

# REPORT

## **Knocknagael Battery Energy Storage System**

Supporting Environmental Information Report

Client: Field Knocknagael Ltd

Reference: PC3506-RHD-07-XX-RP-Z-0004

Status: Final/1

Date: 28 June 2024

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### Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIL	Abnormal Indivisible Load
ATC	Automatic Traffic Counter
BEMP	Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan
BESS	Battery Energy Storage System
BS	British Standard
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CTMP	Construction Traffic Management Plan
ECU	Energy Consents Unit
EHO	Environmental Health Officer
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ha	Hectare
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
LGV	Light Goods Vehicle
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
mAOD	Meters Above Ordnance Datum
MP	Member of Parliament
MSP	Members of Scottish Parliament
MW	Megawatt
NML	Noise Monitoring Locations
NSR	Noise Sensitive Receptors
OCTMP	Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan
PAN	Proposal of Application Notice
PEA	Preliminary Environmental Appraisal
PEAR	Preliminary Environmental Appraisal Report
SBL	Scottish Biodiversity List
SEIR	Supporting Environmental Information Report
SSEN	Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage System

## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Purpose of document**

Field Knocknagael Limited (hereby referred as 'the Applicant') is seeking to obtain Section 36 consent for the proposed installation of a battery energy storage system (BESS) (the 'Proposed Development'), on agricultural land at Essich, Inverness, adjacent to the existing Knocknagael substation (the 'site'). This Supporting Environmental Information Report (SEIR) provides an overview and summary of the environmental assessments that have been undertaken for the Proposed Development and have been submitted as part of the application.

### **1.2 Background**

The Proposed Development will have a generating capacity of up to 200 megawatts (MW), and therefore is the subject of a Section 36 application to the Scottish Ministers under the Electricity Act 1989. The Proposed Development is classified as an industrial installation for the production of electricity on an area exceeding 0.5 ha, and therefore falls under Schedule 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations, and thus may require an EIA.

For a schedule 2 development to require an EIA, there must be potential for significant environmental effects. On 28 March 2024, a formal EIA Screening Opinion was requested from the Energy Consents Unit (ECU), acting on behalf of Scottish Ministers (reference 24/01399/SCRE). On 12 June 2024, a Screening Opinion was received from the ECU which confirmed that the Proposed Development does not require an EIA.

Whilst a full EIA is not required, it is recognised that the assessment of potential environmental impacts, and the identification of appropriate mitigation measures to alleviate the significance of such impacts, is an important part of the planning process. This SEIR has been prepared to provide an overview of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development, to allow the ECU to consider the application in full and with due consideration of planning policy.

## 2 Project Description

### 2.1 Site location and surroundings

The site is located on agricultural farmland at Essich and is characterised by tree plantations and electrical infrastructure in the form of overhead lines. The site is also adjacent to the existing Knocknagael substation, to which it will connect. Locating the Proposed Development next to the existing substation maximises electrical efficiency and decreases the required cable length, thus reducing development impacts.

The overall site area comprises approximately 42.83 hectares (ha) of agricultural land, which also includes the existing Knocknagael substation site. The Proposed Development itself will have a smaller final development footprint of approximately 6 ha, including an approximately 500-metre-long underground cable route.

The site is rural in nature, located away from most nearby residential areas, which will reduce potential impacts on the amenity of surrounding residents in the form of noise or visual effects. The nearest residential properties include a dwelling approximately 250 m west and another dwelling 400 m north of the Proposed Development's footprint. For those residential receptors that do exist around the site, it is considered that potential noise or visual impacts can be appropriately mitigated through site design, including landscaping and the use of earth bunds and acoustic barriers. The Proposed Development would not result in any unacceptable production of waste, pollution or nuisance, and would not create risk of accidents or risks to human health and is not at high risk of flooding or surface water flooding.

The selected site has also been chosen based on suitable access arrangements along Biorraid Road, which provides direct access to Essich Road. The site has been designed to incorporate two existing points of access with the adopted highway, which are suitable from a road safety perspective and aligns with the National Fire Chiefs Council's guidance for two separate access points.

### 2.2 Environmental designations

The site has been selected to avoid environmentally sensitive areas as much as possible and has been designed to sit sensitively within its environmental context. Earth bunding, a tiered platform solution and the retention of existing trees will ensure the Proposed Development is well set within the landscape and is appropriately screened to reduce visual impacts from surrounding viewpoints. The site is not located within a designated landscape, nor are there any National Scenic Areas or National Parks in the vicinity. Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Areas are located within 3 km of the site.

Early desktop studies and site surveys confirmed the absence of any international, national or locally designated sites within the site boundary. The closest ecological designated site is Loch Ashie Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest, located 3 km south-west of the Site. No other designated sites are located within 5 km of the site, however, an ancient woodland is present 0.1 km to the west of the site.

Non-designated heritage assets do exist on the site, however, potential impacts can be mitigated. The closest designated heritage assets are located within 2 km of the site boundary and include cairns and designated hut circles. Existing shelter belts and changes to the underlying topography will ensure the Proposed Development is screened from scheduled monuments.

## 3 Proposed Development

### 3.1 Description of development

The Proposed Development principally comprises the construction and operation of a BESS with a capacity of up to 200 MW. The Proposed Development would charge and discharge from the electricity transmission network via the adjacent, existing Knocknagael substation.

The Proposed Development includes:

- Two BESS compounds, each comprising:
  - Individual battery storage units arranged into rows / strings.
  - Medium voltage (MV) skids (i.e. one MV skid per battery string), each of which houses two power conversion system (PCS) units and one medium-voltage transformer.
  - Ancillary infrastructure including low-voltage cabinets, auxiliary transformers and underground ducting and cabling.
- A high-voltage substation compound comprising:
  - Two high-voltage grid transformers
  - Auxiliary transformers and low-voltage distribution infrastructure
  - An on-site substation building, comprising a control room, high voltage switch room and welfare facilities.
- Acoustic barriers, 3 or 4 metres high (depending on the location) around noise emitting equipment, or 3-metre-high palisade security fencing in areas where noise mitigation is not required.
- Cut and fill / earthworks, and foundational civil structures to create level compounds upon which the batteries, substation and other ancillary structures will be located.
- An underground 132 kV grid connection cable between the substation compound and the existing Knocknagael substation.
- Access arrangements, including two site access points along the site's eastern boundary, parking spaces and five metre-wide internal access tracks throughout the site.
- Stockproof fencing around the perimeter of the site.
- CCTV and lighting columns across the battery and substation compounds.
- Drainage infrastructure, including two attenuation basins.
- Landscape and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement, including earth bunds along the site's northern and eastern boundaries.

The layout of the Proposed Development is shown in **Appendix A**.

### 3.2 Site selection

The location of the Proposed Development has been driven by several factors, including proximity and connectivity to the grid; the availability of land and; environmental constraints.

### 3.3 Grid connectivity

Energy storage facilities are required to import and export energy from the existing electricity network. For an energy storage facility to connect to an existing substation, the substation must have available capacity at the point of connection, and a grid connection agreement must be secured with the transmission operator.



The existing Knocknagael substation has available capacity, with minimal substation upgrade works required. This reduces the potential impacts of the project and facilitates a more near-term connection date. Field has secured a grid connection agreement for 200 MW at Knocknagael substation.

It is most efficient to locate an energy storage facility as close as possible to the point of connection to reduce electrical losses. The site was therefore selected because of its close proximity to the Knocknagael substation.

### 3.4 Land availability

An energy storage facility of the size proposed requires approximately 5-10 hectares of land to accommodate the development.

Potential sites were assessed to the north, east and south of the Knocknagael substation but were discounted due to proximity to sensitive receptors, unsuitable topography, presence of shallow peat and protected land.

Additionally, land immediately to the north and east of Knocknagael substation is currently being considered by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) for substation extension works.

### 3.5 Environmental constraints

Early desktop studies and site surveys confirmed the absence of any international, national or locally designated sites within the site boundary.

The site has also been selected based on its location away from nearby residential areas to reduce potential impacts on the amenity of surrounding residents in the form of noise or visual effects. Longer views south from the site are mostly precluded by the intervening topography and existing woodland to the south of the site offers further natural screening.

### 3.6 Design iteration

The final design of the Proposed Development is the culmination of an iterative design process responding to the completion of baseline studies and surveys, technical assessments and stakeholder consultation over the pre-application development period.

Field's aim is to optimise land use, operational capacity and efficiency of the facility whilst responding to the site's topography, environmental constraints, safety requirements and constructability. Feedback from stakeholder consultation has also informed the design.

The design changes that have been made during this iterative process are summarised below:

Topic	Mitigation
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location of noise generating infrastructure (BESS compounds) away from noise sensitive noise receptors;</li> <li>Selection of specialist BESS equipment to reduce adverse noise impacts on nearby local receptors; and</li> </ul>

Topic	Mitigation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of acoustic barriers to reduce noise impacts on surrounding sensitive receptors.</li> </ul>
Spatial Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In response to landowner consultation, a segregated 5 m wide farm access track has been included to maintain livestock and farm machinery access. This allows this area to be returned to pastureland once the Proposed Development is operational</li> <li>• Following consultation with SSEN, a separate fenced high-voltage area is proposed within the Substation Compound to ensure operational safety.</li> </ul>
Safety and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two separate points of access have been provided along the eastern boundary to provide a further means of emergency access to account for wind direction.</li> <li>• The access roads have been designed to facilitate emergency access throughout the site</li> <li>• Adherence to UK and international standards for fire separation distances between equipment.</li> </ul>
Ecology / Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mature trees and heritage assets located within the centre of the Site have been retained where possible. Existing forestry to the south of the site is also largely retained, where possible. Any impacts have been compensated through compensation planting as part of the Proposed Development.</li> <li>• To improve the biodiversity value of the site, the design of the attenuation basins has been developed to support new and improved habitats.</li> </ul>
Landscape and Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landscaped earthworks and planting have been introduced along the eastern boundary of the development to reduce visual impacts from receptors travelling along the Biorraid Road.</li> <li>• In response to community consultation and engagement with local neighbours, additional earthworks and planting has been introduced to screen the development including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hedgerows and trees on the western/north-western boundary of the site.</li> <li>○ Additional earthwork bunding and tree and shrub planting around the western BESS compound.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### 3.7 Construction, operation and decommissioning

#### 3.7.1 Construction

The construction process is estimated to take up to two years and would comprise the following principal activities:

- Site preparation and establishment activities, including vegetation removal and the erection of temporary fencing;
- Earthworks and establishment of site compound;
- Construction of equipment platforms and foundations, including underground ducting and cabling;

- Delivery and arrangement of equipment;
- Cabling and connection works between battery equipment, ancillary equipment and substation compound;
- Installation of underground cabling between substation compound and Knocknagael substation;
- Testing and commissioning; and
- Landscape planting, earthworks and site restoration.

The final construction sequencing and programme will be determined subject to detailed construction design. Landscaping and site restoration would be programmed and carried out as early as possible to ensure landscape planting is given suitable time to establish.

The majority of construction traffic would be limited to the initial 12 months of the construction period. An Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (OCTMP) has been prepared which outlines expected traffic movements and traffic management measures.

### **3.7.1.1 Environmental Management**

#### ***Construction Environmental Management Plan***

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be prepared for the proposal. The CEMP would outline all appropriate measures required to minimise the risk of, and control any potential environmental impacts associated with the construction phase of the Proposed Development.

The CEMP would ensure the suitable management of relevant environmental issues, including but not necessarily limited to:

- Site operations, including working hours and maintenance of construction compounds;
- Protection of sensitive on-site areas, including archaeology, trees and ecology protected by clearly demarcated buffer areas / construction exclusion zones;
- Surface water drainage, including water quality;
- Waste management in accordance with a Site Waste Management Plan;
- Dust and noise; and
- Pollution prevention.

#### ***Construction Noise Assessment – Scheme of Best Practicable Means***

Before construction commences, a Construction Noise Assessment and Construction Noise Mitigation Scheme will be prepared. The scheme would demonstrate how the Applicant will ensure that best practicable measures are implemented to reduce the impact of construction noise on the surrounding area.

The scheme would, where practicable, adhere with the best practice measures outlined in British Standard (BS) 5228: Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites.

#### ***Health and Safety***

High standards of health and safety will be established and maintained at all times, including compliance with all applicable health and safety legislation and adherence to industry best practice.

#### ***Contaminated Land***

Initial site surveys have confirmed that there does not appear to be any potential source of contamination on site, and as such, there is no requirement for the potential disturbance or management of contaminated soils.

### 3.7.2 Operation

The facility would be available to import and export electricity on a 24/7 basis. During normal operations, the facility would be operated entirely remotely. It would only be necessary for a maintenance engineer to visit the site during routine maintenance visits (approximately monthly) or in the rare event that emergency maintenance is required.

On-site security, including security fencing around battery compounds, gated accesses, CCTV cameras, motion sensors and security lights would ensure the site is secure. The Proposed Development will be monitored 24/7.

The site would not be lit at night. Lighting would be low level directional LED lighting with shrouds to prevent any upward light spill and would only be used when necessary for access.

#### 3.7.2.1 Fire Safety Management:

During operation, safety measures would be in place to ensure the protection of people, the surrounding environment, and the Proposed Development in the unlikely occurrence of a fire related incident. These measures are outlined within the Outline Battery Safety Management Plan and include:

- **Adherence to UK and international standards:** The Proposed Development has been designed in accordance with UK and internationally recognised best practice standards, guidance and codes of practice.
- **Minimised risk through equipment selection:** The Applicant only works with BESS suppliers that have relevant quality certifications. Smoke and heat detectors will be fitted within battery units, as well as internal electrical protection, separation layers, thermal monitoring and fire detection and suppression systems.
- **Site design:** Best practice measures have been implemented into the design of the Proposed Development, including:
  - Two separate access points for emergency vehicles;
  - Appropriate internal access track widths to ensure emergency vehicles can safely traverse the site;
  - Surface level filter drains and penstock valves within the drainage design to capture fire water run-off and prevent it being discharged into surrounding watercourses; and
  - Minimum separation distances between infrastructure based on relevant British Standards.
- **Implementation of a firefighting and emergency strategy:** The Applicant will prepare a detailed firefighting and emergency strategy in consultation with the Local Fire and Rescue Service.

### 3.7.3 Decommissioning

The Proposed Development would have an operational life of 30 years, after which the site would be restored to its former use. Decommissioning works and site rehabilitation would be subject to a Decommissioning Strategy.

Decommissioning will consider relevant environmental legislation and technology available at the time of decommissioning.

## 4 Consultation

### 4.1 The Highland Council

#### 4.1.1 Major Pre-application Meeting:

On 15 May 2024, a pre-application meeting was held with The Highland Council via their Pre-Application Advice Service for Major Developments.

The Applicant presented the Proposed Development, including the key planning and environmental issues, the surveys and assessments undertaken to-date to inform the latest design, and the final suite of assessments that would accompany the planning application.

On 12 June 2024, formal written advice was provided by The Highland Council which included feedback about the Proposed Development and the key issues that should inform the planning application. This feedback is included in **Appendix B**.

In summary, the feedback included:

- Consideration of cumulative landscape and visual impacts as a result of the clustering of electrical infrastructure adjacent to the existing Knocknagael substation;
- Transport access, including construction traffic management and trunk road access;
- Consideration of flood risk and drainage matters;
- Consideration of impacts on the natural environment and biodiversity enhancement;
- Consideration of noise impacts;
- Additional information about security fencing and acoustic barriers around the development; and
- Information about landscaping, including native screen planting, maintenance requirements and compensatory planting for any vegetation removal.

### 4.2 Public consultation

#### 4.2.1 Proposal of Application Notice:

Public consultation commenced with the submission of a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) to The Highland Council and relevant community councils, ward councillors, Members of Scottish Parliament (MSP) and Members of Parliament (MP) on 28 March 2024.

#### 4.2.2 Public Consultation Events

Public consultation for the Proposed Development was carried out in accordance with the Energy Consent Unit's Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (updated July 2022).

The full consultation process is outlined in the Pre-Application Consultation Report (Alpaca Communications, 2024) and in summary, included:

- **15 April 2024:** Upload of a consultation website (<https://www.fieldknocknagael.co.uk>) which includes an overview of the Proposed Development, details about public consultation events and a feedback form.

- **16 April 2024:** Delivery of consultation brochures to 490 surrounding properties and community councils, ward councillors, MSPs and MPs. This included an overview of the Proposed Development, a link to the relevant website, an invitation to both public consultation events and a free-post feedback form.
- **19 April 2024:** Advertisement of the first public consultation event in the Inverness Courier.
- **30 April 2024:** First public consultation event at Dores Village Hall, at which there were 15 attendees.
- **17 May 2024:** Advertisement of the second public consultation event in the Inverness Courier.
- **23 May 2024:** Delivery of secondary invites to community councils, ward councillors, MSPs and MPs to the second public consultation event.
- **28 May 2024:** Second public consultation event at Dores Village Hall, at which there were 7 attendees.
- **7 June 2024:** The final date for consideration of written feedback by feedback form, post or email.

Across the two events, there were a total of 22 attendees. In total, two feedback forms were received about the proposal, one of which was in favour of the Proposed Development, and one of which objected. Feedback was provided regarding concerns about impacts relating to noise, visual amenity, construction traffic, fire safety and security. These issues have all been considered across the package of supporting planning and environmental assessments.

## 5 Landscape and Visual

This section summarises the conclusions of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), which considers how the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development will impact physical landscape features, as well as any effects on landscape character and views.

### 5.1 Study area

The focus of the LVIA is the main built form of the Proposed Development (comprising two BESS compounds and a Substation compound) occupying approximately 6 ha of pastureland between Essich Road and Biorraid Road, located to the west of Knocknagael Substation.

The study area was derived from Zone of Theoretical Visibility mapping, site observation and review of published information. Potential for significant effects on landscape and visual receptors will not be expected beyond a 3 km zone of the Proposed Development.

### 5.2 Baseline

The Proposed Development is located within an area of undulating pasture farmland on Essich Moor. A dense block of coniferous woodland defines the southern boundary of the site, while the north holds extensive open views towards Inverness and the Moray Firth. The overall landscape is attractive and strongly rural in character, although the presence of Knocknagael Substation and tall electricity pylons to the northeast are a highly prominent source of local visual intrusion. Biorraid Road defines the eastern site boundary and Essich Road (General Wade's Military Road) defines the western boundary.

### 5.3 Impacts (landscape and visual amenity)

The LVIA concludes that the landscape within the site and its environs is of high value and of medium susceptibility to change and is therefore assessed as being of high sensitivity to change.

The Proposed Development comprises three main development compounds. The approximate median height of the Southern BESS Compound is 185 mAOD, the Western BESS Compound is 177 mAOD and the Substation Compound sits at 170 mAOD. The tallest structures are associated with the 132kV Compound equipment, which includes the Switch Room at 7.57 m. The high voltage transformers within the Substation Compound and the Western BESS Compound will be enclosed by a 4 m high acoustic barrier. The Southern BESS Compound will incorporate a 3 m high acoustic barrier on the northern and western boundaries, and a 2.4 m high security fence (with 600 mm high electric topper) on the southern and eastern boundaries.

#### 5.3.1 Construction

Landscape and visual effects arising from the construction phase of the Proposed Development will be temporary and short term. Any physical effects to existing landscape features will either be reversible or effectively mitigated over a period of time.

During the construction phase, some vegetation will be removed to accommodate the Proposed Development, however, this vegetation is not of high value and is common locally. Construction activities and vehicular traffic will also affect the existing sense of tranquillity and remoteness, however notable

landscape character effects will be limited to areas within relatively close proximity of the site with minor or negligible effects predicted beyond 1 km distance.

Construction activities will be highly prominent in the view from the grounds of Essich Farm Cottage, however, these effects will be short term and temporary. Predicted effects to views from residential properties to the north and west will not be significant due to the overall distance and intervening vegetation screening.

Essich Road and Biorraid Road will obtain open, close-range views across the site during construction, however, these effects will be short term.

### **5.3.2 Operation**

Initial operational phase effects will not be significant. Earth modelling and established grassland will be effective in substantially screening the BESS Compounds and provide some visual integration with the local landscape. Tall acoustic fencing around the Western BESS Compound will be effective in screening the MV skids and battery strings, although fencing will appear relatively prominent in the landscape. In the long-term, established woodland, gorse and proposed tree planting will substantially screen the acoustic barriers and infrastructure within the site from adjoining landscape areas, in addition to reinforcing local landscape character. Residual effects following 10 years of landscaping establishment are predicted to be minor adverse or minor negligible at all receptors, with exception of close range views from Biorraid Road (adjacent to the site) where moderate or minor moderate adverse effects are predicted.

