferences

New baseline survey work

The study area mostly lies within the survey area of the breeding bird survey undertaken in 2017 to inform the Coire Glas Scheme. However, well over five years have elapsed since this and therefore the results may no longer provide a reliable basis for the characterising current baseline Ornithology conditions. Only a small part of the study area (approximately 20%) overlaps the area covered by supplementary breeding bird surveys undertaken in 2022 and 2023 to inform Coire Glas Scheme planning conditions. Therefore these more recent surveys do not adequately cover the study area.

In light of the shortcomings associated with the data from the previous surveys described above, it is proposed that a new baseline breeding bird survey will be undertaken in the 2024 to inform the Proposed Development's EIAR. For most bird species the new survey will cover the Proposed Development site (defined by the Search area for site boundary) buffered to 500m, an area of 4.5 km^2. For a few species with greater sensitivity, surveys will cover a wider species-appropriate buffer, as described earlier.

The 2024 bird survey programme will use standard breeding bird survey methods recommended by NatureScot (SNH, 2017) to measure the abundance and distribution of breeding bird species in upland habitats. The survey programme will include moorland bird walkover surveys (Brown and Shepherd, 1993), woodland bird surveys (Bibby *et al*., 2000), black grouse lek counts and searches for the breeding sites of Schedule 1 raptor (Hardy *et al*., 2009) and checks of standing freshwaters for breeding waterfowl and diver species. The proposed survey methods are considered to be suitable for the range of breeding species anticipated to potentially breed in the study area (Table 8.1).

Surveys will be undertaken by experienced ornithologists that hold a Schedule 1 disturbance license issued by NatureScot. The survey schedule is predicated on undertaking survey work over five visits spaced at approximately equal intervals between mid-March and mid-July.

Designated sites

The Proposed Development site does not overlap any site designated for bird conservation.

The only designated site designated for bird conservation site that is reasonably close to the Proposed Development is the West Inverness-shire Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This designation covers a number of freshwater lochs, the of which Loch Garry is by far the closest to the Proposed Development. The qualifying features of this SPA/SSSI are summarised in Table 8.2. No connectivity between this SPA/SSSI and the Proposed Development's ornithological study area is anticipated.

Name of site	Location of site	Distance of designated site from Proposed Development (km)	Designation
West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA/SSSI	Loch Garry and other lochs	Approximately 3 km, from nearest point of designated site to Proposed Development	Qualifying interests are breeding black-throated diver and breeding common scoter

Table 8.2: Nature conservation designations relevant to the Proposed Development

8.5 Mitigation by design

The Proposed Development includes a number of embedded mitigation measures designed to benefit bird receptors. These are summarised below:

- Construction stage vegetation stripping will take place outside the bird breeding season (April to August);
- The area of habitat directly damaged or lost by the Proposed Development will be kept to the minimum.
- Habitats along the cable route damaged by construction activities (e.g. track verges, compounds and borrow pits) will be restored using best practice methods. This will including the reuse of local vegetation turves put aside during vegetation stripping.
- Marking of permanent fences inline with best practice to increase visibility to grouse and thereby minimise the risk of fatal fence strikes occurring.
- A Breeding Bird Protection Plan (BBPP) will be prepared that sets out measures that will be taken ensure compliance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through the construction stage. In particular measures to avoid harm to bird nests, eggs and dependent young, and the disturbance to species listed on Schedule 1 when they are breeding. The BBPP will also include measures to avoid disturbance of black grouse at their lek sites.
- An Invasive Non-native Species Plan (INNSP) will be prepared that sets out biosecurity measures that will be taken to prevent the Proposed Development causing the spread and establishment of non-native species, especially plant species. The INNSP will also include measure for the long-term monitoring and control of non-native species within the Proposed Development site boundary.
- Ecological Clerk of Works will be appointed throughout the construction period. ECoW duties will include overseeing the various habitat mitigation measures, fence marking and the implementation of the BBPP and INNSP.

8.6 Potential development impacts

Potential effects of the Proposed Development on bird receptors and bird habitats are summarised below:

<u>Construction stage:</u>

- Habitat loss and change;
- Disturbance (noise and visual), potentially leading to displacement; and,
- Spread and establishment of invasive non-native species (INNS), leading to habitat degradation.

<u>Operational stage:</u>

- Habitat loss and change;
- Disturbance (noise and visual);
- Spread and establishment of INNS, leading to habitat degradation; and,
- Fence collision strike (grouse species).

Decommissioning stage:

- Habitat loss and change;
- Disturbance (noise and visual), potentially leading to displacement; and,
- Spread and establishment of INNS, leading to habitat degradation.

The potential for disturbance during the operational stage is anticipated to be much less frequent and less intense than during the construction stage, but will occur over a much longer time period. Although no additional habitat loss is anticipated to occur during the operational stage, the effects of habitat loss and change caused during construction would persist through the operation stage albeit with some potential for localised habitat recovery with time. Decommissioning stage impacts are anticipated to be similar in nature and magnitude to construction stage impacts.

8.7 Cumulative development impacts

NatureScot will be consulted with regard to which projects should be considered in the cumulative impact assessment for bird receptors. Wind farm developments (in-planning, consented and operational) within 20 km of the Proposed Development are provisionally identified as potentially relevant to cumulative impact assessment together with the Coire Glas Scheme, its proposed grid connection and the Kilfinnan Road proposals.

The examination of cumulative impacts on bird receptors will be limited to consideration of impacts of the Proposed Development that in isolation are shown to be of at least low magnitude. Impacts that in isolation are determined to be of negligible magnitude would not materially add to a regional cumulative impact with other projects and therefore will not be considered.

Based on the current understanding of the baseline Ornithology (i.e., prior to the planned 2024 breeding bird surveys) all impacts on bird receptors of the Proposed Development in isolation are anticipated to be of negligible magnitude.

8.8 Additional mitigation measures

It is anticipated that there will be no requirement for secondary mitigation measures related to Ornithology receptors, i.e. mitigation that is additional to the Proposed Development's embedded mitigation measures.

8.9 Receptors and impacts scoped in and out of the assessment

As was the case for the Coire Glas Scheme EIA, detailed impact assessment will be limited to high-conservation-value bird species receptors for which potential for a likely significant effect is identified. Common and widespread bird species with a favourable conservation status will be scoped-out of requiring assessment.

The potential for impacts on bird receptors arising from both habitat loss/change and disturbance effects are scoped-in for assessment for all stages of the Proposed Development.

The potential for impacts on bird receptors, in particular back grouse, arising from fence collision strikes is scoped-out of the requirement for assessment. The embedded mitigation measure to increase the visibility of fences to birds by affixing appropriate markers according to best practice is anticipated reduce fence strike risk to negligible levels.

The potential impact of invasive non-native plant species to degrade bird habitats is scoped-out of the requirement for assessment for the reasons that follow. The various embedded mitigation measures set out in the Proposed Development's Invasive Non-native Species Plan (INNSP) aim to prevent the spread and establishment of INNS, and to monitor and control any invasive non-native plant species within the Proposed Development's red line boundary. Through the implementation of the INNSP, deleterious long-term effects on the habitats of high-conservation value bird receptors will be avoided.

The potential for the Proposed Development to impact on the West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA/SSSI is scoped-out of the requirement for assessment for the reasons that follow. There are no records of the either of the SPA/SSSI's two qualifying species (black-throated diver and common scoter) occurring in the study area nor is their occurrence there likely due to a lack of suitable freshwater habitat. The closest part of the SPA/SSSI (Loch Garry) is more than 3 km from the Proposed Development, well beyond the maximum plausible distance that activities at the Proposed Development site could lead to disturbance of SPA birds.

Table 8.3 summarises the potential impacts proposed to be scoped in and out of the EIAR.

Potential Impact	Potential Receptor	Construction	Operation	Decommissioning
Habitat loss/change	High-conservation value bird species breeding in study area	✓	✓	✓
Disturbance	High-conservation value bird species breeding in study area	✓	✓	✓
Collision with fences	Grouse species	x	x	x
Bird habitat change from invasive non-native plant species	Moorland and woodland bird breeding and foraging habitat	x	x	x
All impacts	West Inverness-shire Lochs SPA/SSSI (breeding black-throated diver and breeding common scoter)	x	x	x

Table 8.3: Summary of Ornithology impacts scoped in (✓) and scoped out (x)

8.10 Scoping questions to consultees

1. Do consultees agree with the receptors and impacts scoped out of the EIA?
2. Do consultees agree with the proposed ornithological survey scope and methodology?
3. Are there any developments or infrastructure schemes which should be taken into account when considering potential cumulative ornithological impacts?

8.11 Ornithology references

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9 Noise and Vibration

9.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Scoping Report considers the potential noise and vibration effects from the Proposed Development. The potential for likely significant effects is limited to noise emissions from the construction of the underground cable and associated infrastructure. No operational noise impacts are anticipated. Decommissioning impacts are anticipated to be similar to construction impacts.

9.2 Assessment methodology

Environmental, or community noise is a broad term that encompasses noise emitted from many sources, including road, rail & air traffic, industry, construction, public work, and neighbourhood noise. All these sources potentially contribute adversely to the overall noise environment. It is therefore reasonable to expect communities to be sensitive to any change in their acoustic environment because of a Proposed Development. Typically, noise effects need to be considered for both the construction and operational stages of a development and Technical Advice Note (TAN) *1/2011 Assessment of Noise* provides guidance on how this should be considered within a planning context.