## **5.4 Mitigation**

The initial stages of construction will involve the clearance and removal of vegetation and site features, including a small area of the southern conifer plantation. Root protection areas will be defined around the trees and vegetation to be retained, to ensure the features are protected. Excavated topsoil and subsoil will be used to create earth bunds, with the purpose of providing visual screening of ongoing ground level construction activity. All construction works will be subject to a CEMP to minimise environmental effects.

Mitigation embedded into the design of the Proposed Development will reduce potential landscape and visual impacts. These mitigation measures include:

- Retaining existing conifer plantations to provide valuable screening of views into the site all year round.
- Establishing hedgerows, gorse scrub, birch trees and species rich grasslands to provide additional screening and enhance landscape character.
- Designing buildings to be as low in height as practicable and painting external facades in white to reflect local farm dwellings. In addition, development platforms are particularly set in cutting, which provides immediate screening.

## **5.5 Conclusion / Summary**

During early operational stages of the Proposed Development, extensive earth modelling around the site and retention of vegetation will provide screening to the battery storage compounds and partial screening to lower sections of structures within the Substation Compound. Taller structures will remain prominent in views, particularly from the adjoining lanes.



Longer term establishment of proposed woodland and scrub will substantially screen structures within the Proposed Development. The site will be effectively assimilated within its landscape setting and overall landscape character reinforced. In the medium to long term, proposed landscape planting measures will outweigh initial losses with overall beneficial effects, introducing a greater diversity of native species that are characteristic of the local landscape.

## 6 Ecology and Biodiversity Enhancements

This section outlines the findings of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (PEAR), which evaluated the potential ecological receptors and constraints present within the site, in addition to appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures.

### 6.1 Study area

The Ecology Study Area comprises approximately 24.4 ha of the overall site area for the Proposed Development and captures the anticipated extent of the final development footprint, construction activities or other disturbance.

The Ecology Study Area is dominated by pasture, sheep grazed modified grassland, with no designated ecological sites present within or adjacent to the Ecology Study Area.

### 6.2 Baseline

To assess whether the Proposed Development is able to deliver significant biodiversity enhancements in accordance with NPF4, the baseline biodiversity value of the Ecology Study Area has been calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric<sup>1</sup>.

The Ecology Study Area is dominated by habitats of low ecological interest, such as neutral grassland and gorse scrub, with negligible potential to support protected or notable species. However, some interest has been recorded within several small areas of habitat. This includes an area of blanket bog, a Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL) Priority Habitat, on the southern boundary, as well as two areas of riparian woodland.

The habitats within the Ecology Study Area are predominantly dry habitats, which rules out the presence of Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems in these areas.

### 6.3 Impacts

The two habitats will be retained on site, and mitigation will be implemented to avoid impacts during construction. The construction phase of the Proposed Development will result in a permanent loss of habitat on-site, and thus is predicted to result in a loss of 35.11 biodiversity units from the baseline conditions. This will be mitigated by biodiversity enhancement through habitat created on site, as discussed in **Section 6.4**.

Given the scale of Proposed Development, impacts beyond the site boundary are considered unlikely and therefore no impacts to designated sites are anticipated.

### 6.4 Mitigation

All works associated with the Proposed Development will follow the mitigation hierarchy set out by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2018) in their Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. The hierarchy is as follows:

- **Avoidance:** Seek options that avoid harm to ecological features;
- **Mitigation:** Negative effects should be avoided or minimised through mitigation measures, either through the design of the project or subsequent measures that can be guaranteed – for example, through a condition or planning obligation;

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<sup>1</sup> Defra (2024). Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>. Last accessed June 2024.

- **Compensation:** Where there are significant residual negative ecological effects despite the mitigation proposed, these should be offset by appropriate compensatory measures; and
- **Enhancement:** Seek to provide net benefits for biodiversity over and above requirements for avoidance, mitigation or compensation.

Appropriate mitigation measures for protecting habitats include avoiding the loss or degradation of blanket bog by implementing a 15 m exclusion boundary zone and pollution prevention techniques. Root protection zones will be implemented to retain and protect areas of woodland, which includes some broadleaved trees which will be retained on site, and any habitats of high or medium distinctiveness will be compensated for on a 'like for better' basis.

An appropriately worded Species and Biodiversity Protection Plan will outline the necessary mitigation measures to safeguard the following species and ensure any potential adverse effects are avoided:

- Nesting birds;
- Otters;
- Water voles;
- Amphibians; and
- Reptiles.

The Proposed Development is also set to create habitat on-site, including broadleaved and coniferous woodland, mixed scrub and modified grassland.

The proposed habitat creation on-site results in a net unit increase of 13.07 biodiversity units, which is a net change of 20.8%, and therefore it can be concluded that significant biodiversity enhancement is achieved.

Future management of habitats post-development will be recommended in the form of a Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP), which will encompass details on the location and techniques for creation and restoration of habitats, management objectives and monitoring requirements.

## 6.5 Conclusion / Summary

The Proposed Development will result in a biodiversity enhancement of 20.8%. Habitats of greatest interest within the Ecology Study Area are to be protected and retained alongside the Proposed Development. In addition, areas of new habitat creation are proposed which are anticipated to result in long-term positive effect for biodiversity.

## 7 Transport and Access

This section summarises the findings of the combined Transport Statement and Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (OCTMP), outlining the potential impact of the Proposed Development on the road network within the local areas, alongside appropriate mitigation measures.

### 7.1 Study area

The site is located approximately 600 m to the south of the settlement of Essich and located opposite the Knocknagael Substation. The site is bounded by Essich Road to the northwest, And Biorraid Road extends along the entire eastern boundary of the site and provides access to the settlement of Essich to the north, and the village of Bunachton approximately 10 km to the south of the site. It is proposed that all deliveries would arrive at the site via Biorraid Road, from a route which includes Essich Road, the Inverness Southern Distributor Road (A8082), and the wider A-road network such as the A9 and A82.

### 7.2 Baseline

To understand baseline traffic conditions and provide an overview of the operation of Biorraid Road in the vicinity of the site, an Automatic Traffic Counter (ATC) survey was undertaken in the vicinity of the existing gated access to the site. The ATC was commissioned for a seven-day period from Saturday 09 March 2024 to Friday 15 March 2024.

The ATC results show that over the seven-day survey period, a total of 421 two-way vehicles were recorded on Biorraid Road in the vicinity of the site, demonstrating that Biorraid Road is subject to very light levels of daily vehicular traffic. The ATC survey also recorded the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed of 32.2 mph for vehicles travelling northbound and 33.8 mph for vehicles travelling southbound. These recorded speeds are considerably lower than the 60 mph speed limit in place on Biorraid Road.

A review of Personal Injury Collisions (PICs) recorded in the vicinity of the site revealed no PICs were recorded on the rural lane or north of the Essich Road junction. As a result, there are no road safety concerns that would be exacerbated by the proposed construction traffic at the site.

An assessment of the current AIL access arrangements has been undertaken as part of the AIL Access Report submitted as part of the application.

### 7.3 Impacts

The highest volume of traffic associated with the Proposed Development would occur during the construction phase, which is anticipated to be approximately 24 months. Daily deliveries would peak in the first year of construction, and impacts related to construction traffic would be mitigated with the introduction of a CTMP. Onsite parking for construction staff will be provided within the site boundary

Operational traffic is anticipated to be very low, resulting in a negligible impact on the local road network. One Light Goods Vehicle (LGV) would require access to the site each month for routine checks and maintenance, with an occasional Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) requiring access to replace batteries when necessary.

It is reasonable to assume a slight increase in the number of LGV and HGV trips during the decommissioning stage, which would be managed with similar methods to construction of the site.

Two potential developments have been identified that could result in cumulative traffic impacts to the Proposed Development; Loch na Cathrach Pumped Storage (formerly Red John) and Knocknagael Substation Extension. These potential cumulative traffic impacts will be considered at the pre-construction stage, in liaison with the other schemes and the Highland Council. This approach allows the impacts to be determined accurately and appropriate mitigation to be established once detailed information is available to all parties.

The high-voltage transformers can be delivered within Special Types General Order Category 3, with the gross load below 150 te gross, therefore the move will not require a Special Order from National Highways.

The AIL report assessed a route from the A9 onto the A8082 and then travelling south on Essich Road to the proposed site and is believed to be structurally acceptable to the relevant authorities. Swept Path Assessments (SPA) have also been carried out.

## 7.4 Mitigation

A series of specific traffic mitigation measures will be implemented in line with best practice, which would aim to mitigate the potential impacts of construction traffic associated with the Proposed Development. Mitigation measures include the establishment of hours of construction from 08:00 – 18:00 Monday to Friday, and 08:00 – 13:00 Saturday, with no work or deliveries undertaken on Sundays and/ or Bank Holidays. Car shares would be encouraged with core construction staff and all staff parking would be accommodated at the site.

HGV movement associated with the construction phase would be scheduled and routed in order to mitigate potential conflict as a result of two-way HGV movements. A Logistics Manager would be appointed to engage with local residents and act as a point of contact. Should any complaints or concerns arise during the construction phase, appropriate mitigation would be implemented as soon as practicable.

Minor remedial works are required to accommodate AILs on the final approach to Site and two at the left turn from A8082 Culduthel Avenue onto Essich Road and bearing right along the unclassified road at approximate OS grid reference: NH 64935 39318. These would require plating and packing to any present kerbs/pavements/verges to facilitate the manoeuvre, or alternatively, temporary laying of hardcore or permanent road widening to be completed.

Details regarding AILs will be provided in a separate AIL-CTMP, which will be compiled and implemented prior to construction.

## 7.5 Conclusion / Summary

The combined Transport Statement and OCTMP outlines the measures that would be adopted to maintain high standards of construction safety and limit disruption to other motorists, local residents and businesses. The Proposed Development would only generate a low level of traffic during the construction phase and the impact of operational traffic is expected to be negligible. A final CTMP would be provided post-planning consent and before commencement of construction.

## 8 Archaeology

This section summarises the findings of the archaeological desk-based assessment, providing an archaeological and historical baseline summary and context for the Proposed Development. This section also assesses the likely level of impact the Proposed Development may have on known and potential heritage assets.

### 8.1 Study area

A 2 km study area was established for designated heritage assets using data from Historic Environment Scotland. For the purpose of assessing the potential physical impact of the Proposed Development, a study area based on a 1 km buffer from the site was used to gather Historic Environment Record Data from the Highland Council for non-designated heritage assets.

### 8.2 Baseline

A review of existing information was used to provide archaeological and historical baseline context within the study area. Five designated heritage assets were identified within 2 km of the Proposed Development, comprising Scheduled Monuments in the form of cairns, hut circles, a stone circle and the historic Caledonian Canal. There are also various non-designated above-ground archaeological remains within the site itself, including a late Bronze Age to late Iron Age hut circle with further possible hut circles present and a Post-medieval farmstead.

The presence of hut circles and clearance cairns within the site and the survival of similar and likely associated Prehistoric settlement and agricultural features in the wider landscape indicates there is moderate to high potential for further previously unrecorded heritage assets to be present buried beneath the surface.

No Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes, or Inventory Historic Battlefield's were found within 2 km of the site.

### 8.3 Impacts (direct and setting)

It is considered that there is no potential for a material impact to the cultural significance of heritage assets as a result of changes in their setting.

Due to the intervening topography, undulating landscape and existing woodland areas, it is not anticipated that any potential impacts to the setting of the five designated heritage assets will arise as a result of the Proposed Development, and therefore they have not been included in the assessment. All other Designated Heritage Assets are located beyond 3 km and were not considered further in this setting assessment, predominantly due to their distance from the site. It was concluded, based on the result of the walkover survey, that due to their distance from the site and the likely scale of the Proposed Development, that there will be no changes to the setting of designated heritage assets.

Prior to mitigation, there is a potential for significant harm to known non-designated heritage assets within the site, primarily as a result of direct physical impacts. Groundwork activity across the site additionally has the potential to damage any previously unrecorded archaeological remains buried beneath the surface.

## 8.4 Mitigation

An agreed programme of archaeological works secured via a suitably worded condition attached to any planning permission would be appropriate to mitigate impacts to surviving above and below ground archaeological remains. This would comprise a staged approach to archaeology and to further characterise, investigate, establish survival and significance, and ultimately to mitigate the impacts to heritage assets within the site. Mitigation is likely to include a combination of techniques such as geophysical survey, trial trenching and earthwork survey to allow areas of preservation in situ, or archaeological excavation and/or watching brief to be defined in line with Highland Council's approved 'Standards for Archaeological Work'<sup>2</sup>.

Where an agreed scheme of archaeological mitigation is in place, it is considered that any loss of the informative value of those archaeological remains would be effectively mitigated to an acceptable level.

## 8.5 Conclusion / Summary

The assessment concludes that there is not anticipated to be a material impact on the cultural significance of heritage assets within the site as a result of changes in their setting. The physical disturbance of heritage assets would be appropriately recorded and managed through a Written Scheme of Investigation.

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<sup>2</sup> Highland Council (2012). Standards for archaeological work - inbhean chomhairle na gàidhealtachd airson obair àrceolasach

## 9 Noise

This section provides a summary of potential operational noise impacts associated with the Proposed Development, as determined by a Noise Impact Assessment (TNEI, June 2024) which is included within this planning application.

The assessment does not cover noise associated with the construction phase; this will be assessed pre-construction in a Construction Noise Management Plan when more detail about the construction schedule, activities and techniques is known.

### 9.1 Study area

The study area that has informed the assessment of potential operational noise impacts has been determined based on the identification of the closest noise sensitive receptors (NSRs) to the Proposed Development.

The nearest identified NSRs include:

- A residential property located approximately 280 m to the north of the nearest noise emitting equipment (the substation compound);
- A residential property located approximately 380 m south-west of the nearest noise emitting equipment (the western BESS compound); and
- A residential property located approximately 750 m south-west of the nearest noise emitting equipment (the western BESS compound).

### 9.2 Baseline

#### 9.2.1 Background Sound Levels

To characterise the existing background noise conditions at the site, baseline sound level monitoring was undertaken at two Noise Monitoring Locations (NMLs) over an 8-day period between 9 November 2023 and 17 November 2023. Due to the presence of a nearby watercourse near one of the NMLs, the survey results were omitted as unrepresentative.

It was considered that the results at the remaining NML were representative of the local soundscape, including daytime results of 27 dB  $L_{A90}$  (15 min) and night time results of 23 dB  $L_{A90}$  (15 min).

Due to the 'very low' background sound levels surrounding the Proposed Development, and following continued engagement with The Highland Council's relevant Environmental Health Officer (EHO), a fixed target noise rating level of 31 dB(A) was agreed as appropriate.

It was also agreed with The Highland Council that the Noise Impact Assessment should contain evidence that no tonal characteristics are expected in the immission levels incident at any nearby NSRs within the 100 Hz One-Third Octave frequency band.

#### 9.2.2 Noise Emitting Equipment

Noise emitting equipment associated with BESS facilities generally includes:



- Battery storage units;
- MV skids; and
- HV transformers.

The noise data used to inform noise modelling has been informed by thorough engagement with a candidate BESS, which has been provided as part of this planning application.

### **9.3 Impacts and mitigation**

Noise impacts were evaluated in accordance with relevant guidance, comprising BS 41423 and PAN1/20114.

With no mitigation, noise modelling indicated that the fixed noise rating level of 31 dB(A) could not be met at all NSRs.

Revised modelling was undertaken which implemented acoustic barriers around noise emitting equipment, including:

- 4-metre-high acoustic barriers around the western BESS compound;
- 4-metre-high acoustic barriers around the HV transformers within the substation compound; and
- 3-metre-high acoustic barriers along the northern and western boundaries of the southern BESS compound.

Following revised modelling that considered attenuation provided by the acoustic barriers, it was found that the fixed noise rating level of 31 dB(A) could be met.

Regarding The Highland Council's concerns about noise levels at a frequency of 100 Hz, it has also been confirmed that the Proposed Development is not expected to have any tonal characteristics present in any frequency band (100 Hz or otherwise).

### **9.4 Summary**

Based on baseline noise surveys, noise modelling informed by supplier-verified BESS data, and engagement with The Highland Council's EHO, appropriate noise limits have been set for the Proposed Development.

An assessment of potential operational noise impacts has informed the implementation of noise mitigation measures, including a mixture of 3-metre-high and 4-metre-high acoustic barriers around noise emitting equipment.

With the identified mitigation measures applied, all agreed noise limits can be met, and the Proposed Development is not expected to have an adverse impact on the amenity of the surrounding area.

## 10 Flood Risk and Drainage

This section considers the potential flood risks associated with the Proposed Development. A full Flood Risk Assessment (Haydn Evans, June 2024) and Drainage Strategy (Haydn Evans, June 2024) has been prepared which includes all detailed modelling and relevant surface water drainage design information.

### 10.1 Flood Risk

In accordance with NPF4, the following sources of flooding have been assessed:

- Tidal and fluvial;
- Pluvial;
- Groundwater;
- Sewers; and
- Reservoirs or other artificial sources.

A desktop assessment of all publicly available information confirmed that the site is at no or low risk of all forms of flooding. The Proposed Development does not increase on or off-site flooding risk and is therefore acceptable.

### 10.2 Drainage

A Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) has been implemented to satisfy national and local flood risk and surface water management guidance, including NPF4. SuDS control the flow rate and volume of water leaving the development area and reduce pollution by intercepting silt and cleaning run-off from hard surfaces.

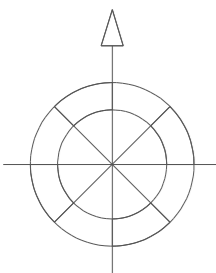
Ground investigations confirmed that infiltration drainage is not feasible for the Proposed Development. It is therefore proposed to discharge surface water into Essich Burn, via the existing ditch and outlet pipe, which matches the existing drainage regime of the site. Attenuation basins are provided for 1 in 200 year events, including a restricted discharge matching the Qbar greenfield run-off rate. Filter drains fitted with penstock valves and attenuation basins appropriately mitigate the risk of pollutants including any fire water runoff. A SuDS Management and Maintenance Plan is provided as part of the application to ensure that the SuDS components are regularly inspected and maintained. This ensures efficient operation and reduces the likelihood of failure.

### 10.3 Conclusion / Summary

All potential sources of flooding have been considered in accordance with relevant national and local planning policies and guidance. It has been confirmed that the site is at low risk of flooding from all sources, and therefore no bespoke mitigation measures are required. The proposals do not increase on or off-site flood risk and are therefore considered acceptable.

A surface water drainage strategy and design has been prepared to manage potential increase in surface water runoff attributed to the Proposed Development. The strategy has been prepared in accordance with sustainable drainage principles and ensures the site will remain free of flooding during storm events, prevents the risk of any off-site flooding, and maintains the protection of the water environment.

## Appendix A – Site Layout Plan



Essich Road

Biorraid Road

Transmission Operator Substation

Knocknagael Electricity Substation

Substation Compound - refer to drawing 005.8.1 for details

High Voltage Transformer

Parking Spaces

Substation Building

Standby Generator

MV Skid

Battery String

Western BESS Compound

Auxiliary Transformer

LV Cabinet

Southern BESS Compound

Lighting and CCTV Column

- Notes**
- All dimensions are shown in metres unless noted otherwise.
  - Do not scale from this drawing.
  - This drawing is indicative only and the site layout is likely to change as more information becomes available.

- Legend**
- Planning Boundary
  - Access Track - Unbound Finish
  - Access Track - Asphalt Finish
  - Attenuation Basin
  - Palisade Fence
  - 4m Acoustic Fence
  - 3m Acoustic Fence
  - Stock Proof Fence
  - Indicative Underground Cable Route
  - Site Landscaping and Planting
  - Existing Trees to Remain

1:10	0	100mm	200mm	300mm	400mm	500mm	600mm	700mm	800mm	900mm	1m
1:20		0.5m	1m	1.5m	2m	2.5m	3m	3.5m	4m	4.5m	5m
1:50		1m	2m	3m	4m	5m	6m	7m	8m	9m	10m
1:100		1m	2m	3m	4m	5m	6m	7m	8m	9m	10m
1:200		5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m	35m	40m	45m	50m
1:500		5m	10m	15m	20m	25m	30m	35m	40m	45m	50m
1:1000		10m	20m	30m	40m	50m	60m	70m	80m	90m	100m
1:1000		10m	20m	30m	40m	50m	60m	70m	80m	90m	100m

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY	CHKD
3	27.08.2024	Landscaping and planting area amended	JH	AP
2	20.06.2024	Change and landscaping amended. Annotations added	JH	AP
1	30.05.2024	Site layout amended	JH	JW
0	28.03.2024	Site Layout Plan - Original	JH	AP

**FIELD**

Field  
Fora Montacute Yards,  
186 Shoreditch High Street,  
London,  
E1 6HU

PROJECT Knocknagael

TITLE Indicative Site Layout Plan

DISCIPLINE PLANNING

DRAWING STATUS FOR PLANNING

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN BY	CHECKED BY	APPROVED BY
1:1000 @ A0	28.03.2024	JH	AP	JM
PROJECT NO.	DRAWING NO.	REV.		
BTGBKN001	001.1	03		



## **Appendix B – Pre-application Response from The Highland Council**

<b>Reference no:</b>	24/00184/PREMAJ	<b>Date of Issue:</b>	11 June 2024
<b>Proposal:</b>	Construction and operation of a 200MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with associated infrastructure, access and ancillary works	<b>Address:</b>	Land 500m South East of Essich Farm Cottages, Inverness
<b>Case officer:</b>	Roddy Dowell	<b>Email and phone no:</b>	████████████████████
<b>Confidentiality Requested</b>	Yes		

**This pre-application advice has been specifically prepared for Field Kncknagael Ltd as the applicant and DBPlanning as the agent for the proposed development at Land 500m South East of Essich Farm Cottages, Inverness.**

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<b>Description of proposal</b>
<p>Construction and operation of a 200MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with associated infrastructure, access and ancillary works (Section 36 Application to ECU) comprising of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 52 battery energy storage units (per indicative Site Layout Plan);</li> <li>• Power Conversion Systems (which house the inverters and transformers);</li> <li>• Substation and associated infrastructure including;</li> <li>• Office/welfare facilities;</li> <li>• Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) building;</li> <li>• Auxiliary transformers and low voltage distribution infrastructure;</li> <li>• Site access, internal access tracks and parking spaces;</li> <li>• Underground cable connection to the Spittal converter station;</li> <li>• Landscape and biodiversity mitigation and enhancement;</li> <li>• CCTV cameras and security lighting and security fencing;</li> <li>• Earthworks, including earth bunds; and,</li> <li>• Drainage.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary of Key Issues</b>
<p>The Planning Authority are supportive of appropriately located and designed electricity transmission infrastructure/battery storage, particularly where this facilitates the transition away from the reliance upon fossil fuels towards more renewable forms of energy to meet our electricity needs while avoiding or reducing curtailment, and contributing to diversity, decarbonisation, efficiency and supply and for the economy. The principle of the development is therefore supported.</p>

In assessing energy storage proposals, it is helpful to consider whether sufficient information has been provided on: the type and nature of storage facility proposed, such as scale and appearance and whether any associated infrastructure is designed in a way that is sympathetic to the local area and existing pattern of development; the electricity network benefits and capacity proposed (noting that energy storage is typically considered to be “generation”); the need of for the infrastructure in this location and what other alternatives exist in terms of location/technology/size and scale of BESS options available; and potential impacts, for example any pollution risks and particular requirements for decommissioning.

There is some concern regarding the clustered location adjacent to the existing Knocknagael Substation could give rise to adverse cumulative visual and landscape impacts, particularly experienced by people on the nearby road network and closest properties to the south east of the site. The landscape and visual impacts are key issues that will inform our position in relation to this proposal. Your assessment should cover impacts of all elements of the development, where they are not covered under a separate application. Careful consideration is required to mitigate the landscape and visual impacts on closest surrounding properties and recreational receptors using Essich Road and the roads either side of the Knocknagael Substation. You are strongly encouraged to provide information on all aspects of your proposal as far as possible at application stage, including information on intended grid connection, in order that the Council has the fullest understanding of the scheme.

Moreover, there is substantial BESS interest in the wider surrounding area and as such your landscape and visual impact assessment must include an up-to-date assessment of the cumulative effects of the proposal with other similar proposals covering an appropriately sized study area. This cumulative assessment much consider all other forms of major development being planned in the vicinity and consider what additional impacts would arise from the colocation of this development.

The proposal also requires to undergo EIA Screening (with 24/01399/SCRE submitted and currently pending consideration), however regardless whether an EIA is required, there is a range of additional requirements that must be satisfactorily addressed in your submission, as set out in this response in relation to a transport assessment, trunk road access, and construction traffic management; flood risk and drainage matters; impacts on the natural environment including trees and biodiversity enhancement; a noise impact assessment; and fire risk management plan, amongst other considerations.

The application must include full details of perimeter security/acoustic fencing as well as proposed native screen planting, with requirement for ongoing maintenance, particularly if existing tree cover in the area cannot be relied upon to serve a screening function in the future. Care should also be taken to ensure all of the proposed development, including areas for cabling, landscaping, water supply and drainage are included within the application site boundary, which requires to extend up the public road.

Whilst it is considered that the principle of the proposed development may be supported much will depend on the potential landscape and visual impacts and what mitigation measures are utilised to minimise effects.

**Background Information**

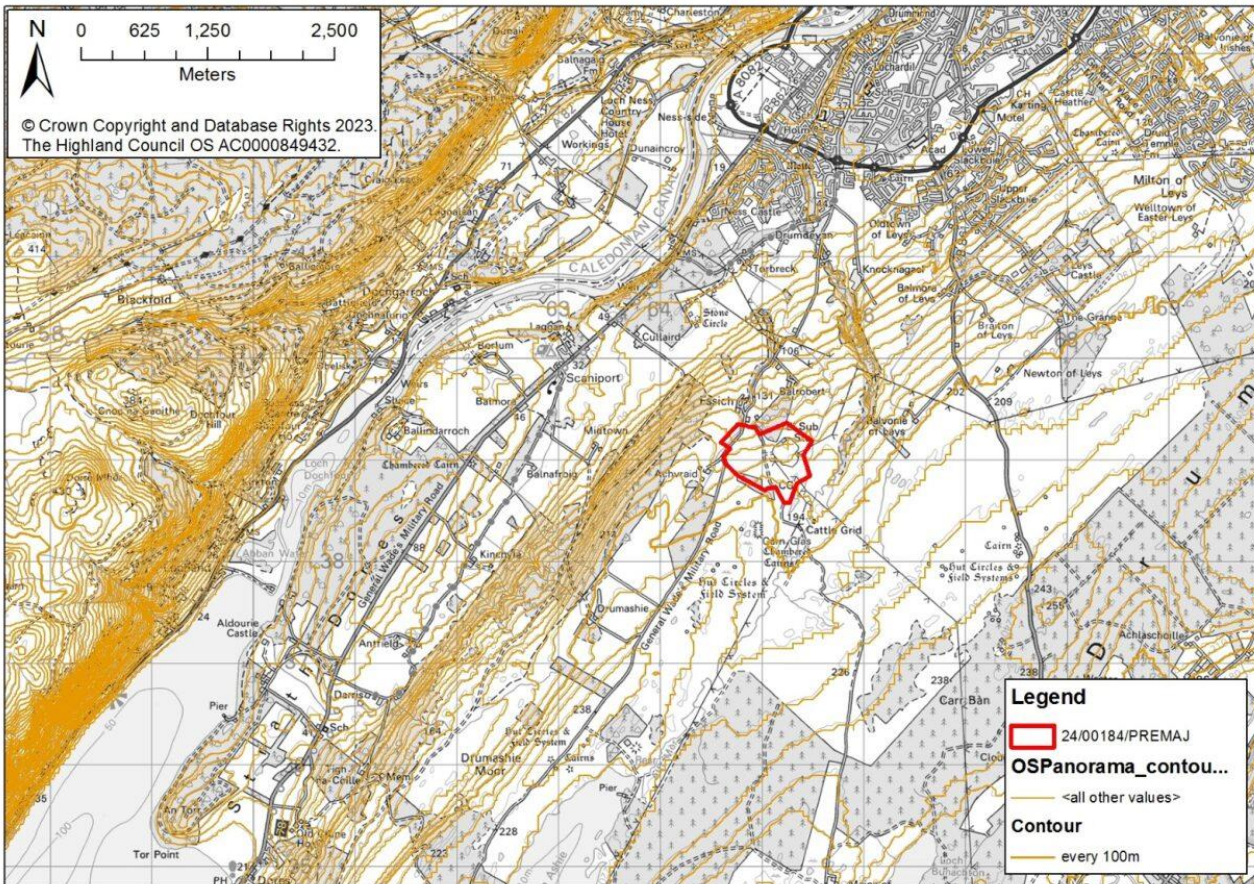
Site Area	42.4ha	
Land Ownership	Unknown	
Existing Land Uses	Grazed grassland	
Grid Reference	265169 (E)	839050 (N)

**Consents Required**

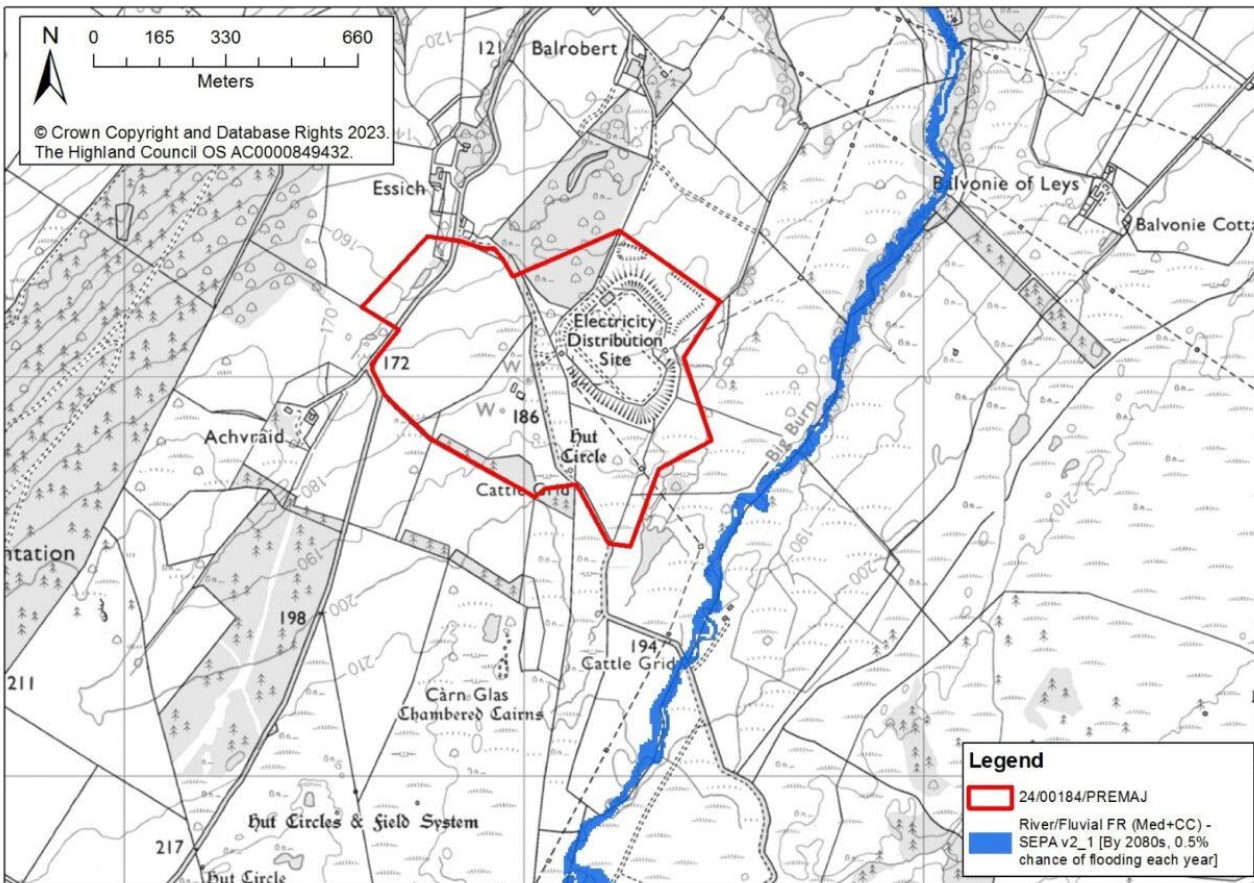
You are advised that the following consent(s) will be required for the proposed development:  
Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989