The TAN refers to BS 5228 *Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites: Part 1 (Noise)* and *Part 2 (Vibration)* (hereafter referred to as BS 5228). This standard is generally used for the assessment of construction noise for all types of development in the UK and is a recognised Code of Practice for the implementation of the Control of Pollution Act (CoPA) 1974. For operational noise the TAN refers to a variety of standards and guidelines that may be followed, which can vary significantly between different types of project depending on the nature of the proposed noise source(s) and/or environment.

Part 1 provides recommendations for basic methods of noise control including sections on community relations, training, occupational noise effects, neighbourhood nuisance and project supervision. The annexes provide information on noise sources, noise calculation procedures, mitigation measures and their effectiveness. Part 2 provides similar guidance for vibration.

Accordingly, it is proposed that an assessment of construction noise is undertaken in accordance with the BS 5228 guidance. Where appropriate, this assessment will also consider the potential for adverse vibration impacts.

The construction of the cable along Kilfinnan Road is likely to be straightforward and short in duration, principally consisting of trenching and backfill and some concreting at jointing bay locations. It is anticipated, however, that Horizontal Direction Drilling (HDD) will be required where the cable leaves the road and heads northwards. HDD activities will generate higher noise levels than the trenching and backfill operations and will occur for longer periods of time, so this will form the main element of the assessment.

The HDD plant will consist of above ground, static items of plant, such as pumps, generators, and compressors. As such, no significant vibration effects are anticipated, and no assessment of vibration is required.

No noise is anticipated to be generated from the operation of the Proposed Development.

9.3 Study area

The study area is defined by the location of the nearest Noise Sensitive Receptors (NSRs), on the assumption that if noise and vibration is within acceptable levels at these locations then it will also be within acceptable levels at NSRs at greater distances.

The cable route is expected to run parallel to Kilfinnan Road travelling eastwards from Kilfinnan Bridge, then turning northwards at 227735, 795824 to the proposed substation at 225500, 798500. Accordingly, the closest NSRs are the residential properties along the southern end of Kilfinnan Road. There are no NSRs located within proximity to the northern end of the cable route.

The extent of the proposed study area is shown in Figure 9.1.

9.4 Baseline environment and cumulative projects

Background noise monitoring was undertaken during the 2018 Coire Glas Scheme EIA at 5 properties in the area, from which background sound levels were derived and used to set appropriate noise thresholds for the construction stage of that development. These thresholds will be reused during the assessment of the Proposed Development.

The NSRs being considered for the Proposed Development were previously considered in a construction noise assessment for the related upgrade of Kilfinnan road. The Proposed Development is not expected to be carried out during the same period as the Kilfinnan road upgrades, therefore, no cumulative noise level increase is anticipated, however, the same NSRs will be considered, as will the cumulative duration of exposure to construction noise. These are detailed in Table 9.1.

Name of Receptor	Grid Reference		Distance of designated site from Proposed Development (km)	Reason for inclusion
	Easting	Northing		
Kilfinnan Burn Farm	227706	795701	0.12	Closest residential property to compound where HDD is likely to take place.
7 Kilfinnan Holiday Chalet	227111	795216	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
6 Kilfinnan Lodges	227128	795234	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
Great Glen Lodges House	227173	795269	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
Great Glen Lodges 1	227203	795216	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
Great Glen Lodges 2	227214	795232	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
Great Glen Lodges 3	227225	795243	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
Great Glen Lodges 4	227235	795255	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
Great Glen Lodges 5	227231	795269	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
Highland Lodges House	227281	795357	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
Highland Lodges 1	227296	795308	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
Highland Lodges 2	227313	795297	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.

Name of Receptor	Grid Reference		Distance of designated site from Proposed Development (km)	Reason for inclusion
	Easting	Northing		
Highland Lodges 3	227323	795309	<0.1	Located next to Kilfinnan road and therefore proposed cable route.
Corriegour Hotel	226206	792702	1.0	Located on southern shore of Loch Lochy opposite the proposed development.

Table 9.1: Noise sensitive receptors

9.5 Mitigation by design

BS 5228 details several best practice noise control measures that can be implemented throughout the construction stage.

As the cable will be undergrounded, no operational noise is anticipated.

9.6 Potential development impacts

Construction noise effects would be temporary in nature, however noise effects do have the potential to be significant if not mitigated, in particular from HDD activities.

No permanent, long term noise effects are anticipated.

No adverse vibration impacts are anticipated from either construction or operation of the Proposed Development.

9.7 Cumulative development impacts

The Proposed Development is not forecast to take place at the same time as other activities, as such, cumulative noise level increases are not expected. The assessment will, however, consider the timescale of the Proposed Development following on from previous construction activities, and the overall duration of exposure to noise.

9.8 Receptors and Impacts Scoped In and Out of the Assessment

Table 9.2 below summarises the potential impacts proposed to be scoped in and out of the EIAR.

Potential Impact	Potential Receptor	Construction	Operation	Decommissioning
Noise Impacts	Residential properties located along Kilfinnan Road	✓	x	x
Vibration Impacts	Residential properties located along Kilfinnan Road	x	x	x

Table 9.2: Summary of noise and vibration impacts scoped in (✓) and scoped out (x)

9.9 Scoping questions to consultees

- Do consultees agree that all potentially significant sources of noise and vibration from the Proposed Development activities have been identified?
- Do consultees agree that appropriate standards and methods of assessment are proposed based on the potential for noise impact?
- Do consultees agree with the proposed scope as per Table 9.1?
- Are there any developments or infrastructure schemes which should be taken into account when considering potential cumulative noise impacts?

10 Geology, Hydrology, Soils & Flood Risk

10.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider the potential significant effects of geological receptors, surface water, groundwater and flood risk. The chapter will also consider potential effects on habitats dependent on water, such as Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE).

10.2 Assessment methodology

The potential effects of the Proposed Development on geological receptors, surface water, groundwater and flood risk will be assessed by confirming baseline conditions and, if required field, investigation to confirm these, followed by an impact assessment, the processes of which are detailed below.

There is much information that has been collated and assessed in support of previous planning applications at site and this will be used to confirm the baseline conditions. A contemporary assessment will be prepared and, where required, data requests will be made to statutory consultees to ensure the most recent environmental monitoring and classification data is used in the assessment.

Baseline Assessment

An initial desk study will be undertaken to determine and confirm the baseline characteristics by reviewing available information relating to soils, geology (including peat), hydrology, hydrogeology and flood risk such as groundwater resources, licensed and unlicensed groundwater and surface water abstractions, public and private water supplies, surface water flows, flooding, rainfall data, water quality and soil data. This will include review of published geological maps, Ordnance Survey maps, aerial photographs, and site-specific data such as site investigation data, peat depth and condition data, geological and hydrogeological reports, digital terrain models (slope plans) and geological literature.

The desk study will identify sensitive features which may potentially be affected by the Proposed Development and will confirm the existing geological, hydrogeological and hydrological environment.

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

If required a site visit and walkover survey will be undertaken, to:

- verify the information collected during the desk and baseline study;
- undertake a visual assessment of the main surface waters;
- identify drainage patterns, areas vulnerable to erosion or sediment deposition, and any pollution risks;
- visit any identified GWDTEs (in consultation with the project ecologists);
- visit private water supply sources that might be affected by the Proposed Development to confirm details of the location of the abstraction, its type and use, as required;
- prepare a schedule of potential watercourse crossings.
- assess the site geomorphology and conduct any additional peat depth probing as required; and
- inspect rock exposures and establish by probing an estimated overburden thickness (a probe is pushed vertically into the ground to refusal and the depth is recorded).

Once the desk study is completed and sensitive soil and peat, geological and water features are confirmed, an impact assessment will be undertaken to assess the potential effects on soils and peat, geological receptors, surface water, groundwater and flood risk as a result of the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

Assessment Methodology

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.

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.

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.

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

10.3 Study area

The study area for peat and soils will be within the site boundary. The study area for geological receptors, surface water, groundwater and flood risk will extend to 500m from the site boundary. The cumulative effects study area will extend to 5km from the site boundary and will consider developments in the same surface water catchments as the Proposed Development.

10.4 Baseline environment and cumulative projects

As a consequence of the previous assessments undertaken at and near the Proposed Development, the baseline conditions are already well understood. These assessments, as well as published information sources, have been used to describe the baseline conditions below.

The baseline conditions for geological receptors, surface water, groundwater and flood risk in the study area are outlined in Table 10.1.

Name and Type of Receptor	Location of Receptor	Designation
Locally, nationally or internationally designated geological or water dependent sites	N/A	The NatureScot SiteLink website confirms that there are no geological or water dependent designated sites within 500m of the site boundary. With the exception of peat (see below) neither the superficial or bedrock geology beneath the Proposed Development is rare or afforded protection. Surface water and groundwater are considered as potential receptors below.
Drinking Water Protected Areas (DWPA)	Bedrock geology beneath the Proposed Development	All of Scotland's groundwater bodies have been designated as DWPA. SEPA mapping confirms the northern extent of the site is located within the Northern Highlands groundwater body (SEPA ID: 150701) whilst the southern extent of the site is located within the Fort William groundwater body (SEPA ID: 150696). None of the surface water catchments which drain the Proposed Development have been designated as a DWPA.
Peat	Beneath parts of Zones 4, 5 and 6	Approximately 3km of the northern extent of the site is shown by NatureScot to be located within an area designated as Class 2 priority peatland which is considered nationally important. Site specific peat probing and condition assessment has been completed in support of adjacent applications,. Peat depths of between 0 and 2m have been recorded.
Soils and geology	Zones 1 - 6	The majority of the Proposed Development is shown by the British Geological Survey (BGS) to be underlain by several metamorphic bedrocks comprising psammites and semipelites. The south eastern extent of the site is shown to be underlain by rocks of the Great Glen fault zone comprising cataclastics. The bedrock is shown to be overlain by hummocky glacial, peat, alluvial fan and glaciofluvial