# Site Constraints Map

## Topo 100m

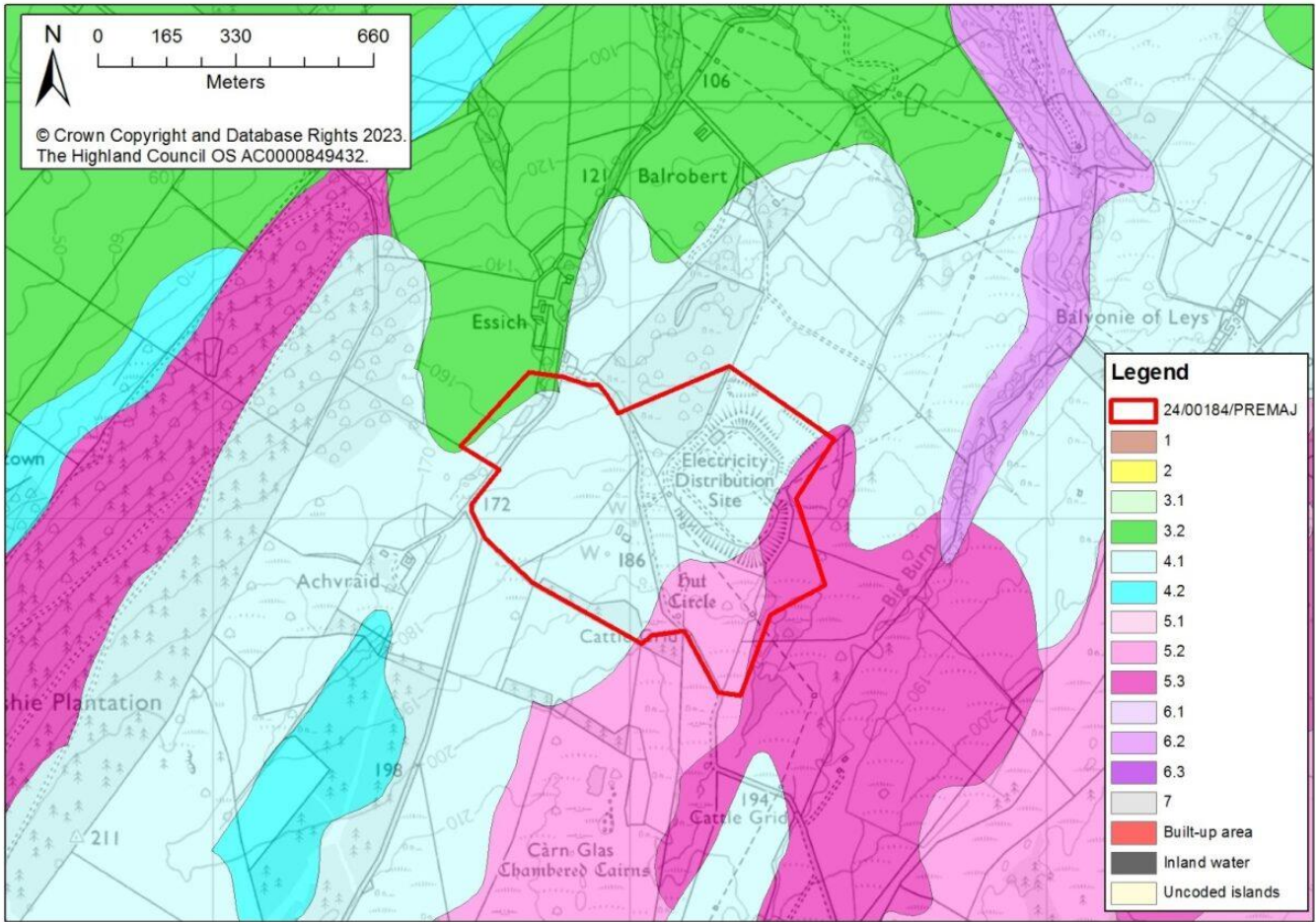


## Future Flood Risk

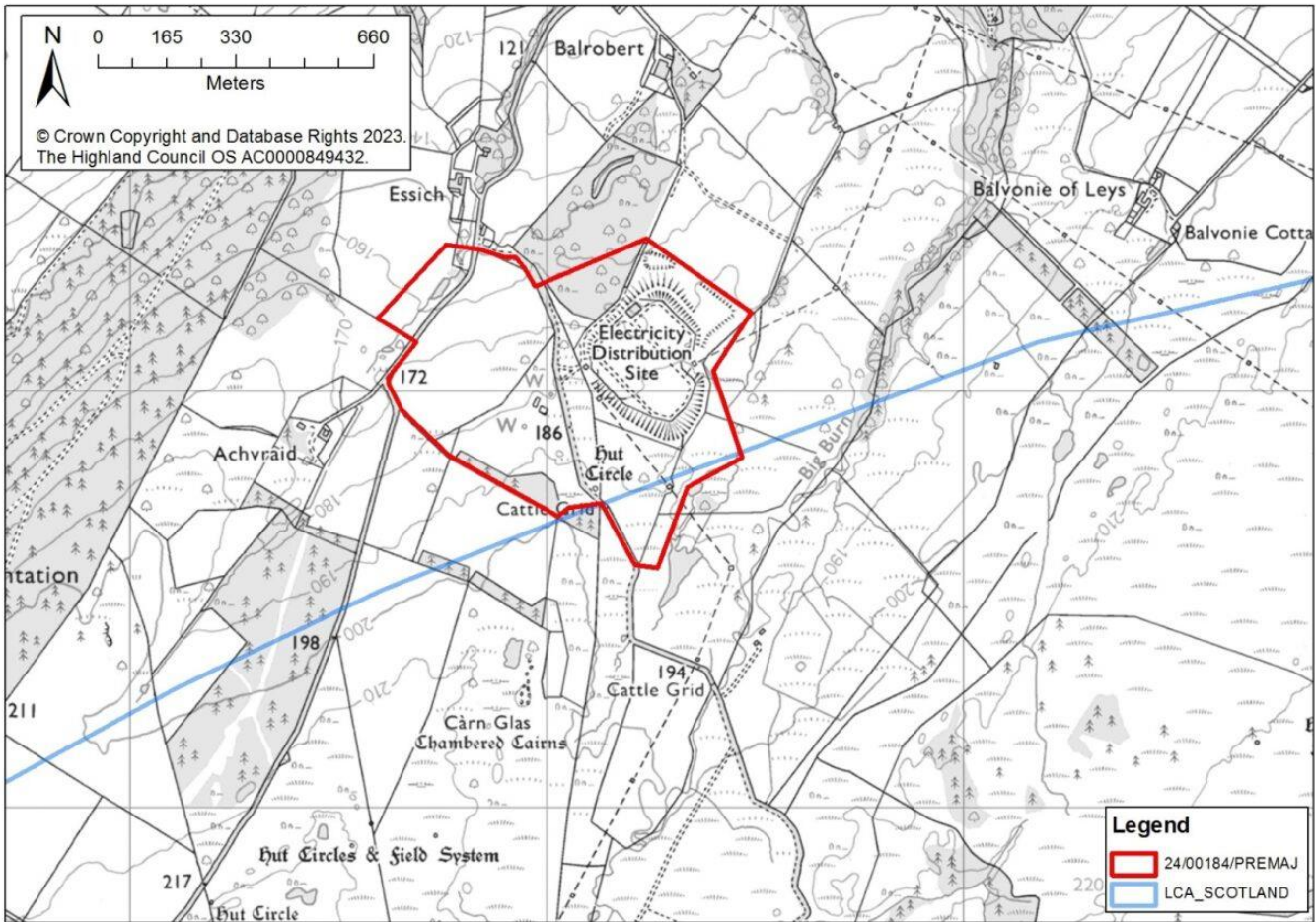




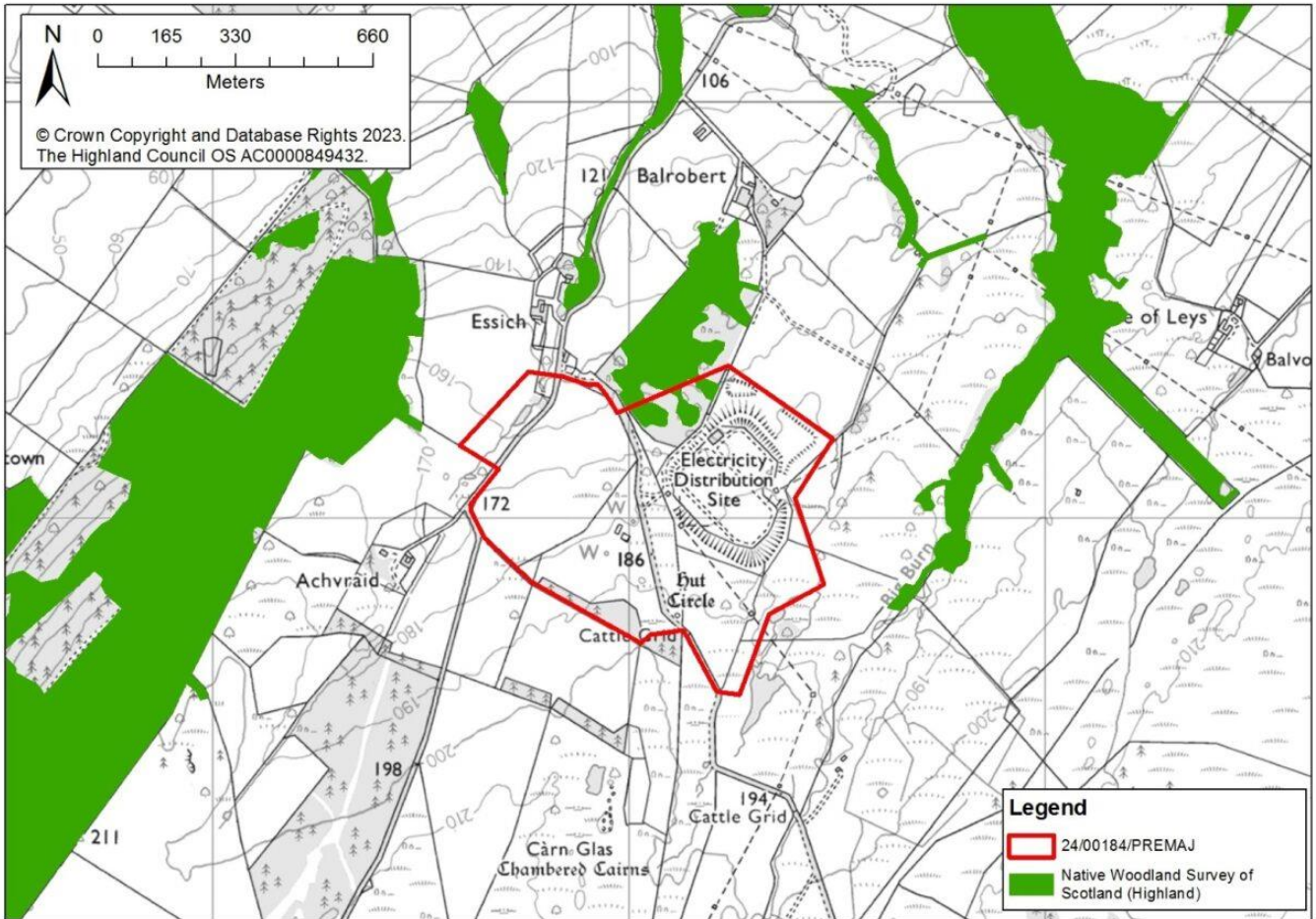
## Land Capability for Agriculture 50k



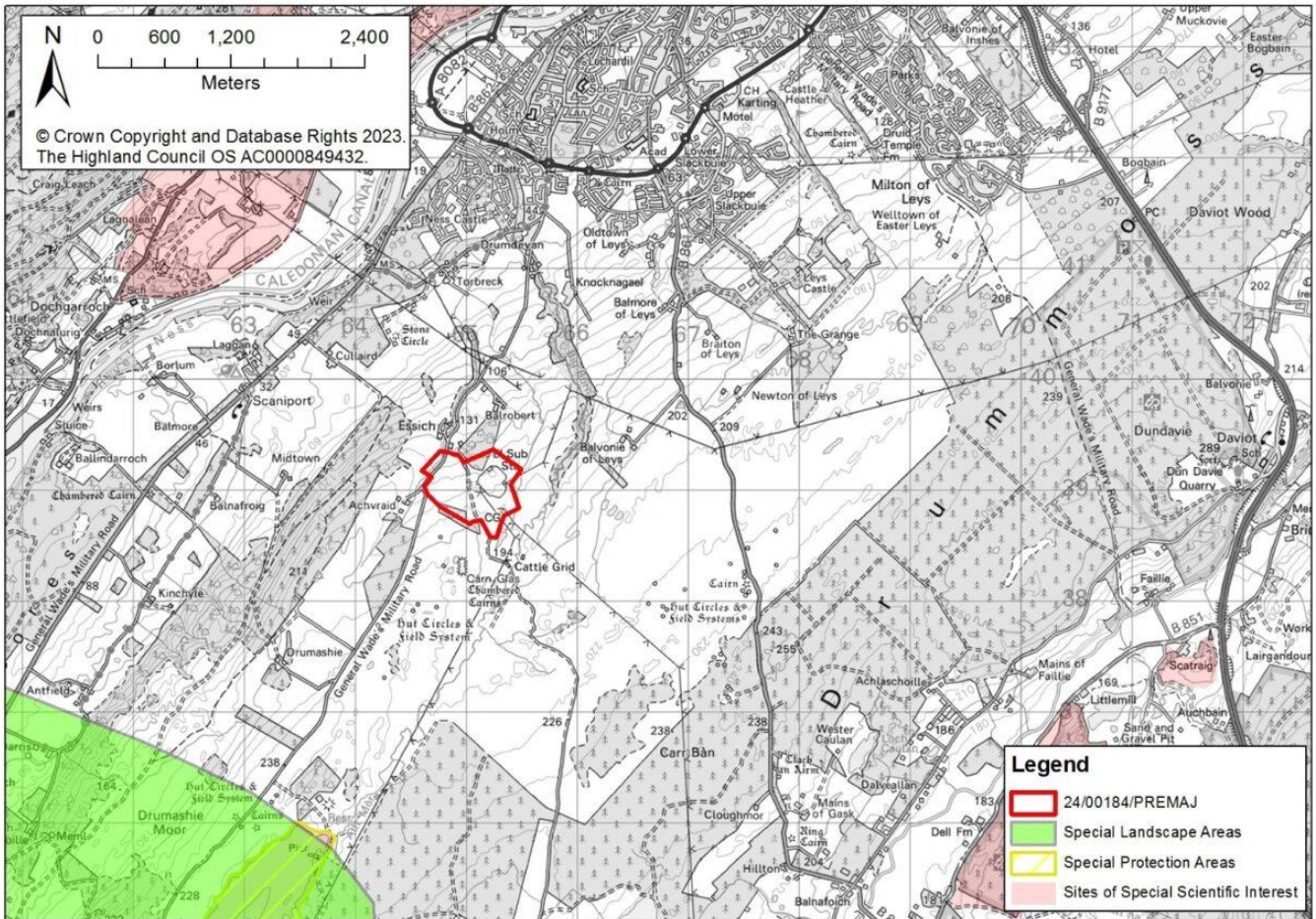
## Landscape Character Type



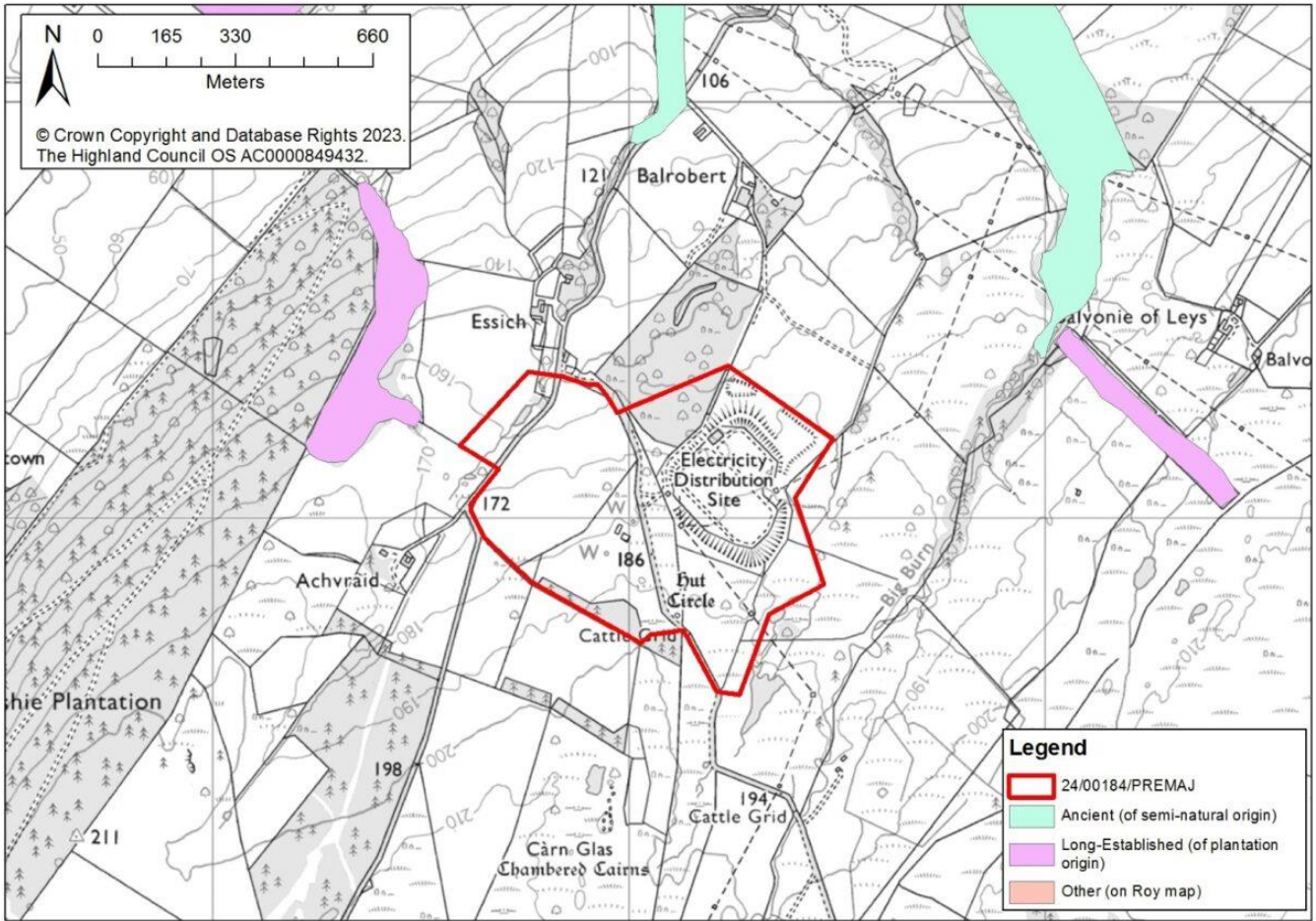
## Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (Highland)



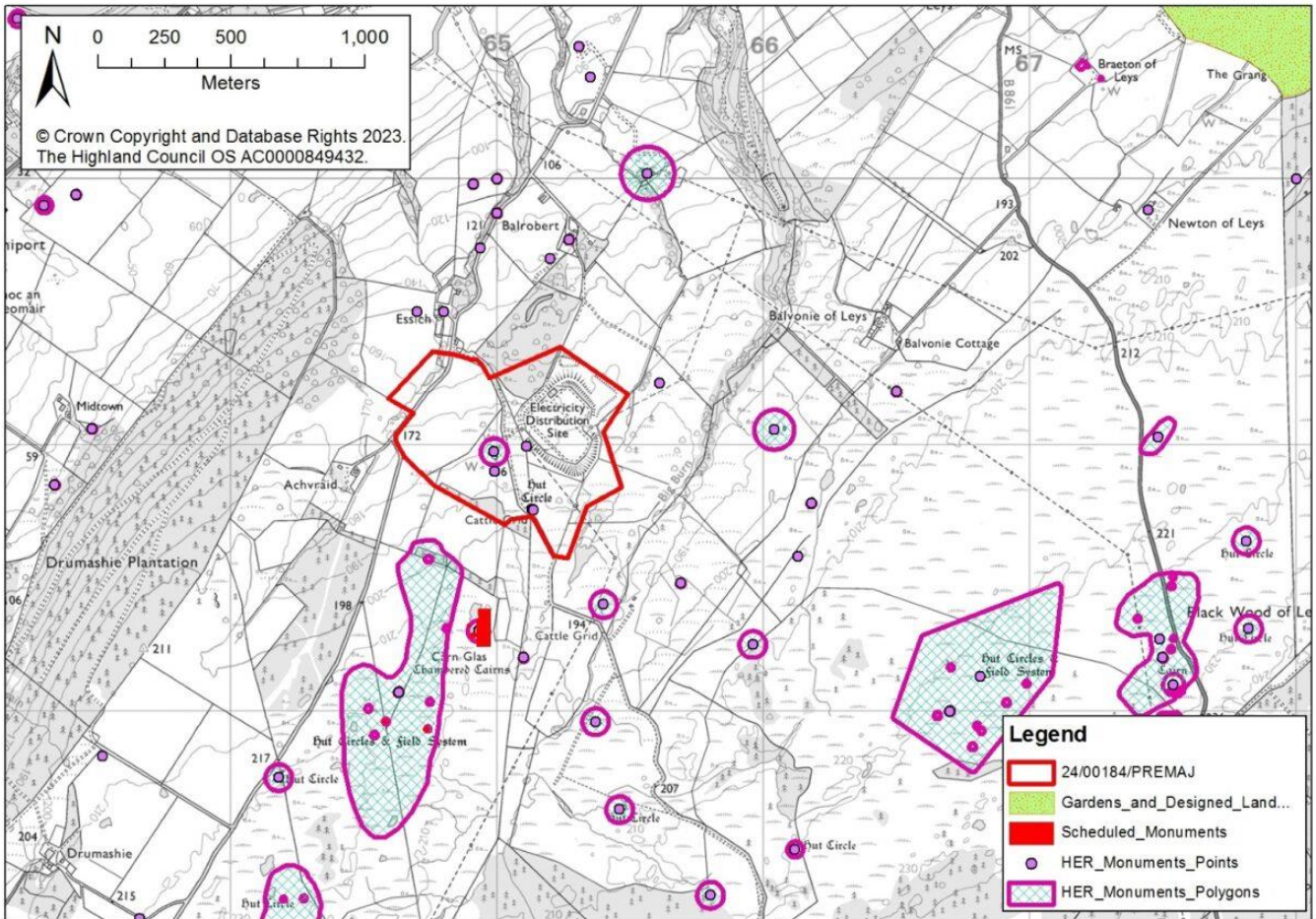
## Natural Heritage



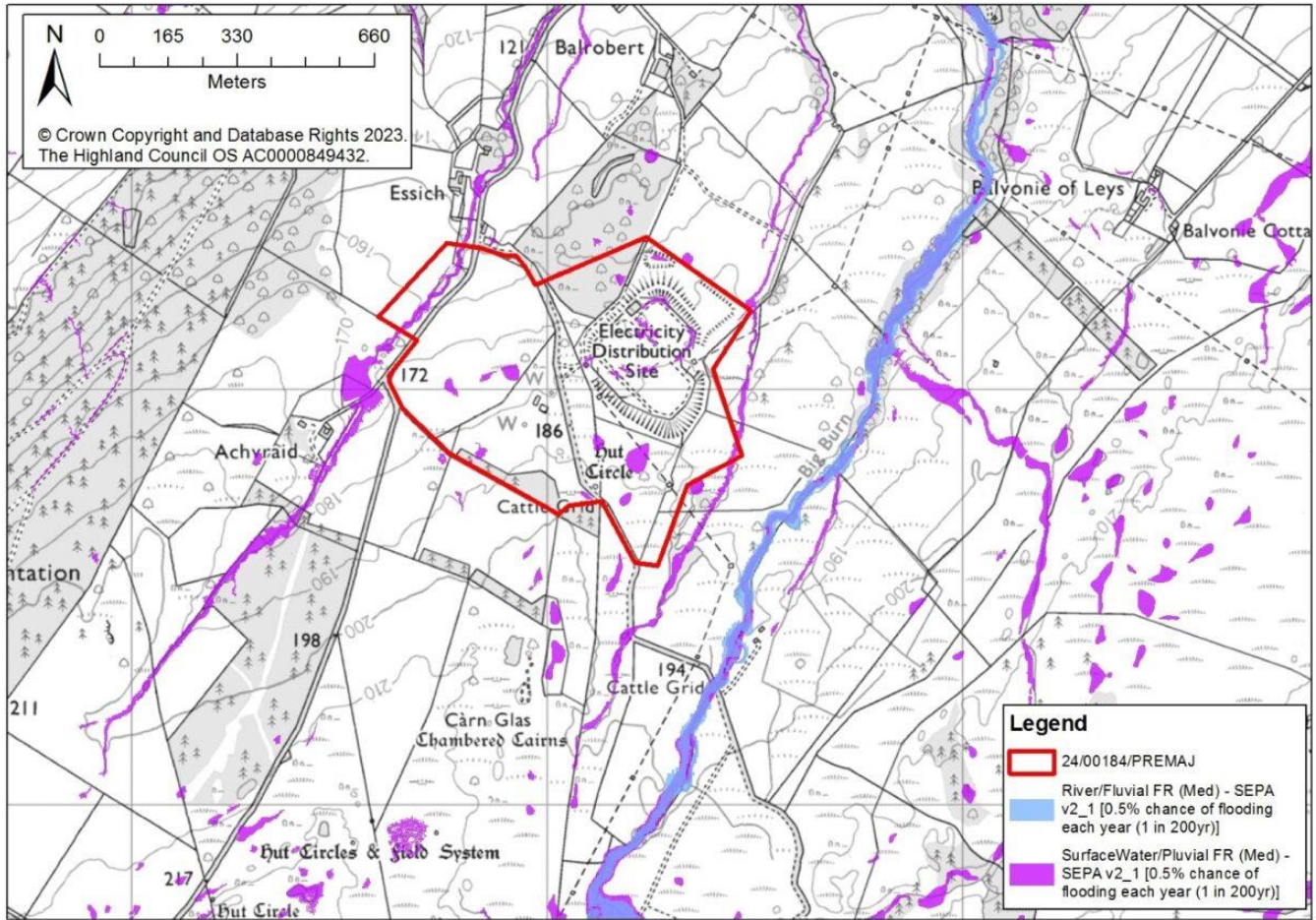
## Ancient Woodland Inventory



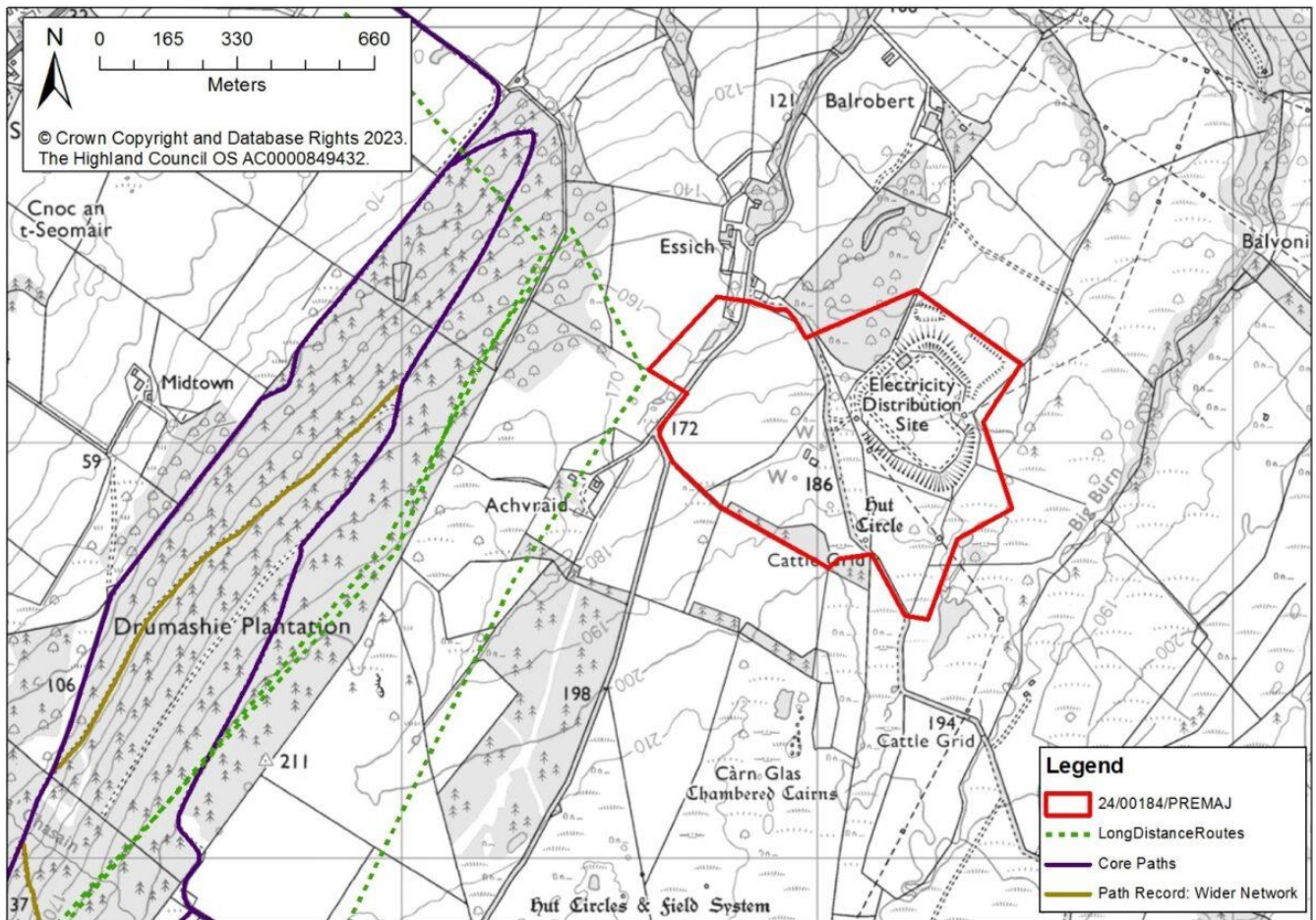
## Built Heritage



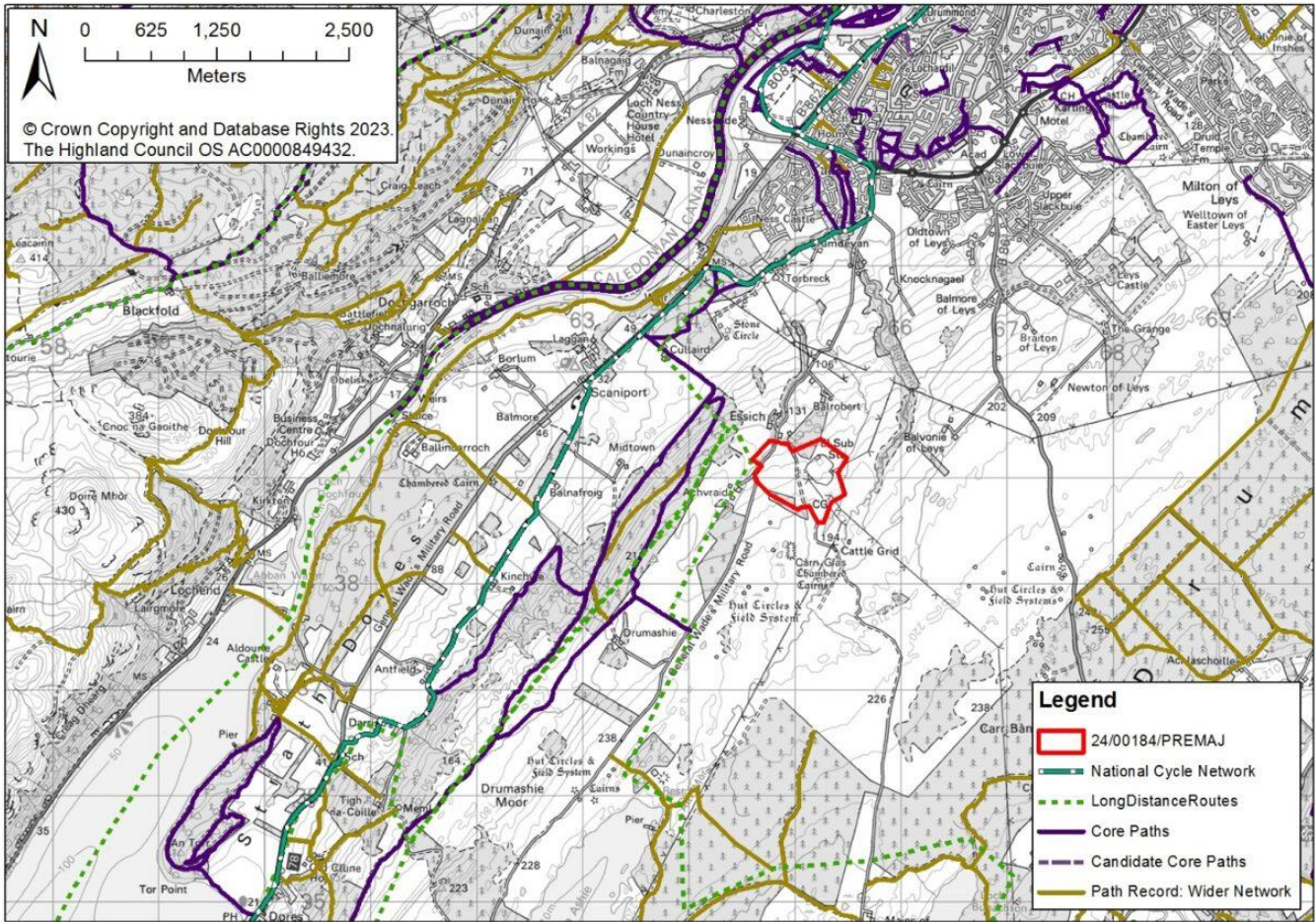
# Flood Risk



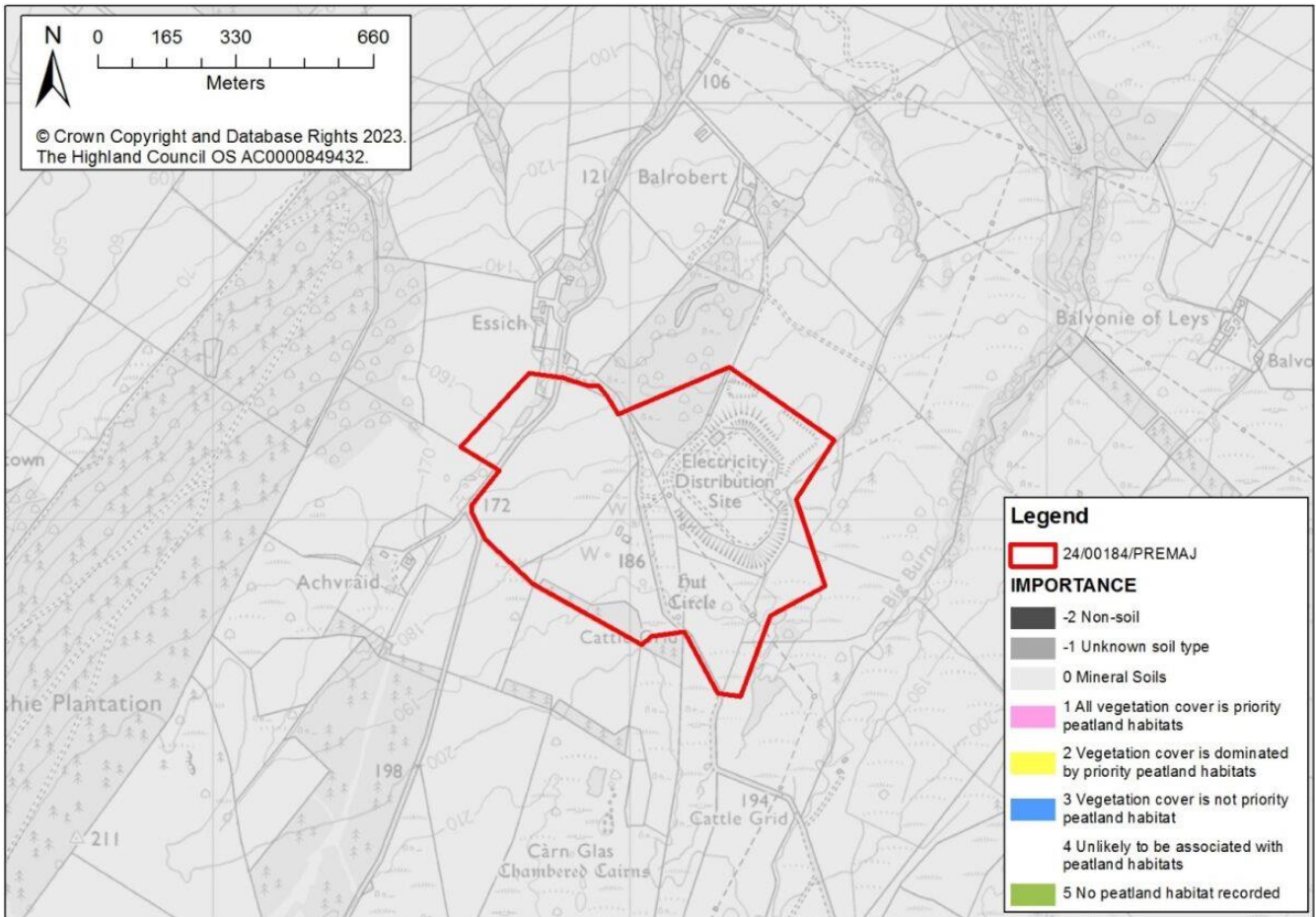
# Outdoor Access 1



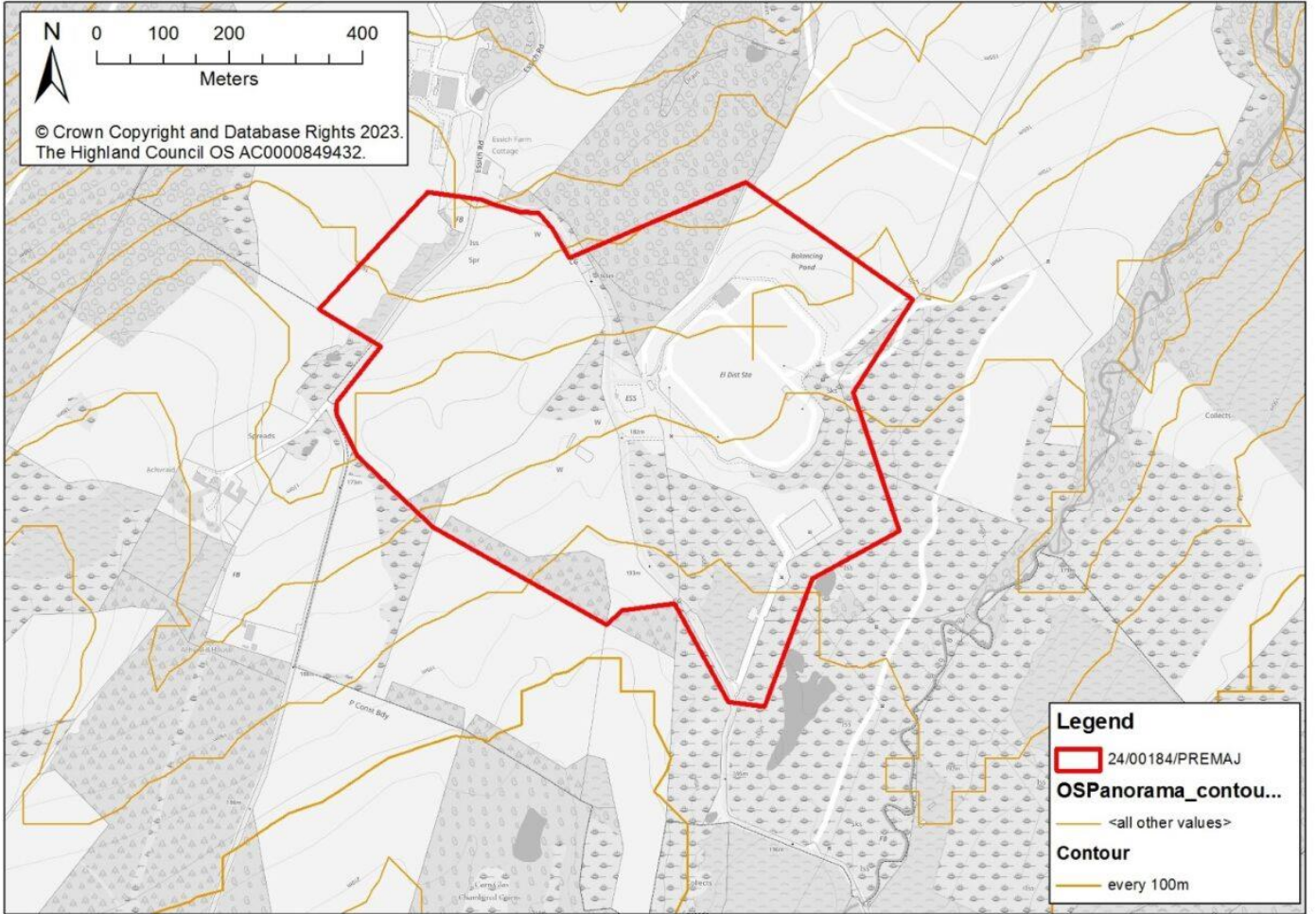
## Outdoor Access 2



## Soils



# Topo 100m



<b>Supporting Information Requirements</b>			
Abnormal Load Assessment	X	Open Space Strategy	
Access Management Plan		Operational Noise Assessment	X
Arboricultural Impact Assessment		Peat Management Plan	X
Archaeological Site Investigations	X	Planning Statement	
Assessment of Impact on Historic Environment		Pre-Application Consultation Report	
Aviation Impact Assessment		Private Water Supplies/Mitigation scheme	X
Borrowpit Management Plan		Protected Habitat Survey	
Carbon Balance Assessment		Protected Species Survey	
Compensatory Planting Plan	X	Restoration/Decommissioning Plan	X
Construction Noise Assessment – Scheme of best practicable means	X	Retail Impact Assessment	
Construction Traffic Management Plan	X	Schedule of Mitigation	X
Contaminated Land Report		Shadow Flicker Assessment	
Design and Access Statement	X	Street Elevations	
Development Brief		Structural Survey	
Drainage Impact Assessment	X	Sustainable Design Statement	
Dust Survey		Swept Path Analysis	
Electric Car Charging Strategy		Transport Assessment	
Flood Risk Assessment	X	Transport Statement	X
Forest Residual Waste Strategy		Tree Constraints Plan	X
GWDTE Assessment	X	Tree Protection Plan	X
Habitat Management Plan		TV / Radio Impact Assessment	
Landscape and Visual Impact		Vibration Assessment	
Landscape Maintenance/Management Plan	X	Visualisations	
Landscape Plan	X	Waste Strategy	
Masterplan		Other (Please Specify): Fire Safety Management Plan	X

<b>Planning history</b>			
<b>Previous Reference</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
08/00753/FULIN	Electricity sub-station	2 December 2009	PERMISSION GRANTED
24/01399/SCRE	Construction and operation of a proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) (over 50MW) with associated infrastructure, access and ancillary works	N/A	PENDING CONSIDERATION

<b>Planning Policy</b>
<p><b><u>National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4, Adopted 2023)</u></b></p> <p>Policy 1 - Tackling the climate and nature crises  Policy 2 - Climate mitigation and adaptation  Policy 3 - Biodiversity  Policy 5 - Soils  Policy 6 - Forestry, Woodland and trees  Policy 7 - Historic assets and places  Policy 11 - Energy  Policy 22 - Flood risk and water management  Policy 23 - Health and Safety  Policy 25 - Community Wealth Building  Policy 29 - Rural development</p>
<p><b><u>Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP, Adopted 2012)</u></b></p> <p>Policy 28 - Sustainable Design  Policy 29 - Design Quality &amp; Place-making  Policy 30 - Physical Constraints  Policy 31 - Developer Contributions  Policy 36 - Development in the Wider Countryside  Policy 51 - Trees and Development  Policy 52 - Principle of Development in Woodland  Policy 56 - Travel  Policy 57 - Natural, Built &amp; Cultural Heritage  Policy 58 - Protected Species  Policy 61 – Landscape  Policy 63 - Water Environment  Policy 64 - Flood Risk  Policy 65 - Waste Water Treatment  Policy 66 - Surface Water Drainage  Policy 67 - Renewable Energy Developments  Policy 72 - Pollution  Policy 74 - Green Networks  Policy 77 - Public Access</p>
<p><b><u>Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP, Adopted 2015)</u></b></p> <p>No site-specific policies apply. The IMDFLDP is currently under review with the Proposed Plan having been published in March 2022.</p>



## **Proposed Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFpLDP2)**

The Examination Report for the IMFpLDP2 was published on 23 January 2024 with modifications incorporated into the plan following Reporter recommendations published on 28 March 2024. The intention is to publish the plan in the coming months. As the Examination Report and Intention to Adopt version of the plan has been published the plan should be given significant weight as a material consideration in the decision making process. The proposal site lies does not lie within a site allocation or Settlement Development Area. It lies within what is known in the HwLDP as the Hinterland around Inverness which presumes against new housing development unless it meets certain exemptions. For non-housing development the principle of development within these areas is assessed against HwLDP Policy 36 Development in the Wider Countryside, alongside relevant NPF4 policies explained further below.

## **Highland Council Supplementary Guidance**

Developer Contributions (November 2018)  
Flood Risk & Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)  
Green Networks (Jan 2013)  
Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)  
Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (March 2013)  
Highland Renewable Energy Strategy & Planning Guidelines (May 2006)  
Physical Constraints (March 2013)  
Public Art Strategy (March 2013)  
Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)  
Special Landscape Area Citations (June 2011)  
Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)  
Trees, Woodlands and Development (Jan 2013)

## **Scottish Planning Policy and Guidance**

Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)  
Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)  
2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (2011)  
Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map, Scottish Government (2018)  
Historic Environment Policy for Scotland, HES (2019)  
PAN 1/2011 - Planning and Noise (2011)  
PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (2008)  
Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2017)

## **Policy Appraisal**

### **Introduction**

The broad principle of energy storage is welcomed and supported, with considerable potential benefits for energy generation (avoiding or reducing curtailment), diversity, decarbonisation, efficiency and supply and for the economy. However, the Council does have concerns about the further industrialising effect of storage proposals at the local level and on wider landscapes, potential health and safety considerations and any potential implications for planning considerations. In assessing energy storage proposals, it is helpful to consider whether sufficient information has been provided on: the type and nature of storage facility proposed, such as scale and appearance and whether any associated buildings are designed in a way which is sympathetic to the local area and existing pattern of development; the electricity network benefits and capacity proposed (noting that energy storage is typically considered to be 'generation'); the potential impacts, for example any pollution risks and particular requirements for decommissioning.

### **Policy Background**

Any future application(s) will be considered and determined against [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\) 2023](#), and the Council Development Plans relevant to this pre-application, which are the [Highland-wide Local Development Plan \(HwLDP\) 2012](#), the [Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan \(IMFLDP\) adopted 2015](#), and associated [Supplementary Guidance](#).

### **Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan 2 (IMFpLDP2)**

Whilst not yet part of the adopted Development Plan, the Council is finalising its work to replace IMFLDP,

with the Examination Report published on 23 January 2024. Reporters recommended modifications have been incorporated into the plan that was published on 28 March 2024 (Intention to Adopt version). Following various statutory requirements, it is intended for the plan to be adopted and published in June 2024, subject to Ministerial clearance and any Ministerial directions that are received. In the meantime, now that the Examination Report and Intention to Adopt version of the plan have been published, the plan should be given significant weight as a material consideration in the decision-making process. Please note however that policies with direct financial implications (policy 10 and policy 11) will be applied only to applications determined after the Plan is adopted.

### **The current adopted Development Plan**

This response does not attempt to detail all the policies within NPF4 or the Council Development Plans that may be relevant; instead, it is limited to the most salient to the assessment of any future application relating to this pre-application. It is recommended that the applicant fully reviews and considers all relevant documents prior to a formal submission:

[www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/)

[www.highland.gov.uk/hwldp](http://www.highland.gov.uk/hwldp)

[www.highland.gov.uk/imf](http://www.highland.gov.uk/imf)

[www.highland.gov.uk/directory/52/a\\_to\\_z](http://www.highland.gov.uk/directory/52/a_to_z)

### **National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023)**

NPF4 was adopted on 13 February 2023 and is now part of the Development Plan. It replaces NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy. Full details of NPF4 are available on the [Scottish Government website](http://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/).

[www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/).

Many of NPF4's policies are relevant to consideration of the pre-application, should it come forward as an application, but attention is particularly drawn here to the following policies:

**Policy 1 (Tackling the climate and nature crises)** is an overarching policy that gives 'significant weight' to the global climate and nature crises.

**Policy 2 (Climate mitigation and adaptation)** intends to encourage, promote and facilitate development that minimises emissions and adapts to the current and future impacts of climate change.