		deposits. Soil mapping shows that the soils beneath the site comprise of peaty podzols, brown soils and subalpine soils.
Groundwater	Zones 1 - 6	The bedrock beneath the Proposed Development does not permit much groundwater storage or movement. The bedrock has been classified by BGS as a low productivity aquifer whereby small amounts of groundwater may be present within near surface weathered zone or secondary fractures. SEPA have classified the groundwater bodies, as required by the Water Framework Directive (WFD), beneath the Proposed Development the bedrock has an overall status of Good in 2022 (last reporting cycle).
Surface water	Zones 1 - 6	The northern extent of the site is located within the River Garry surface water catchment, in particular the Allt na Cailliche sub catchment. The southern extent of the site is located within the surface water catchment of Loch Lochy, including the Allt a'Choire Ghlais / Kilfinnan Burn sub catchment. The site will cross several watercourses, particularly within the southern extent of the site near Loch Lochy. SEPA have classified the larger watercourses in accordance with the WFD and record that they have an overall status of Moderate to Good.
Flooding	Zones 1 - 6	SEPA flood maps indicates that the majority of the site is not at risk of flooding. A floodplain is shown associated with Kilfinnan Burn and Loch Lochy and parts of the southern extent of the site are shown to be within the mapped floodplain.
Private water supplies	Zone 3	Previous assessments have confirmed that there are private water supplies within the southern extent of the site near Kilfinnan.
Licenced abstractions	Zone 3	Previous assessments have confirmed that is one impoundment and one abstraction for private water supply near Kilfinnan Lodges and Kilfinnan Farm respectively.
Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTEs)	Zones 1 - 6	Potential GWDTE were identified as part of the NVC survey completed for the previous Coire Glas Pumped Storage Scheme EIA. Areas of potentially highly and moderately groundwater dependent habitats were recorded within the study area, however, it was determined, that the GWDTE were supported by surface water runoff and rainfall, rather than groundwater, given the geological and hydrogeological setting of the site.

Table 10.1: Baseline conditions in study area

10.5 Mitigation by design

Analysis and interpretation of data gathered during the EIA process will ensure that the Proposed Development and associated works are carefully sited to ensure potential effects on soils, geology and the water environment are minimised, where practicable, through design.

Given the known presence of peat, a carbon rich soils and peat management plan and peat landslide hazard risk assessment will be prepared. As required by NPF4 existing peat depth and condition data (and if required additional peat data) will be collected and used to inform the emerging design of the Proposed Development. This information will be used to locate the proposed infrastructure where technically feasible in areas where peat depths are shallowest. These assessments will also be used to ensure that volume of disturbed soil and peat minimised and beneficially reused on site, and to confirm that peat instability will not be increased by the Proposed Development.

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 General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs). The Proposed Development would be constructed in accordance with these plans.

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) (and is a planning condition of the existing Coire Glas Scheme permission). 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, SSER's GEMPs, statutory consents and authorisations, and industry best practise and guidance, including pollution prevention guidance.

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.

10.6 Potential development impacts

The construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development has the potential to result in the following effects without appropriate controls or mitigation:

- disturbance and loss of carbon rich soils and peat deposits;
- ground instability (including peat slide risk);
- increased flood risk to areas downstream of the Proposed Development during construction through increased surface water runoff and through increased surface water runoff from new impermeable areas;
- potential adverse change of surface and groundwater flow paths and contribution to areas of peat and water dependent habitat, and water supplies;
- disturbance of watercourses from the construction of Proposed Development;
- an adverse effect on surface water or groundwater quality from pollution, fuel, oil, bentonite (using during HDD works), concrete or other hazardous substances during construction and from site traffic associated with maintenance activities; and
- potential pollution impacts and adverse effect to private water supplies.

10.7 Cumulative development impacts

A review of other existing and proposed developments near the Proposed Development will be undertaken and potential in-combination impacts on geological receptors, surface water, groundwater, and flood risk will be assessed to identify cumulative impacts. With regard to the Proposed Development, it is likely that mitigation measures will be proposed that will have a neutral effect or provide betterment compared to baseline conditions. It is considered unlikely that there will be any significant residual or cumulative impact to report.

10.8 Additional mitigation measures

A programme of water monitoring may be required prior to any construction activity and during construction of the Proposed Development. The monitoring programme would be agreed with Scottish Water, SEPA, NatureScot, THC, Marine Science Scotland, and local fisheries boards and it is expected to include monitoring of the watercourses which drain from the site and any identified sensitive receptors i.e. private water supplies. This work will build upon and complement the same work planned or proposed for the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals.

If required, a geotechnical risk register is maintained during the construction and post-construction stage of the Proposed Development. It is expected that this would be maintained by the developer, and again, secured by an appropriately worded predevelopment condition of consent.

10.9 Receptors and impacts scoped in and out of the assessment

Table 10.2 below summarises the potential impacts proposed to be scoped in and out of the EIAR.

Potential Impact	Potential Receptor	Construction	Operation	Decommissioning
Disturbance and loss of carbon rich soils and peat deposits	Soils and peat	✓	✓	✓
Potential effect on geology	Superficial and bedrock geology	x	x	x
Potential effect on designated sites	Geological and water dependent designated sites	x	x	x
Potential adverse change of surface and groundwater flow paths	Surface water, groundwater, water dependent habitat, peat and licenced and private water supplies	✓	✓	✓
An adverse effect on surface water or groundwater quality	Surface water, groundwater, licenced and private water supplies	✓	✓	✓
Increased flood risk to areas downstream of the Proposed Development	Property and third party land, site construction and maintenance staff	✓	✓	✓
Potential cumulative or in-combination effects	Surface water and groundwater receptors	✓	✓	✓

Table 10.2: Summary of geology, hydrology, soils, and flood risk impacts scoped in (✓) and out (x)

At this stage, it is considered that the following can be scoped out of further assessment:

- Effects on geology as no sensitive geological receptors have been identified. Potential effects on carbon rich soils and peat will be assessed in full;
- Effects on geological and water dependent designated sites as no designated sites have been identified within the study area;
- Water Quality Monitoring. 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 EIA Report.
- Geomorphological Assessment. 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 Report.
- Detailed Flood Risk Assessment. Published mapping confirms that the majority of the site is not located in an area of flood risk. It is proposed, therefore, that a simple screening of potential flood sources (fluvial, coastal, groundwater, infrastructure etc) is presented in the EIA report and measures would be used to control the rate and quality of runoff will be specified in the EIA Report.
- Drainage Impact Assessment. Design standards and measures would be used to control and manage incident rainfall would be specified in the EIA Report. A site drainage design would be prepared as part of the detailed site design (post planning) and would form part of the final CEMP. This would be submitted to THC and SEPA for approval at that stage.

10.10 Scoping questions to consultees

- Do consultees agree with the proposed scope of the geology, hydrology, soils and flood risk assessment?
- Published mapping confirms that most of the site area is not identified as being at flood risk. It is proposed, therefore, that a simple screening of potential flooding sources (fluvial, coastal, pluvial, groundwater etc.) is presented in the EIA Report. Is this approach acceptable?
- It is not proposed to prepare a detailed drainage design. Rather measures that would be used to control the rate and quality of runoff will be specified in the EIA Report. Again, is this acceptable?
- Site investigations, where required, including detailed peat probing, augering and condition assessment, DWPA and private water survey, and GWDTE assessment will be undertaken as part of the assessment. Should any additional investigation or data sources be considered when assessing baseline conditions?
- It is not proposed to undertake any water quality sampling, establish groundwater monitoring points, surface water monitoring points or undertake leachability trials of any rock as there is published data that can be used to characterise baseline conditions and complete the impact assessment. Is this acceptable?
- Please advise if there is any specific information or methodology that should be used / followed as part of the private water supply risk assessment?

11 Topics to be Scoped out of EIA

11.1 Climate Change

The Proposed Development is integral to the Coire Glas Scheme, which has the potential to make a significant contribution to climate change mitigation. As a stand-alone project the Proposed Development is unlikely to have significant effects either way on/ from Climate Change. Construction activity to deliver the Proposed Development may impact on climate change with fossil fuel use, however additional vehicle movements are minimal in a regional and national context and will occur for a short duration during the construction stage. Proposals do not include built elements or structures and a separate assessment on soils (including potential carbon sequestrating peat) is proposed to be scoped into the EIA. Furthermore, no impact from climate change is anticipated (e.g. pollution risk arising from construction activities because of increased rainfall will be managed through measures set out in a CEMP, such as preventing runoff). No potentially significant effects on Climate Change are anticipated and it is proposed to scope the topic out of the EIA.

11.2 Built and Cultural Heritage

Chapter 15 of the Coire Glas Scheme EIAR identifies that the southern portion of the Proposed Development is within the boundary of the Blar na Leine Historic Battlefield site. The 2018 Report (Section 15.8.7) confirmed that there are negligible cultural heritage sensitivities along and in the vicinity of Kilfinnan Road. On this basis, the 2022 EIA Scoping Report for the Kilfinnan Road Proposals scoped out Built and Cultural Heritage from the assessment. In line with this approach, no potentially significant environmental effects on Built and Cultural Heritage are anticipated and it is proposed to scope the topic out of the EIA.