**Policy 3 (Biodiversity)** intends to protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive effects and strengthen nature networks. Under NPF4's policy emphasis on biodiversity, development proposals for national or major development, or for development that requires an Environmental Impact Assessment will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal complies with requirements of Policy 3a), Policy 3b) (i-iv), and Policy 3d) to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention.

Scottish Government published [Draft Planning Guidance: Biodiversity](#) on 30 November 2023 setting out the Government's expectations on biodiversity enhancement, which is to be demonstrated by a development site being in "an overall better state than before intervention, and that this will be sustained in the future".

NatureScot recently invited views on the Development of a Biodiversity Metric for Scotland's Planning System. In September 2023, the [Scottish Government released independent research](#) conducted by SRUC on 'Approaches to Measuring Biodiversity in Scotland'. The report's findings and recommendations propose practical steps for achieving a consistent, cross-government approach to measuring biodiversity at the site level. Specifically targeting the planning sector, NatureScot has initiated efforts to create an adapted biodiversity metric tailored for supporting the implementation of Policy 3b) in NPF4. This new tool aims to assist developers and planning authorities in evaluating the biodiversity enhancements resulting from developments. It will be applicable to major development projects, aligning with the goals of National Planning Framework 4. While based on a metric utilized in England, it will be refined to suit Scotland's requirements. The [NatureScot consultation](#) inviting input from stakeholders interested in biodiversity metric development for planning purposes closed on Friday 10 May 2024.

On 2 May 2024, [The Highland Council Revised Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance](#) was approved by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee for adoption as non-statutory planning guidance, following which, the Revised Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance is now a material planning consideration. It is largely based upon the English system, although we are not strictly enforcing the use of a metric, as

there is not yet an agreed Scottish metric. However, we are recommending its use for all Policy 3b developments (and large local scale developments of 0.5Ha or larger) to deliver a minimum 10% biodiversity enhancement from the post development state. If the developers use the metric, it allows a rapid assessment of the biodiversity requirements for NPF4; if however, they do not wish to use the metric, they must clearly detail the biodiversity enhancement measures they will employ on or offsite, which must be in addition to all mitigation measures: avoid, minimise, restore, offset (compensation).

The applicant is encouraged to give full details, as far as is possible at application stage, of the planned biodiversity enhancement and what will be done to achieve this enhancement:

[www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-draft-planning-guidance-biodiversity/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-draft-planning-guidance-biodiversity/)

[www.gov.scot/publications/research-approaches-measuring-biodiversity-scotland/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/research-approaches-measuring-biodiversity-scotland/)

[www.nature.scot/doc/biodiversity-metric-scotlands-planning-system-key-issues-consultation](http://www.nature.scot/doc/biodiversity-metric-scotlands-planning-system-key-issues-consultation)

[www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/83177/item\\_13\\_draft\\_biodiversity\\_planning\\_guidance](http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/83177/item_13_draft_biodiversity_planning_guidance)

**Policy 4 (Natural Places)** serves to protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions, with the aim to ensuring that natural places are protected and restored, and natural assets are managed in a sustainable way that maintains and grows their essential benefits and services. Under NPF4 Policy 4(a) “Development proposals which by virtue of type, location or scale will have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment, will not be supported.” NPF4 Policy 4(b), 4(c), 4(d), and 4(f) include tests according to the impact of a development on a natural designation, including but not limited to Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area, National Scenic Area, Site of Special Scientific Interest, and National Nature Reserve.

**Policy 5 (Soils)** intends to protect carbon-rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance to soils from development. Policy 5 a) requires all developments to adopt the mitigation hierarchy by first avoiding and then minimising the amount of disturbance to soils on undeveloped land.

- It is noted, as per the NatureScot Carbon and Peatland 2016 map, that the area within the redline boundary is entirely Importance Class 0 – Mineral Soils.
- It is noted, as per the Land Capability Classification, that the majority of the land within the redline boundary is Class 4.1, with small areas in Class 3.2, 5.2, and 5.3. According to NPF4, prime agricultural land is identified as Class 1, 2 or 3.1.

**Policy 6 (Forestry, woodland and trees)** intends to protect and expand forests, woodland and trees.

- It is noted that there is some Native Woodland (Lowland mixed deciduous woodland) as per the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (Highland) within the redline boundary to the north of the proposed site. There are other areas of Native Woodland and Ancient Woodland as per the Ancient Woodland to the north of the redline boundary. The applicant is encouraged to give full details, as far as is possible at application stage, of any proposed felling and compensatory planting.

**Policy 7 (Historic assets and places)** intends to protect and enhance historic environment assets and places, and to enable positive change as a catalyst for the regeneration of places. The site is undulating, and it is noted that the developer envisages a cut and fill design. There are some concerns about this proposed reprofiling of the site, given the archaeological potential in the area.

**Policy 11 (Energy)** intends to encourage, promote, and facilitate all forms of renewable energy development onshore and offshore. This includes energy generation, storage, new and replacement transmission and distribution infrastructure and emerging low-carbon and zero emissions technologies including hydrogen and carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS). Policy 11 a) iii. states that development proposals for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emissions technologies will be supported, including battery storage. Policy 11 contains a wide range of criteria for consideration (i. to xii.), including how project design and mitigation addresses impacts. The advice pack identifies a number of considerations for this particular proposal that are relevant to this part of the policy.

Landscape and visual effects need to be considered carefully, including the residual effects with earth bunding and other landscaping proposals in place, to assist consideration of the suitability of the location and inform design choices. Notwithstanding the presence already of the substantial substation at Knocknagael, it will be important to understand the extent of visibility of the proposals and the significance of those, which may possibly be experienced from further afield than the developer’s initial LVIA considerations capture.

NPF4 identifies national developments. National development 3 (Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure) includes energy storage. Any proposal would need to be checked against the terms (definition) of national development 3 to determine whether it would have national development status or would be a major development.

**Policy 18 (Infrastructure first)** intends to encourage, promote and facilitate an infrastructure first approach to land use planning, which puts infrastructure considerations at the heart of placemaking.

**Policy 22 (Flood risk and water management)** intends to strengthen resilience to flood risk by promoting avoidance as a first principle and reducing the vulnerability of existing and future development to flooding.

**Policy 23 (Health and Safety)** intends to protect people and places from environmental harm, mitigate risks arising from safety hazards and encourage, promote and facilitate development that improves health and wellbeing.

**Policy 25 (Community Wealth Building)** intends to encourage, promote, and facilitate a new strategic approach to economic development that also provides a practical model for building a wellbeing economy at local, regional, and national levels. Part a) states that development proposals which contribute to local or regional community wealth building strategies and are consistent with local economic priorities will be supported.

**Policy 29 (Rural development)** intends to encourage rural economic activity, innovation and diversification whilst ensuring that the distinctive character of the rural area and the service function of small towns, natural assets and cultural heritage are safeguarded and enhanced.

### **Highland-wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP) (2012)**

The HwLDP sets out a range of planning policies applicable for the whole Highland Council area. The HwLDP continues to be used alongside NPF4, until it is replaced by a new style LDP. The Council notes that legislation indicates that if there is incompatibility between a provision of the LDP and a provision of the NPF, whichever is the more recently dated shall prevail. That requirement does not take away from the fact that the HwLDP must, whilst still part of the adopted Development Plan, be part of the consideration and, as such the following policies are considered particularly relevant to this pre-application and this site:

**Policy 51: Trees and Development** and **Policy 52: Principle of Development in Woodland** (see also associated Trees, Woodlands and Development SG). For more information, see above under NPF4 policy 6.

**Policy 55: Peats and Soils** – development proposals should demonstrate how they have avoided unnecessary disturbance, degradation or erosion of peat and soils. For more information, see above under NPF4 policy 5.

**Policy 57: Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage** (see also associated Highland Historic Environment Strategy SG). The Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage designations associated with the pre-application site include, but are not limited to, the following:

### **Natural heritage designations**

#### Within 5km of the redline boundary

- Torvean Landforms SSSI (approx. 2.5km to the north of the site)
- Loch Ashie SSSI (3km to the south-west of the site)
- Loch Ashie SPA (3km to the south-west of the site)

#### Just beyond 5km from the redline boundary

Littlemill Fluvioglacial Landforms SSSI (approx. 5km to the south-east of the site)

### **Built heritage designations**

#### Within the redline boundary

MHG26103 – Farmstead (<http://her.highland.gov.uk/SingleResult.aspx?uid=MHG26103>)

MHG26104 - Hut circle, 540m east of Achvraid, Essich  
(<http://her.highland.gov.uk/SingleResult.aspx?uid=MHG26104>)

MHG54926 - Boundary marker, south east of Essich  
(<http://her.highland.gov.uk/SingleResult.aspx?uid=MHG54926>)

MHG52760 - Marker stone, Essich to Bunachton road  
(<http://her.highland.gov.uk/SingleResult.aspx?uid=MHG52760>)

MHG3498 - Hut circle, Allt Mor, Essich (<http://her.highland.gov.uk/SingleResult.aspx?uid=MHG3498>)

#### Within 2km of the redline boundary

- SM11786 - Achvraid, hut circles 800 SE of  
(<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM11786>)
- SM2392 - Carn Glas, chambered cairns 815m SE of Achvraid  
(<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM2392>)
- SM11561 - Achvraid, 'hut circles 1030m SSE of'  
(<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM11561>)
- Various other Historic Environment Records

#### Within 5km of the redline boundary

- Garden and Designed Landscape – Leys Castle (GDL00264)  
(<https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/GDL00264>)

### **Landscape Designations**

#### Within 5km of the redline boundary

- Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Area is located within 3 km of the Site

**Policy 58: Protected Species** (see also related Supplementary Guidance) It is noted that the Common Toad has been recorded within 2 km of the proposed site boundary.

**Policy 59: Other Important Species**

**Policy 60: Other Important Habitats**

**Policy 61: Landscape** – The proposed site is mostly located in [Landscape Character Type 228](#) - Rolling Farmland and Woodland, with part of the boundary to the south east overlapping into [Landscape Character Type LCT223](#) – Flat Moorland Plateau with Woodland. The proposed development is therefore in an area of transition between landscape character types:

<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20228%20-%20Rolling%20Farmland%20and%20Woodland%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>

<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/LCA/LCT%20223%20-%20Flat%20Moorland%20Plateau%20with%20Woodland%20-%20Final%20pdf.pdf>

**Policy 63: Water Environment** – supports development that does not compromise the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

**Policy 64: Flood Risk** (see also associated Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment SG).

**Policy 66: Surface Water Drainage** – requires new developments to utilise Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to return surface water back to the natural water cycle in a sustainable manner. SuDS provide control over quality and quantity of surface water drainage and provide opportunities for amenity and ecological enhancement, and each drainage scheme design must be accompanied by particulars of proposals for ensuring long-term maintenance of the scheme.

**Policy 67: Renewable Energy Developments** – sets out the Council's support in principle for renewable energy developments. This support is subject to addressing important key issues and other criteria. The Council must be satisfied that the development is located, sited, and designed in a way that will not be significantly detrimental to a number of considerations as set out in the Policy.

Whilst the policy does not specifically cover energy storage, it can assist the design and consideration of the scheme. It is understood that the proposal is intended to play a significant role in reducing curtailment of renewable energy generation and ease energy export and transmission, particularly ahead of major grid reinforcements all being in place which have a substantial lead-in time for delivery. We strongly advise that the role and capacity of the proposed transmission-connected energy storage facility is understood and clearly explained within any application submission (and any pre-application consultation).

**Policy 69: Electricity Transmission Infrastructure** – highlights the strategic importance the Highlands will play in generating and transmitting electricity from areas of generation to areas of consumption.

**Policy 72: Pollution** (see also Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects: [www.highland.gov.uk/info/198/planning - long term and area policies/152/renewable energy/2](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/198/planning_-_long_term_and_area_policies/152/renewable_energy/2)).

### **Policy 77: Public Access**

#### Adjacent to the redline boundary

- Long Distance Routes - Trail of the 7 Lochs

#### In the vicinity

- Path Record: Wider Network – Inverness and Nairn
- Core Paths – Kindrummond to Cullaird; Drumashie to Cullaird; Cullaird to Drumashie Plantation.

### **Area Local Development Plan**

The Highland Council Area Local Development Plan covering this proposed site is the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMF) which was adopted by the Council in 2015. This plan's focus is on the regional and settlement strategies for the Inner Moray Firth and identifies specific site allocations and as such, much of the content of IMF is not directly relevant to a battery storage proposal. However, certain aspects of the strategies for the local area and settlements may highlight priorities for the local area that should be taken into consideration when designing the development or help to inform plans for community engagement and/or community benefit.

The Area Local Development Plans confirm boundaries (including any refinements) of the Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) within their plan areas. The SLA citations webpage provides the most up to date information on SLAs:

[www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/2937/assessment\\_of\\_highland\\_special\\_landscape\\_areas](http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/2937/assessment_of_highland_special_landscape_areas).

The redline boundary is located outwith IMF settlement development areas (SDAs), in open countryside and approximately 1.5km from the nearest SDA and site allocations at Inverness City.

As the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 is intended to be adopted and published in June 2024, it should be given significant weight as a material consideration in the decision-making process:

[www.highland.gov.uk/imf](http://www.highland.gov.uk/imf).

### **The preparation of a new-style Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP)**

Through 2024 we will continue to focus primarily on evidence-gathering for the new, single Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP), with the tentative programme including an Evidence Report towards the end of 2024 and subsequent Gate Check, with the Proposed Plan stage in 2025. The latest edition of our Development Plans Newsletter, which was published in March 2024, provides an update to timescales: [www.highland.gov.uk/developmentplansnewsletter](http://www.highland.gov.uk/developmentplansnewsletter).

The HLDP will, once adopted in 2027, replace all our current LDPs. As part of this programme of work, the Council will review the coverage and content of its current suite of Supplementary Guidance, to establish which aspects should be covered within the new Local Development Plan itself, which aspects should be covered within non-statutory planning guidance and any aspects no longer required.

### **Other Constraints**

For the avoidance of doubt, the redline boundary is outwith the Airport Safeguarding area.

### **Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)**

Scottish Government's route map of actions ([www.gov.scot/publications/draft-energy-strategy-transition-plan/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/draft-energy-strategy-transition-plan/)) to delivering a net zero energy system, includes the following which relate to the expansion sought in renewable energy generation capacity, which the proposed development would facilitate:

### A Just Transition – Community benefits and shared ownership

We have set an ambition for 2 GW of community owned energy by 2030. We will encourage developers to offer community benefit and shared ownership opportunities as standard on all new renewable energy projects – including repowering and extensions to existing projects.”

### Energy supplies – Scaling up renewable energy – Onshore Wind

“In the Onshore Wind Policy Statement, published in December 2022, we set an ambition for a further 12 GW of onshore wind by 2030, increasing from 8.78 GW as of June 2022 to 20 GW by 2030, more than double our existing capacity. Our draft Strategy and Plan restates our ambition and provides clear positions on community benefit and shared ownership, including how communities can benefit from repowering of existing sites. The Onshore Wind Policy Statement sets out how we will work with industry to deliver an Onshore Wind Sector Deal in 2023, to ensure we maximise deployment and the economic opportunities that flow from it.”

### Maximising benefits to our economy, businesses, and workers

“We will work with industry to deliver an Onshore Wind Sector Deal in 2023, to ensure we maximise deployment and the economic opportunities that flow from it. We continue to support the Scottish supply chain and recognise the particular opportunities in the onshore market, for example in operation and maintenance and decommissioning of sites.”

### Delivering a just transition for communities and regions across Scotland – Communities and places can participate in and benefit from the net zero energy transition.

“We will encourage developers to offer community benefits and shared ownership opportunities as standard on all new renewable energy projects – including repowering and extensions to existing projects.”

## **Climate & Ecological Emergency**

The Council recognises the importance of the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, as the legislative tool for addressing Scotland’s Climate & Ecological Emergency, which the Council committed to under its own Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration in May 2019.

Furthermore, given Highland’s land mass and geography make up and renewable energy resources, it is accepted that the area has enormous potential to significantly contribute to the production of renewable energy and energy storage. The proposal would add to energy storage capacity. However, this commitment has to be taken in balance along with all other considerations of a particular site, and despite NPF4’s strong position of ‘in principle’ support for such energy developments, they should still be located, sited, and designed appropriately and thus comply with the wider development plan policies.

## **Community Wealth Building**

The intent of NPF4 Policy 25: Community Wealth Building is to encourage, promote and facilitate a new strategic approach to economic development that also provides a practical model for building a wellbeing economy at local, regional and national levels. NPF4 Policy 25 supports the following proposals:

- Development proposals which contribute to local or regional community wealth building strategies and are consistent with local economic priorities will be supported. This could include for example improving community resilience and reducing inequalities; increasing spending within communities; ensuring the use of local supply chains and services; local job creation; supporting community led proposals, including creation of new local firms and enabling community led ownership of buildings and assets.
- Development proposals linked to community ownership and management of land will be supported.

The draft Community Wealth Building Strategy 2024-2027 was approved for wider consultation by the Full Council on 14 March 2024. A public consultation is about to be launched, inviting individuals and stakeholders to help refine the strategy and shape the supporting action plan. The updated strategy and draft action plan will be presented to the Full Council for consideration in September 2024.

[www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/83024/item\\_14\\_community\\_wealth\\_building\\_strategy](http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/83024/item_14_community_wealth_building_strategy)

## **Developer Contributions**

Planning obligations seek to mitigate the impact of any development which cannot be mitigated through the

planning process or through planning conditions. Any planning obligations sought must accord with Scottish Government Planning Circular [3/2012 \(Planning Obligations and Good Neighbour Agreements\)](#).

This assessment is made against NPF4 Policy 18 (Infrastructure First), HwLDP Policy 31: Developer Contributions, our [Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance](#), and our most recently published [Inner Moray Firth Delivery Programme](#), and may require the prospective developer to make contributions towards: transport; green infrastructure; water and waste; public art. For the avoidance of doubt, because this pre-application is for an industrial development, contributions towards affordable housing, education and community facilities are not required.

[www.gov.scot/publications/circular-3-2012-planning-obligations-good-neighbour-agreements/](http://www.gov.scot/publications/circular-3-2012-planning-obligations-good-neighbour-agreements/)

[www.highland.gov.uk/developercontributions](http://www.highland.gov.uk/developercontributions)

[www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local\\_and\\_statutory\\_development\\_plans/809/delivery\\_programmes](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/809/delivery_programmes)

### **Community Benefit**

Community benefit is a goodwill contribution voluntarily donated by a developer. It is for the benefit of communities affected by developments where this will have a long-term impact on local resources and the local environment and whilst it is a separate issue to planning, the Council wants to make sure that local communities benefit directly from the use of their local resources and are compensated for the disruption and inconvenience associated with large scale development work. The Council's [Community Benefit](#) policy contains contacts for any further discussion on this and the Council would advocate early engagement: [www.highland.gov.uk/communitybenefitpolicy](http://www.highland.gov.uk/communitybenefitpolicy).

Although not an application for an onshore wind farm, and the proposed BESS storing energy from a mixed supply of energy sources connecting to the grid network, the proposal is encouraged to provide community benefit which is commensurate to onshore wind technology. At the time that the Council's Concordat and Community Benefit Policy was introduced a contribution rate of £5,000 per MW for installed onshore wind generation was set, with this sum being index linked to reflect the base date of 3 March 2011, with this sum appreciating each year in line with the UK Retail Price Index (RPI). Based on inflation over the intervening 13 years to March 2024, the £5,000 per MW rate currently stands at £8,277. This rate was set based on the anticipated yield from onshore wind. The effect of introduction of multiple BESS developments to effectively bolster grid capacity, means that the anticipated yield from onshore wind developments should increase.

Prospective BESS developers are therefore being encouraged to consider how the introduction of their facility compares to the introduction of generation from onshore wind, and provide the equivalent amount of community benefit for the area where the BESS is being proposed, with this community potentially not having received any community benefit from onshore wind generation to date (depending upon the geographical area/location of the host community council relative to consented wind farms).

### **Design**

The Design Quality and Place Making policy (policy 29) in the HwLDP requires new development to be designed to make a positive contribution to the architectural and visual quality of the area. Furthermore development proposals must demonstrate sensitivity and respect towards the local distinctiveness of the landscape, architecture, design and layouts of their proposals.

We encourage careful, considered, and bespoke design solutions to nestle development into their hosting landscape and community contexts. The Council expects that all associated buildings and external infrastructure are designed in a manner that reflects the design, scale, materials etc. of the existing facility.