11.3 Air Quality

The EIA for both the principal consents and Kilfinnan Road Proposals assessed Air Quality, identifying potential for significant effects from construction activities. Relevant to this proposal are those impacts anticipated from the construction of the unadopted section of Kilfinnan Road and Kilfinnan Bridge, including the formation of a site compound. The previous EIAs concluded that no significant effects would occur if mitigation identified was implemented. The Applicant is already committed to implement this mitigation, which will be included in the CEMPs for these developments, as well as a CEMP that will be prepared for the Proposed Development. No significant effects on Air Quality are anticipated and it is proposed to scope the topic out of the EIA.

11.4 Land Use, Tourism and Recreation

The principal consents and Kilfinnan Road Proposals both identify aspects of development that interact with public access rights, including potential for significant effects on tourism and recreation. The principal consents address this issue through a Construction Access Management Plan, and the Kilfinnan Road Proposals do so through direct provision of a Great Glen Way diversion from the South Laggan Forest Gate to Kilfinnan Bridge, and by committing to maintain access to existing routes, such as the Ben Tee hillpath. This mitigation is already committed through these aspects of the wider Coire Glas project and will be implemented, therefore addressing impacts that could otherwise arise from the Proposed Development. Details for maintaining public access to the Ben Tee hill path and parking for hillwalkers will be included with the Proposed Development and are therefore embedded mitigation in the Proposed Development's design. No significant effects are therefore anticipated on Land Use, Tourism and Recreation and it is proposed to scope the topic out of the EIA.

11.5 Traffic and Transport

The Proposed Development will generate a modest number of trips that, when combined with the Coire Glas Scheme, will not exceed the Coire Glas Scheme's predicted peak trip generation, which itself has been accepted, with mitigation, through the principal consents. This mitigation is already committed and will be implemented. It is therefore proposed to scope-out Traffic and Transport from the EIA and, by extension, is also proposed that a Transport Assessment is not required to support the Proposed Development. Abnormal load deliveries required for the Proposed Development will be assessed through

an Abnormal Load Route Assessment that will be submitted in support of the Planning Application, anticipated to form part of the Construction Traffic Management Plan for the development. In response to this Scoping Report, **agreement with this approach from the Council's Transport Planning Team is requested**.

11.6 Socioeconomics

The principal consents identified a range of positive socio-economic effects of the wider Coire Glas Scheme, which remain relevant. Any socio-economic effects arising from the Proposed Development are anticipated to be temporary for the construction stage, no significant effects are therefore predicted. It is proposed to scope out Socioeconomics from the EIA.

11.7 Forestry

The Coire Glas Scheme results in tree felling, covered by the Clunes Forest Design Plan, amounting to 13.36 ha of permanent woodland removal, for which a scheme for compensatory planting is secured by planning condition against the principal consents. Limited tree felling is also required along Kilfinnan Road as a result of the proposed earthworks associated with the Kilfinnan Road Proposals and the Applicant has committed to a scheme of compensatory planting for the equivalent area of trees permanently removed. The trees identified to be removed as part of the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals will have been felled by the time the Proposed Development comes forward, and therefore the baseline conditions associated with the Proposed Development will be a clear-felled corridor where the principle of tree removal has been accepted and appropriately mitigated. No significant effects on Forestry are therefore anticipated and it is proposed to scope the topic out of the EIA.

11.8 Electric and Magnetic Fields

Intensity of the magnetic field of electricity cables has been estimated in accordance with relevant guidance. These estimates confirm that the Proposed Development will be within the recommended exposure thresholds established in International Guidelines[5] and no significant effects are therefore anticipated. Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF) is therefore proposed to be scoped out of the assessment.

11.9 Risk Management

The Proposed Development's potential to cause significant adverse effects on the environment through risk of major accidents and/or disasters, relevant to the project, include:

1. Potential for accidents during the construction of the Proposed Development that could cause disturbance, injuries or fatalities to people, both involved in the construction or members of the public;
2. Potential for pollution of ground, groundwater and surface waters during the construction of the Proposed Development with potential for impacts on soils, habitats or species.

The Proposed Development will be delivered following best practice construction and environmental protection methods, both of which are subject to a wide range of other legislation, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations 2013. The Proposed Development will be delivered in accordance with this other suite of legislation which is considered to provide the necessary level of mitigation to address the potential for the risks above arising. No significant effects on Risk Management are therefore anticipated and it is proposed to scope the topic out of the EIA.

[5] https://www.icnirp.org/cms/upload/publications/ICNIRPrfgdl2020.pdf

12 Next steps

Following submission of this Scoping Report, the Applicant will undertake further consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees where necessary, undertake environmental surveys and studies, finalise the design of the Proposed Development and submit a planning application to the Council, supported by an EIA Report. In parallel, work will continue addressing conditions placed upon the Coire Glas Scheme and to secure consent for the Kilfinnan Road Proposals.