You are therefore strongly encouraged to explore different design options, for example:

- Use of existing/comparable materials;
- Stronger designs for public facing elevations and perimeter walls/fences. More utilitarian materials and designs should be reserved for those elevations not visible from public views;
- Boundary treatments should assist with integrating the development into the landscape and soften the edges of the development. Proposals for existing infrastructure removal, reuse and recycling should be outlined as should proposals for existing site restoration where required. Any future maps submitted in association with the proposed development must be based on an adequate scale with which to assess the information. This includes all tracks, excavations, buildings, borrow pits, cabling, site compounds, laydown areas, storage areas and any other built elements. Existing built



infrastructure should be re-used or upgraded where possible. The layout should be designed to minimise the extent of new works on previously undisturbed ground. A comparison of the environmental effects of alternative locations of infrastructure elements, such as tracks, may be required.

### **Design and Access Statement**

The Design and Access Statement should outline the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development and:

- (i) explain the policy or approach adopted as to design and how any policies relating to design in the development plan have been taken into account.
- (ii) describe the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and demonstrates how the design of the development takes that context into account in relation to its proposed use.
- (iii) state what, if any, consultation has been undertaken on issues relating to the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development; and what account has been taken of the outcome of any such consultation.

Further advice on the preparation of design statements is contained in the Council's advice note on [Design and Access Statements](#) and Scottish Government [Planning Advice Note 68](#).

### **Design Considerations**

Given the rural setting surrounding properties are relatively few and sporadic, however the closest properties are located along Essich Road approximately 500m north west to Essich Farm, 400m west to Achvraid House and 350m west Achvraid Farm from the nearest proposed battery units. Given the sloping landform and further mitigation through screening and planting it appears that site may be hidden from view from the closest properties.

Essich Road, along with roads adjacent either side of the existing substation north east and south west are popular with cyclists. These routes offer expansive views of the undulating agricultural land towards Inverness, the Moray Firth and coastline beyond. Careful consideration is required to mitigate the landscape and visual impacts on closest surrounding properties and these recreational receptors.

### **Sustainability**

The [Council's Sustainable Design Guide: Supplementary Guidance](#) provides advice and guidance on a range of sustainability topics, including design, building materials and minimising environmental impacts of development. A Sustainable Design Statement is required.

The Council recognises the importance of the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019, as the legislative tool for addressing Scotland's Climate & Ecological Emergency, which the Council committed to under its own Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration in May 2019.

Furthermore, given Highland's land mass and geography make up and renewable energy resources, it is accepted that the area has enormous potential to significantly contribute to the production of renewable energy. However, this commitment has to be taken in balance along with all other considerations of a particular site. It is appreciated that the proposal would add to the country's installed capacity for energy storage; however, such developments should still be located, sited and designed appropriately, with all battery storage sites requiring final end of life decommissioning and site restoration, with an outline restoration scheme and supporting valuation report being required, together with a financial restoration guarantee; the detail of which is encouraged to be provided at the application stage ahead of determination of the application.

The Council encourage the inclusion of electric car charging facilities within all new developments. A strategy for the provision of charging points within the development should be submitted with the application.

### **Natural Heritage**

HwLDP Policy 57 considers impacts on natural, built and cultural heritage designations and features. All development will be assessed taking into account the level of importance and type of heritage features, the form and scale of development and any impact on the feature and its setting. Of particular relevance are those landscape and other natural, built and cultural heritage features in proximity to the proposal identified in the constraints maps provided. It is positive that the site is reasonably well separated from natural heritage designations.

### **Impact on Landscape, Landscape Officer**

Whilst the Landscape Officer was unable to attend the pre-application meeting they note the viewpoint locations suggested appear appropriate, but the scale of mapping and lack of ZTV information mean they can give no more definitive response can be given at this stage.

The landscape and visual impacts are key issues that will inform our position in relation to this proposal. Your assessment should cover impacts of all elements of the development, where they are not covered under a separate application. You are strongly encouraged to provide information on all aspects of your proposal as far as possible at application stage, including information on intended grid connection, in order that the Council has the fullest understanding of the scheme.

In addition to the Landscape Institute Guidance on visualisations the applicants should have regard to the Council's own Standard. While this was drawn up with specific reference to wind energy projects, aspects will still be relevant for other proposals.

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12880/visualisation\\_standards\\_for\\_wind\\_energy\\_developments](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/12880/visualisation_standards_for_wind_energy_developments)

The Landscape Officer advise the applicants that permanent screening earthworks will only be acceptable if the earthworks themselves can be designed to fit in with the landscape character of the area. Bunds with constant depth, height and slope are unlikely to achieve this, so detailed design to ensure that earthworks do not read as an obvious landform intervention will be required. It is not clear that the bunding currently indicated would meet this standard.

While "landscaping" is referred to in the Presentation, there are no planting proposals on the detailed plan. Planting or other measures may be advisable to ameliorate the appearance of the development, with its fencing and lighting, from the minor road between the development and the Knocknagael Substation and to blend the earthworks in with the wider landscape character.

Successful establishment of tree and shrub planting will be essential and applicants should ensure that species selection, planting method and establishment maintenance is tailored to the locality.

The visualisations should include the scheme at completion and following 10 years of landscaping establishment. The viewpoint locations suggested appear appropriate but the scale of mapping and lack of ZTV information mean no more definitive response cannot be given at this stage. A ZTV of the development with the proposed viewpoints should be shared with the Council for further consideration.

The Council is aware that there is a lot of BESS interest in the wider surrounding area and as such your landscape and visual impact assessment must include an up-to-date assessment of the cumulative effects of the proposal with other similar proposals in the wider area covering an appropriate study area.

### **Impact on Trees, Forestry Officer**

Within the site it is predominantly grazed grassland but there is a group of visually significant, mature, mixed broadleaves located quite centrally within the proposed development. There are also three areas of mature mixed conifers forming a broken shelterbelt along the southern boundary of the site. There are also some mixed broadleaves around the edges of these stands which would have been part of the planting design to soften the edges. However, it is not entirely clear if these stands of trees are to be included within the site or not as the red-line position varies across the drawings. On the Site Location Plan the western and central stands of trees are included, but on the Detailed Site Plan only the western stand of trees is included within the red-line. There is a short riparian strip of mixed broadleaf trees at the northern end of the site, on the other side of the Essich Road although no development is proposed near here. There is open, mature mixed broadleaf woodland outside the site to the north-east and it is recorded in the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland. There appears to be relatively recent planting on a bund to the north-east of Knocknagael Substation which is likely to have been planted as part of a landscaping scheme. None of the woodland on or around the site is recorded in the Ancient Woodland Inventory.

### **Policy**

NPF4 Policy 6 b) notes that "Development proposals will not be supported where they will result in: ii. Adverse impacts on native woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees of high biodiversity value... iii. Fragmenting or severing woodland habitats, unless appropriate mitigation measures are identified and implemented in line with the mitigation hierarchy."

NPF4 Policy 6 c) notes that “Development proposals involving woodland removal will only be supported where they will achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits in accordance with relevant Scottish Government policy on woodland removal. Where woodland is removed, compensatory planting will most likely be expected to be delivered”.

Policy 51 (Trees and Development) of the Highland wide Local Development Plan states that ‘The Council will support development which promotes significant protection to existing hedges, trees and woodlands on and around development sites. The acceptable developable area of a site is influenced by tree impact, and adequate separation distances will be required between established trees and any new development.’

#### Proposal

It appears that a tree survey has been carried out as the individual trees in the site appear to have been plotted and there are green and pink circles which appear to represent crowns and root protection areas. It is also mentioned in the Mitigation by Design slide in the Presentation that ‘Existing category ‘A’ trees have been avoided through design’, which also indicates a tree survey has been carried out, which is welcome.

There also appears to have been consideration given to these trees and it appears that the intention is to retain and safeguard the majority of them, which is most welcome. The Landscape slide in the Presentation notes that ‘Trees will be retained where possible and a scheme of mitigation planting will be prepared as necessary to minimise landscape effects and views.’ There are two smaller trees within the construction footprint of BESS Compound 2, so some compensatory tree planting will be required.

The proposed eastern construction compound, BESS Compound 1, associated grading (cut and fill) and access tracks appear to come close to the edge of the conifer woodland and the applicant will need to ensure that all construction is outwith RPAs.

It also appears that BESS Compound 2 and associated access track would require the removal of part of the western, triangular-shaped conifer and broadleaf block, which seems unnecessary. There would appear to be adequate space to adjust the layout to ensure that woodland loss is not required.

There is a proposed cable route running to the east of the BESS, round the north side of the Substation, so any future application would need to include this proposal. The proposal should avoid trees wherever possible and if this is not possible the applicant would need to identify the amount of woodland that would be lost and provide an equivalent area of compensatory tree planting.

#### Recommendations

The applicant should design the layout to minimise the impact on woodland as much as possible. Any future application should include tree survey by a professional arboriculturist to BS 5837:2012 containing at least tree survey report, data schedule Tree Constraints Plans and Tree Protection Plans to show how retained trees/ woodland would be safeguarded from construction activity.

The applicant will also need to provide a Landscape Plan and Landscape Maintenance Plan which shows how trees to be removed are to be replaced with on-site planting and to show how the visual amenity of the local landscape is to be enriched. Where woodland is proposed to be removed, compliance with the Scottish Government’s Control of Woodland Removal policy must be demonstrated. Compensatory planting of new woodland is a clear expectation where there are any proposals for felling, and if necessary this may be off-site

#### **Impact on Peat**

It appears that there may be ‘waterlogged peat’ within the site boundary as identified within the presentation documentation.

The below therefore sets out SEPA’s information requirements and SEPA would welcome discussion around these. There may be opportunities to scope out some of the issues below depending on the site with evidence provided to support why an issue is not relevant for this site.

Where proposals are on peatland or carbon rich soils (CRS), the following should be submitted to address SEPA’s requirements in relation to NPF4 Policy 5 to protect CRS and the ecosystem services they provide (including water and carbon storage). Peatland in near natural condition

generally experiences low greenhouse gas emissions, is accumulating and may be sequestering carbon, has high value for supporting biodiversity, helps to protect water quality and contributes to natural flood management, irrespective of whether that peatland is designated for nature conservation purposes or not.

It should be clearly demonstrated that the assessment has informed careful project design and ensured, in accordance with relevant guidance and the mitigation hierarchy in NPF4, that adverse impacts are first avoided and then minimised through best practice.

The submission should include a series of layout drawings at a usable scale showing all permanent and temporary infrastructure, with extent of excavation required. These plans should be overlaid on the following:

- a. peat depth survey showing peat probe locations, colour coded using distinct colours for each depth category. This must include adequate peat probing information to inform the site layout in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy in NPF4, which may be more than that outlined in the [Peatland Survey – Guidance on Developments on Peatland \(2017\)](#).
- b. peat depth survey showing interpolated peat depths.
- c. peatland condition mapping – the [Peatland Condition Assessment](#) photographic guide lists the criteria for each condition category and illustrates how to identify each condition category.

The detailed series of layout drawings above should clearly demonstrate that development proposals avoid any near natural peatland and that all proposed excavation is on peat < 1m deep.

The layout drawings should also demonstrate that peat excavation has been avoided on sites where this is possible. On other sites where complete avoidance of peat and carbon rich soils is not possible then it should be clearly demonstrated that the deepest areas of peat have been avoided and the volumes of peat excavated have been reduced as much as possible, first through layout and then by design making use of techniques such as floating tracks.

The Outline Peat Management Plan (PMP) must include:

- a. A table setting out the volumes of acrotelmic, catotelmic and amorphous peat to be excavated. These should include a contingency factor to consider variables such as bulking and uncertainties in the estimation of peat volumes.
- b. A table clearly setting out the volumes of acrotelmic, catotelmic and amorphous excavated peat: (1) used in making good site specific areas disturbed by development, including borrow pits (quantities used in making good areas disturbed by development must be the minimum required to achieve the intended environmental benefit and materials must be suitable for the proposed use), (2) used in on and off site peatland restoration, and (3) disposed of, and the proposed means of disposal (if deemed unavoidable after all other uses of excavated peat have been explored and reviewed).
- c. Details of proposals for temporary storage and handling of peat - [Good Practice during Wind Farm Construction](#) outlines the approach to good practice when addressing issues of peat management on site and minimising carbon loss.
- d. Suitable evidence that the use of peat in making good areas disturbed by development, including borrow pits, is genuine and not a waste disposal operation, including evidence on the suitability of the peat and evidence that the quantity used matches and does not exceed the requirement of the proposed use. If peat is to be used in borrow pits on site, SEPA will require sections and plans including the phasing, profiles, depths and types of material to be used.
- e. Use of excavated peat in areas not disturbed by the development itself is now not a matter SEPA provides planning advice on. Please refer to [Advising on peatland, carbon-rich soils and priority peatland habitats in development management | NatureScot](#) 2023, and the [Peatland ACTION – Technical Compendium](#) which provides more detailed advice on peatland restoration techniques. Unless the excavated peat is certain to be used for construction purposes in its natural state on the site from where it is excavated, it will be subject to regulatory control. The use of excavated peat off-site, including for peatland restoration, will require the appropriate level of environmental authorisation. Excavated peat will be waste if it is discarded, or the holder intends to or is required to discard it. These proposals should be clearly outlined so that SEPA can identify any regulatory implications of the proposed activities. This will allow the developer and their contractors to tailor

their planning and designs to accommodate any regulatory requirements. Further guidance on this may be found in the document [Is it waste - Understanding the definition of waste.](#)

### **Biodiversity Enhancement**

As this is a major development, NPF4 Policy 3b is applicable and requires biodiversity enhancement of the site post-construction in addition to mitigation and compensation measures. In order to satisfy Policy 3b a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan that details how criteria i to v will be met, will be required in addition to the Ecology Assessment. This will demonstrate that the development will significantly enhance the biodiversity of the site from its pre-development state by at least 10%.

Where the Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan is unable to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the planning authority that the development will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, the proposal will not be supported.

The Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the development will accord with Policies 57-60 of the HwLDP. The Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan will be carried out by a suitably qualified and experienced consultant. In rare cases where site constraints result in the applicant being unable to deliver one or more of the above criteria, consideration may be given to developer contributions as to enable biodiversity enhancements to be implemented elsewhere in line with the mitigation hierarchy to allow offset, off- site measures.

### **Impact on Protected Species**

It is unclear if any protected species are located within the site given the mixture of mature broadleaves located in the centre of the site and mature mixed conifers adjacent to the southern boundary. If construction work was planned during the bird breeding season consideration of breeding birds would also be required. For further advice, see: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/standing-advice-planning-consultations-birds>.

## **Amenity**

### **Contaminated Land**

The Contaminated Land Team have confirmed there does not appear to be any potential source of contamination on site and no further information would be required to support the application.

### **Operational Noise**

You are required to submit a Noise Impact Assessment, which shall be carried out by a suitably qualified and competent person in accordance with BS 4142:2014+A1:2019 Methods for Rating and Assessing Industrial and Commercial Sound, with your application. Consideration will be given to the fact that background sound levels are likely to be low in the rural Hinterland areas on the outskirts of Inverness and that there are concerns regarding "creeping/increasing" background levels.

The noise assessment should include the following:

- A description of the proposed development in terms of noise sources.
- A plan showing the location of noise sources, noise sensitive premises and survey measurement locations.
- A survey of the background (LA90,T); ambient noise (LAeq,T), and 1/3rd octave band spectrum levels to determine the existing noise levels at sensitive receptors. Monitoring locations must be agreed beforehand with the Council's Environmental Health Service.
- A prediction of noise levels at noise sensitive premises.
- A description of any noise mitigation methods that will be employed including the calculated effect of mitigation.
- The raw data and equations used in the calculations must be made available on request.

Battery energy storage sites cannot be easily turned on and off and it may not be possible to obtain an accurate background measurement once operational. Given that noise limits will usually be wholly dependent on background levels, it is vital, to ensure that values are reliable and representative. Therefore, a minimum of 1 week's background monitoring would normally be required.

In many cases, a new battery development may be sited beside an existing substation. In such cases, a cumulative noise assessment should be submitted and any noise limits, would apply to the cumulative noise level.

However, in most cases, the owner/operator of the BESS will not be the same as the substation, therefore, it would not be possible to set a cumulative limit as a condition. The noise from any existing substation would need to be ascertained by the applicant and subtracted from the cumulative limit giving the available noise limit for the new development

The main criteria to be applied to BESS developments is for noise from the development not to exceed the background level. This is quite an onerous standard however, given that noise from battery sites will generally be 24/7, a strict noise limit is appropriate.

These developments are often in quiet rural areas and there may be difficulties in complying with the requirement not to exceed background levels. BS4142 does allow for noise to be considered in context and that could include consideration of an absolute limit in areas with very low background levels. However, while not tonal in nature, noise from battery sites is likely to be different to natural noises found in rural locations so this too should be given consideration.

Based on this and the noise assessment, planning conditions will be applied and are likely to follow -

1. Noise arising from the development, when measured and/or calculated as an LZeq, 5min, in the 100Hz one third octave frequency band must not exceed 30 dB, at the curtilage of any noise sensitive premises.

2. The Rating Level of noise arising from this development as determined in accordance with BS4142 Methods for Rating and Assessing Industrial and Commercial Sound shall not exceed XXdB(A)\* at the curtilage of any noise sensitive receptor.

\*The sound level to be applied will depend on the measured background level and the predicted sound level at the nearest noise sensitive property. Maybe open to negotiation and agreement.

3. NR20 as a design standard might be used where there is no garden or other external amenity at the noise sensitive receptor, or where background levels are very high (>40dB).

All plant, machinery and equipment associated with the development shall be so installed, maintained and operated such that any associated operating noise does not exceed NR20 when measured or calculated within any noise-sensitive property with windows open for ventilation purposes.

4. The development shall proceed in accordance with the approved Noise Impact Assessment. Mitigation measures identified in the assessment shall be in place prior to the commencement of operation and thereafter maintained in perpetuity.

5. Prior to the development becoming operational, if there are any changes to the proposed equipment or mitigation measures which could result in an increased noise level, a revised noise impact assessment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall proceed in accordance with the revised assessment.

The following conditions will likely be applied for once the site is operational -

#### 1. Compliance Monitoring on Receipt of Complaint

Within 21 days from receipt of a written request of the Planning Authority, following a complaint to it alleging noise disturbance at a noise sensitive location, the site operator shall, at its expense, employ an independent consultant to assess the level of noise in terms of compliance with consented noise limits.

The site operator shall submit the report of the independent consultant's assessment for the approval of the Planning Authority within 2 months of receiving the written request.

If the noise level exceeds the prescribed noise limits, the assessment report shall include a scheme of mitigation to be enacted, including timescales for implementation, to ensure compliance with consented noise limits.

Details of the proposed compliance monitoring must be agreed in writing beforehand with the Council's Environmental Health Service.

#### 2. Mandatory Compliance Monitoring

Within 21 days from receipt of the development becoming fully operational the site operator shall, at its expense, employ an independent consultant to assess the level of noise in terms of compliance with consented noise limits.

The site operator shall submit the report of the independent consultant's assessment for the approval of the Planning Authority within 2 months of the development becoming fully operational.

If the noise level exceeds the prescribed noise limits, the assessment report shall include a scheme of

mitigation to be enacted, including timescales for implementation, to ensure compliance with consented noise limits.

Details of the proposed compliance monitoring must be agreed in writing beforehand with the Council's Environmental Health Service

There will also be the following condition relating to the construction phase:

### **Construction Noise**

Prior to construction commencing, the applicant shall submit, for the written approval of the planning authority, a construction noise mitigation scheme which demonstrates how the applicant/contractor will ensure the best practicable measures are implemented in order to reduce the impact of construction noise. The assessment should include but is not limited to the following:

- A description of the most significant noise sources in terms of equipment; processes or phases of construction.
- The proposed operating hours and the estimated duration of the works for each phase.
- A detailed plan showing the location of noise sources, noise sensitive premises and any survey measurement locations if required).
- A description of noise mitigation methods that will be put in place including any proposals for community liaison. The best practice found in BS5228 Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites should be followed. Any divergence requires to be justified.

Thereafter the development shall progress in accordance with the approved Noise Mitigation Scheme and all approved mitigation measures shall be in place prior to construction commencing or as otherwise may be agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

### **Dust**

Depending on the proximity of the working area to houses etc. the applicant may require to submit a scheme for the suppression of dust during construction. Particular attention should be paid to construction traffic movements.

### **Private Water Supplies**

The applicant will be required to carry out an investigation to identify any private water supplies, including pipework, which may be adversely affected by the development and to submit details of the measures proposed to prevent contamination or physical disruption. Highland Council has some information on known supplies but it is not definitive. An on-site survey will be required.

### **Fire Risk Management**

The applicant should consider fire risk management, fire suppression, fire extinguishing and potential consequential effects. It is understood that the Scottish Fire Service (SFS) is currently preparing guidance for Battery Energy Storage System developments which should, when available, be of assistance and could identify an arrangement for SFS to be consulted on proposals. Our current expectation is that no development should be consented until a detailed Fire Risk Management Plan and details of emergency procedures to control fire in case of a fire event, have been provided with the application. Effective management of fire risk may require the inclusion of measures within the overall proposals that have a planning implication. In the interim, the Highland Council is in the process of preparing further guidance for developers setting out application information requirements, with this to be made available on our website and to be based upon the principles set out in the National Fire Chiefs Council, National Fire Chiefs Council, [Grid Scale Battery Energy Storage System planning – Guidance for FRS](https://nfcc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Grid-Scale-Battery-Energy-Storage-System-planning-Guidance-for-FRS.pdf) (version 1), November 2022: <https://nfcc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Grid-Scale-Battery-Energy-Storage-System-planning-Guidance-for-FRS.pdf>

### **Design Life and Decommissioning**

A Decommissioning Plan would be required with a financial guarantee being required to ensure the removal of any redundant infrastructure, restore the site with the land returning to a productive after use. This would be secured via planning condition to ensure an appropriate financial bond is put in place to secure these works throughout the lifetime of the development.

### **Contaminated Land**

The Contaminated Land Team note that having checked their database, historical Ordnance Survey maps and aerial photos, there does not appear to be a potential source of contamination onsite. Therefore, further information is not required to support the application.

## **Transport and Wider Access**

### **Impact on the Local Road Network, Transport Planning**

Whilst no site specific comments have been received from the Transport Planning Team some general advice is noted. A Transport Assessment will be required with any future application, which should quantify the predicted construction and ongoing operational traffic quantities and profiles related to the proposed development, broken down by AIL's (if required), large standard goods vehicles (HGV's) and other cars / light vans.

With regards to predicted construction traffic, the measures proposed for managing their impacts and ensuring that they can safely be accommodated onto the local public road network should be set out in a Framework Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) within the above required TS. This should confirm the proposed routing of all construction traffic to and from the development and the measures proposed to minimise their impacts to the existing road network and the users of that network. It should also include the steps that will be taken to avoid impacts during the busier periods on the local roads in that area, including during school opening and closing times.

If necessary, the need for any physical improvements to the local public road network for it to safely accommodate the predicted construction traffic should be fully set out in any submission made, including justifications why such improvements should be deemed sufficient.

Any submission will need to clarify if the construction and ongoing operations of this development will require any abnormal vehicles (AIL's) to access the site, including large cranes. If so, the submitted TS should include an AIL assessment into the implications of such vehicles using the local public roads to access this site and what, if any, mitigation will be required to safely accommodate such vehicles. Any such assessment should include reviews into both the physical ability of such large vehicles to safely negotiate the local public roads serving this site and the ability of any road structures to accommodate the loadings of such vehicles.

Subject to clarification on the likely levels and types of construction traffic associated with this development, we'd expect any submission to clarify their willingness to enter into a formal 'Wear and Tear' agreement as set out by Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. This would be to protect The Council from any extraordinary expenses in repairing local public roads damaged by vehicles associated with the construction of this development. Such an agreement will require a monitoring regime to be established for determining the condition of the local public roads used by construction traffic and recording any deterioration as a direct result of these proposed works. Any submission should set out the intended arrangements for that monitoring regime and the process of undertaking any necessary repairs.

If any condition survey undertaken prior to works commencing identifies existing areas of deterioration that may become unsafe as a direct result of the construction access requirements of this development, the Developer may wish to support The Council in delivering pre-emptive repairs to the existing carriageway. This would likely be beneficial to the Developer as it should help avoid disruption to the use of their proposed construction access routes during their works.

### **Impact on the Trunk Road Network, Transport Scotland**

The proposed development comprises the construction and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) of up to 200MW and associated infrastructure/ancillary works, including an underground cable route. The site is located adjacent to the Knocknagael Substation, south of Inverness with the nearest trunk road being the A82(T) at Torvean, approximately 6km to the north.

The information supporting the pre-app indicates that the application will be a Section 36 (Schedule 2 – Non-EIA) application, and that an Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (OCTMP) will be prepared to support the application.

The information supporting the pre-app gives no indication as to the likely number or composition of vehicular trips required during construction of the facility. Transport Scotland would seek a threshold assessment of the trunk road junction be provided to determine if there will be any impact on the A82(T)



associated with the construction of the BESS.

While no mention of Abnormal Load Deliveries (ALD) is made within the supporting information, we would assume these will be required during the construction of the BESS. It should be noted that in the event that ALDs are to be utilised, Transport Scotland will require to be satisfied that the size of loads proposed can negotiate the selected route and that their transportation will not have any detrimental effect on structures within the trunk road route path. A full Abnormal Loads Assessment report should be provided that identifies key pinch points on the trunk road network. Swept path analysis should be undertaken and details provided with regard to any required changes to street furniture or structures along the route.

In the absence of more detailed information, Transport Scotland has no further comment to make and will not be in attendance at the Pre-Application meeting in this instance.

### **Public Transport**

The Public Transport Team have comments regarding public and school transport.

### **Public Access, Access Officer**

The Access Officer has confirmed they have no comments to make on the application.

A comprehensive site assessment should confirm whether or not the public cross this site, the impact of effectively removing the footprint of the site from public access rights before, during and on completion should be assessed according to the Environmental Impact Assessment Handbook produced by NatureScot. Identification of and mitigation for the negative impacts, as well identifying opportunities to benefit public access, should form the basis of a draft access management plan that should be submitted with an application. One will be required of a major application in line with Policy 77 Public Access of the Highland wide Local Development Plan.

## **Water Environment**

### **Flood Risk, Flood Risk Management Team**

There are no watercourses within the application site boundary, although there is a small watercourse to the west. Development or landraising within any flood plain should be avoided and proposals should generally follow SEPA's Standing Advice for Flood Risk. Where any permanent infrastructure will be located in close proximity to a watercourse or waterbody, a Flood Risk Assessment should be submitted to demonstrate that the development is not at risk from flooding and will not increase flood risk elsewhere. SEPA's Technical Flood Risk Guidance for Stakeholders outlines the information required to be submitted as part of a Flood Risk Assessment.

SEPA's flood maps show the potential for surface water flooding at a number of discrete locations within the site. The applicant will need to demonstrate that the development will not be at risk of surface water flooding and will not increase the risk to others.

Small watercourse crossings should be oversized and larger scale watercourse crossings should be demonstrated to be adequately designed to accommodate the 1 in 200 year flow (including an allowance for climate change and freeboard) to avoid increasing the risk of flooding, or information provided to justify smaller structures.

A minimum buffer strip of 6m should be kept free from development from the top of bank(s) of any watercourse or waterbody. Storage of materials within this area during construction is not permitted.

Further advice and SEPA's best practice guidance are available within the water engineering section of SEPA's website: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/engineering/>.

Guidance on the design of water crossings can be found in Construction of River Crossings Good Practice Guide: <http://www.sepa.org.uk/media/151036/wat-sg-25.pdf>.

### **Flood Plain**

Development or landraising within any flood plain should be avoided and proposals should generally follow SEPA's Standing Advice for Flood Risk. Should any permanent infrastructure be located within close proximity to a watercourse a Flood Risk Assessment should be submitted to demonstrate that the development is not at risk from flooding and will not increase flood risk elsewhere. SEPA's Technical flood

risk guidance for stakeholders outlines the information required to be submitted as part of a Flood Risk Assessment: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/162602/ss-nfr-p-002-technical-flood-risk-guidance-for-stakeholders.pdf>

Small watercourse crossings should be oversized and larger scale watercourse crossings should be demonstrated to be adequately designed to accommodate the 1 in 200 year flow (including an allowance for climate change and freeboard) to avoid increasing the risk of flooding. Further information must be provided to justify any smaller structures.

A minimum buffer strip of 50m should be kept free from development from the top of bank(s) of any watercourse or waterbody. Storage of materials within this area during construction is not permitted.

Further advice and SEPA's best practice guidance is available within the water engineering section of SEPA's website: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/engineering/>.

Guidance on the design of water crossings can be found in Construction of River Crossings Good Practice Guide: <http://www.sepa.org.uk/media/151036/wat-sg-25.pdf>.

### **Drainage**

A Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA) is required. The DIA should include details relating to any existing field drains and the management of surface water drainage, which should be designed in line with general Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) principles. The applicant should demonstrate, within the proposals submitted, any mitigation measures to manage the residual risk of overland flow/pluvial flooding.

Natural flood management techniques should also be applied to reduce the rate of runoff where possible. Tracks should not act as preferential pathways for runoff and efforts should be made to retain the existing drainage network. Appropriate drainage is required to restrict runoff to pre-development rates and to minimise erosion to existing watercourses. The DIA should ensure that post development runoff rate is no greater than pre-development runoff rate (i.e. greenfield runoff) for all return periods up to the 1 in 200 year event including an allowance for climate change.

Runoff from all events up to and including the 1 in 200 year plus climate change event should be managed within the site boundary, with no flooding to critical roads or buildings, and evidence as to how this will be achieved should be included within the DIA.

Refer to the Council's Flood Risk and Drainage Impact: Supplementary Guidance for further detailed requirements:

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/2954/flood\\_risk\\_and\\_drainage\\_impact\\_assessment\\_supplementary\\_guidance](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/2954/flood_risk_and_drainage_impact_assessment_supplementary_guidance)

### **SEPA**

SEPA welcomes pre-application engagement, but please be aware that SEPA's advice at this stage is based on emerging proposals and it cannot rule out potential further information requests as the project develops. Similarly, its advice is given without prejudice to our formal planning response, or any decision made on elements of the proposal regulated by SEPA, which may take into account factors not considered at the pre-application or planning stage.

Each of the drawings requested below must detail all proposed upgraded, temporary and permanent infrastructure. This includes all tracks, excavations, buildings, borrow pits, pipelines, cabling, site compounds, laydown areas, storage areas and any other built elements. All drawings must be based on an adequate scale with which to assess the information.

SEPA would very much welcome further early engagement with the developer as the project develops and more information is known about the layout. SEPA encourages the developer to keep in contact via [REDACTED]. SEPA would especially welcome the opportunity to provide advice on a draft layout once peat probing and habitat survey has been carried out and when more is known about supporting infrastructure.

SEPA directs the applicant to their standard advice – which is available from [www.sepa.org.uk/media/594101/sepa-triage-framework-and-standing-advice.pdf](http://www.sepa.org.uk/media/594101/sepa-triage-framework-and-standing-advice.pdf). This advice covers most of

the issues in relation to SEPA's interests for this development and SEPA provides the below site specific advice in this case.

### **Ground Water Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems**

Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) are protected under the Water Framework Directive. Excavations and other construction works can disrupt groundwater flow and impact on GWDTE and existing groundwater abstractions. The layout and design of the development must avoid impacts on such areas.

A National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey should be submitted which includes the following information:

- a. A set of drawings demonstrating all GWDTE and existing groundwater abstractions are outwith a 100m radius of all excavations shallower than 1m and outwith 250m of all excavations deeper than 1m and proposed groundwater abstractions. The survey needs to extend beyond the site boundary where the distances require it.
- b. If the minimum buffers cannot be achieved, a detailed site specific qualitative and/or quantitative risk assessment will be required. Please refer to [Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Development Proposals on Groundwater Abstractions and Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems](#) for further advice and the minimum information SEPA requires to be submitted.

Please note that due to discrepancies in habitat definition and ambiguity in correspondence with NVC types we do not accept the use of The UK Habitat Classification System (UKHab) as an alternative to NVC.

### **Water Attenuation – Fire Risk**

The Fire Risk Management Plan and details of emergency procedures to control fire in case of a fire event, are required to be provided with the application. This should include details of the intended water source / hydrant to be used, as well as details of how any contaminated fire water would be retained and treated onsite before being discharged from site. It is noted that there are waterbodies in proximity to the site, their suitability for use may be with investigating further, with any potential connection to be included within the application site.

### **Built and Cultural Heritage**

#### **Impact on the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Scotland**

No comments have been received from Historic Environment Scotland but their intention is to submit these late and they will be passed on separately.

#### **Impact on the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Team**

No comments have been received from the Historic Environment Team.

Whilst no site specific comments have been received from the Historic Environment Team given the presence of Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the vicinity of the proposal, there is potential for archaeology to be disturbed by development and an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) is likely to be required. A WSI should include details of how the recording and recovery of archaeological resources found within the application site shall be undertaken, and how any updates, if required, to the written scheme of investigation will be provided throughout the implementation of the programme of archaeological works. Should any archaeological works reveal the need for post excavation analysis, a Post-Excavation Research Design (PERD) for the analysis, publication, and dissemination of results and archive deposition will be required.

### **Pre-Application Procedures**

#### **Proposal of Application Notice**

The Town and Country Planning (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2021 came into force from 01 October 2021.

This requires a formal Proposal of Application Notice to be submitted to the Planning Authority at least 12 weeks prior to any formal planning application being lodged and any subsequent planning application must be accompanied by a Pre-application Community Consultation report. Further information is provided on the Council website, please see the Proposal of Application Notice section [here](#).

## **Public Consultation**

Public consultation should be undertaken as the proposals develop to help both gauging the opinion of the local community and also scoping potential areas of conflict which could be addressed prior to submission of the application.

When carrying out community consultation we recommend that full consideration is taken of Scottish Government Planning Advice Note 3/2010 - Community Engagement. This includes the standards for community involvement which should be adhered to. These standards are:

- Involvement
- Support
- Planning
- Methods
- Working together
- Sharing information
- Working with others
- Improvement
- Feedback
- Monitoring and evaluation

It is advisable to take into consideration all of the comments made by members of the public before a planning application is submitted to ensure that the public feel they have had an influence over the proposals. For public consultation it may be useful to use the SP=EED tool developed by Planning Aid Scotland. This builds on the Standards for Community Engagement set out in PAN 3/2010. This is available online at <https://www.pas.org.uk/>.

## **Environmental Impact Assessment Screening**

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 requires the proposal to be screened to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required to support a planning application. Whilst electrical energy storage facilities are not explicitly listed within either Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 of the aforementioned regulations, a broad interpretation of the scope of the EIA Regulations must be adopted. Under section 3(a) Schedule 2, 'Energy Industry' projects relating to Industrial installations for the production of electricity, steam and hot water where the area of the development exceeds 0.5 ha, the project must be screened to determine if any significant environmental effects are likely to arise by virtue of the factors such as size, nature or location.

It is noted that a formal request for a EIA Screening has been made in writing to the Planning Authority (24/01399/SCRE) and is currently pending consideration.

## **Community Councils**

In terms of the appropriate Community Councils to consult, the proposal is located within the Dores and Essich Community Council area. A development of the nature proposed may affect a number of adjacent Community Councils, as such it is recommended that adjacent Community Councils are also consulted.

The Ward Manager Charles Stephen can provide advice further in this regard if required. Contact details for all community Councils can be found [here](#).

## **Access**

It would be beneficial to at this stage consult with the local Disability Access Panel. The contact details for your local panel are:

Inverness Access Committee, c/o Shopmobility, Falcon Gallery Car Park, Inverness, IV2 3PR

For general advice in relation to the removal of barriers and the promotion of equal access for all people affected by disability for your development contact the [Scottish Disability Equality Forum](#), 12 Enterprise House, Springkerse Business Park, Stirling, FK7 7UF. Telephone: (01786) 446456.

## **Application Procedures**

### **Processing Agreements**

A processing agreement is a way of helping developers, the Council and relevant stakeholders work together through the planning process. It involves setting out the key stages involved in deciding a planning

application, identifying what information is required from whom and setting time scales for the various stages of the process.

The Council actively encourages the use of processing agreements for major applications. You are advised to contact the Council's Major Application Team with a view to agreeing a Processing Agreement at the earliest possible opportunity. Contact details are provided in section 18 towards the end of this pack.

### **Councillors Code of Conduct**

It would be beneficial for you to be familiar with the Councillors' Code of Conduct. This is available online at the Standards Commission for Scotland [website](#).

### **Scheme of Delegation**

All applications will be determined in line with the Council's Scheme of Delegation. It would be beneficial for you to familiarise yourself with the scheme. This is available [online](#).

### **Submission Documents**

As the Council can process files of a maximum size of only 10MB the submission must be divided into appropriately named sections.

## **Any Other Appropriate Information**

### **Gaelic**

In line with the Council's ongoing commitment to promote the increased use of Gaelic in developments within the Highlands, you are encouraged to consider the use of bilingual signs - both internal and external - as part of your proposal. Our Gaelic Translation Officers are able to provide additional advice and help with translations, if required.

For further information and guidance, please contact [gaelic@highland.gov.uk](mailto:gaelic@highland.gov.uk)

To download a copy of the Council's 'Using Gaelic in Signs' advice note, please visit:  
[https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/11857/guidelines\\_on\\_the\\_use\\_of\\_gaelic\\_in\\_highland\\_council\\_services](https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/11857/guidelines_on_the_use_of_gaelic_in_highland_council_services)

For details on grant funding for bilingual signage, please contact Comunn na Gàidhlig on (01463) 724287 or visit [www.cnag.org](http://www.cnag.org).

## **Contacts**

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

## **Disclaimer**

This advice is based on the information submitted and is given without prejudice to the future consideration of and decision on any application received by The Highland Council.

Pre-application case files are not publicly available but can be the subject of Freedom of Information and

Environmental Information Regulations requests.

## Useful Weblinks

The Highland Council Development Plans

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local\\_and\\_statutory\\_development\\_plans](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans)

*Highland Council Supplementary and Development Guidance Listed by Category:*

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory/52/development\\_guidance](https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory/52/development_guidance)

*Siting and Design Quality:*

THC Sustainable Design Guide

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory\\_record/683409/sustainable\\_design](https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/683409/sustainable_design)

*Roads/Access and Transport*

More information on access and parking standards (incl. small housing developments) can be found at:

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads\\_and\\_pavements/101/permits\\_for\\_working\\_on\\_public\\_roads/4](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20005/roads_and_pavements/101/permits_for_working_on_public_roads/4)

*Access Panel*

The Council encourages applicants at pre-application stage to engage with the local Disability Access Panel to consider accessibility improvements for physically disabled and sensory impaired people. The Highland Council have published a [Planning Protocol for Effective Engagement with Access Panels](#), which you should take into consideration

Access Panels Contact Info-

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/751/equality\\_diversity\\_and\\_citizenship/326/equality\\_and\\_diversity\\_contacts/4](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/751/equality_diversity_and_citizenship/326/equality_and_diversity_contacts/4)

*Scottish Government*

Scottish Government Building, Planning and Design Pages

<https://www.gov.scot/building-planning-and-design/>

Scottish Government Planning and Architecture Guidance

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/planning-architecture/planning-guidance/>

Scottish Planning Policy

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-planning-policy/>

*Scottish Water*

Contact Scottish Water for guidance on connections to the public water/drainage network:

<https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/en/Business-and-Developers/Connecting-to-Our-Network/Pre-Development-Information/Planning-Your-Development>

*SEPA*

You can find more information on SUDS at: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/diffuse-pollution/diffuse-pollution-in-the-urban-environment/>

You can view SEPA's small-scale developments guidance here:

<https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/small-scale-sewage-discharges/>

You can view SEPA's flood risk map here: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/water/flooding/flood-maps/>

CAR Licensing - [https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/34761/car\\_a\\_practical\\_guide.pdf](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/34761/car_a_practical_guide.pdf)

### *Historic Environment*

The Highland Historic Environment Record (HER) contains detailed information about listed buildings, conservation areas and archaeological sites in the Highland area:

<http://her.highland.gov.uk>

General advice on development affecting historic designations can be found at:

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/>

### *Protected Species -SNH*

More information on Scotland's protected species and areas can be found at:

<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/safeguarding-protected-areas-and-species/protected-species>

<https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/natural-heritage-advice-planners-and-developers/planning-and-development-protected-areas>

### *Trees and Woodland*

The Scottish Government's woodland strategy and associated policies can be found here:

<https://forestry.gov.scot/support-regulations/control-of-woodland-removal>

The Council's guidance on tree/woodland issues can be found here:

[http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1225/countryside\\_farming\\_and\\_wildlife/63/trees\\_and\\_forestry/](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1225/countryside_farming_and_wildlife/63/trees_and_forestry/)