12.1 Further information

If you would like more information on the Coire Glas Scheme or this Proposed Development please visit:

www.coireglas.com

Or contact us at:

coireglas@sse.com

Appendix A: Outline Schedule of Environmental Commitments

Subject Area	Outline Commitment	Timing
Proposed Development		
Adherence to a Construction Environmental Management Programme (CEMP)	The Applicant will produce and adhere to a CEMP which will be approved by the Planning Authority. The CEMP will deliver a number of mitigation measures to ensure sustainable management of, but not limited to, the following environmental issues during construction of the Proposed Development: Noise and vibration, Dust and air pollution, Surface and ground water, including drainage controls and mitigation, Ecology and Ornithology (including protection of habitats and species), Waste, Pollution (land and water), Site operations (including maintenance of the construction compound, working hours and safety of the public), The Applicant shall consult with relevant consultees and shall amend and update the CEMP as required throughout the construction period.	Construction, operation and maintenance
Adherence to a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)	The Applicant will develop and implement a CTMP which will detail the management of traffic to and from site, including abnormal loads and daily worker's commute. The Applicant shall amend and update the CTMP as required throughout the construction and decommissioning period	Construction, operation and maintenance
Adherence to a Pollution Prevention Plan	The Applicant will develop and implement a Pollution Prevention Plan which will identify and implement pollution prevention options to minimise or avoid the creation of pollutants or waste.	Construction, operation and maintenance
Detailed ground investigations	Detailed ground investigations will be undertaken prior to construction commencing to identify ground conditions. They will confirm the rock type, rock characteristics and suitability.	Pre-Construction
Construction Working Hours	Construction working hours will be agreed with the Planning Authority.	Construction
Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP)	An Operational Environmental Mitigation Plan will be developed on commissioning of the Proposed Development to ensure all aspects of pollution prevention, waste management and any on-going habitats or species mitigation or monitoring commitments are also delivered during the operational stage. The OEMP will be developed in consultation with relevant consultees.	Operation
Risks of Major Accidents and/or Disaster	During operation, routine maintenance inspections will be completed to ensure the safe and compliant operation of all built infrastructure.	Operation
Ecology		

Pre-construction surveys	Pre-construction protected species surveys, following best practice guidance, will be undertaken. CIEEM EcIA guidance will be followed in relation to assessment of impacts for the receptors taken forward in scoping.	Pre-construction
Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW)	An Ecological Clerk of Works will oversee all construction works.	Construction
Water Pollution Prevention	SEPA Guidelines for Water Pollution Prevention from Civil Engineering Contracts (SEPA, 2006a) and Special Requirements (SEPA, 2006b) will be adhered to.	Construction
Biodiversity Enhancement	A Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Assessment will be undertaken, and corresponding Biodiversity Enhancement Plan will be prepared, following the SSE Renewables Methodology.	Pre-construction
Lighting	Lighting used during installation works will be sympathetic to wildlife and not illuminate adjacent green space on site, which will impact crepuscular or nocturnal species in the vicinity.	Construction
Retention of woodland	The area of semi-natural broadleaved woodland, adjacent to the cable route, is considered of national importance and therefore every effort will be made to retain woodland and to minimise any impacts to it, including the root protection zones. Where felling cannot be avoided, compensatory tree planting will replace lost species and habitat.	Construction
Awareness of constraints	All site personnel will be made aware of ecological constraints (i.e. otter, water vole, pine marten, red squirrel, bats, invertebrates, and reptiles) present in and around the site within the site induction/ toolbox talk.	Construction
Vegetation checks	If trenching is scheduled to take place during winter months, a vegetation check will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist 48 hours prior to clearance, to identify any potential environmental sensitivities or constraints.	Construction
Trenching covers	Any trenches created during the works will not be left open for mammals to become trapped. Appropriate covers will be fitted at the end of every working day. At the very least, a shallow sloping edge or ramp will be placed in excavations to allow any animals to climb out.	Construction
Ornithology		
Pre-construction surveys	Pre-construction surveys carried out by an ECoW or suitably qualified ornithologist will determine whether any breeding activity is taking place within potential species-specific disturbance zones of any proposed infrastructure. If breeding is found to occur within a potential disturbance zone, all construction works will be halted immediately, and a disturbance risk assessment will be prepared.	Pre-construction
Landscape & Visual		
Location of Development	By locating as much of the Proposed Development as possible within the envelope of the Coire Glas Scheme and Kilfinnan Road Proposals, the extent of new development would be minimised (mitigation by design).	Pre-construction
Noise		
Noise Control Measures	Adherence to British Standard 5228-1:2009+A1:2014 and British Standard 5228-2:2009+A1:2014, Code of Practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites throughout the construction stage will take place.	Construction

Geology, Hydrology, Soils and Flood Risk		
Peat Management Plan and Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment	Given the known presence of peat, a carbon rich soils, peat management plan and peat landslide hazard risk assessment will be prepared.	Pre-construction
Adherence to best practice construction techniques	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 General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs). The Proposed Development would be constructed in accordance with these plans.	Pre-Construction