Appendix B

Routeing Appraisal Methodology

Table B.1: Routeing Appraisal Methodology Table

Criterion	Sub-criteria	Objectives	Methodology
Length of Route	Length of Route Option (Holford Rule 3)	To choose the shortest and most direct route (Holford Rule 3).	Holford Rule 3 states, "*other things being equal, choose the most direct line*". Although this rule primarily relates to avoiding sharp changes in direction, and therefore the need for more visually intrusive angle poles, choosing the most direct route may result in fewer adverse environmental effects than a longer, less direct route (taking due consideration of other constraints). The approximate length of the centre line of each route option is calculated using Geographical Information Systems (GIS).
Landscape and Visual Amenity	■ Locally Designated Landscapes, including Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) and the Pentland Hills Regional Park (Holford Rule 2) ■ Landscape Character Types (LCT) (Holford Rules 4, 5, 6 and 7), including Landscape Susceptibility. ■ Residential Visual Amenity with '150m trigger for consideration zone' (similar to Holford Rule 4) ■ Tourism and Recreation: potential for views from OS promoted viewpoints, Sustrans routes, Core Paths, long distance promoted trails, tourist attractions and recreational areas such as golf courses and Country Parks (Notes on Clarification to the Holford Rules)	■ To seek to avoid/reduce, as far as practical, effects on designated landscapes (Holford Rule 1 and 2). ■ To contribute to the understanding of likely landscape and visual sensitivities within different areas for routeing (Holford Rules 4, 5, 6 and 7). ■ To seek to avoid/reduce, as far as practicable, potential effects on views from residential receptors. ■ To seek to avoid/reduce, as far as practicable, potential effects on formal/informal recreational areas and tourism features. (Further Notes on Clarification to the Holford Rules).	There are no Holford Rule 1 designations (National Scenic Areas) located within the study area. Holford Rule 2 areas of local value have therefore been mapped and identified to inform the appraisal. These include areas of scenic value designated at local level (e.g., Special Landscape Areas (SLAs), and which have a level of protection in a Local Development Plan (LDP), and other designations such as the Pentland Hills Regional Park. The potential for effects on the identified special qualities of these designated areas are appraised where present within the study area. The NatureScot's digital map-based national Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (published in 2019)[26] is used as the basis for determining the susceptibility of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) across the study area. This is supplemented by information contained within relevant published landscape capacity studies and observations made during fieldwork to appraise the relative landscape 'fit' of each route option. Landscape susceptibility refers to the ability of the landscape to accommodate a particular kind of change without significant change in its character, in this instance the introduction of wood pole 132kV OHL development. During the appraisal of route options, indicators of landscape susceptibility are considered to ensure the most appropriate landscape 'fit' of the proposed OHL development. Reflecting Holford Rules 4, 5 and 6, the appraisal considers aspects of landscape character including landform and scale, landcover and pattern (e.g. in terms of topography or field boundaries), the presence of other man-made influence, the presence and distribution of settlement and evidence of existing and likely future change within the landscape. The findings of the landscape susceptibility appraisal are presented in **Appendix E**. In all areas, routeing should seek a positive fit between the type and scale of OHL and the receiving landscape character. Routes with a positive landscape fit are likely to give rise to less severe, fewer, and less widespread effects on landscape character. Routes with a poorer landscape fit, for example running along ridge lines, or cutting across valleys, are likely to have greater effects on landscape character. The appraisal also considers landscape sensitivity, with reference to both the susceptibility of the landscape to the type and scale of OHL development proposed and the value attributed to the landscape through formal designation or otherwise, using published baseline landscape character information. As effects on views and visual amenity are experienced by people as receptors, receptors at their homes are often judged to be most susceptible to changes in views and visual amenity. Residential dwellings are mapped, and 150 m buffers on these are applied as 'trigger for consideration zones' for residential visual amenity to reflect the principles within the Further Notes on Clarification to the Holford Rules and published Landscape Institute Guidance on Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) (TGN 02/2019)[27]. Potential effects on residential visual amenity are considered with regard to locations where these buffers overlapped with each route option. Particular consideration is given to higher concentrations of residential receptors within close proximity of route options that may result in pinch points. The implications for principal views from individual properties are considered, informed by aerial photography and field work. Approved and validated planning applications for residential dwellings which are not yet constructed are considered as 'committed development' under the Land Use topic where present within the route option (see section on Land Use below). In relation to residential amenity, approved and validated[28] planning applications for residential dwellings within 150m of the route option are considered in the identification of pinch points. It is

[26] https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/landscape/landscape-character-assessment/scottish-landscape-character-types-map-and-descriptions
[27] https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2019/03/tgn-02-2019-rvaa.pdf
[28] Undetermined planning applications are those which have been validated, i.e. are 'live' applications, but have not yet been decided.

Criterion	Sub-criteria	Objectives	Methodology
			recognised that the degree of certainty of construction of these two types of potential future development differs. Consideration is also given to visual amenity experienced by people within a 2km radius of the route options at locations where recreational activities are undertaken, including tourist attractions. To inform consideration of visual amenity, a number of potential receptors (i.e. areas where people are undertaking recreation or visiting tourist attractions where views of the surrounding landscape are important to that experience) are identified and mapped, including but not limited to golf courses, country parks, holiday/caravan parks, promoted visitor attractions, promoted tourist routes/core paths and long-distance walking/cycle routes. Data on recreation and tourism interests is gathered using a desk-based approach using Ordnance Survey maps, aerial satellite imagery and GIS datasets supplemented by fieldwork. Outdoor tourist attractions, promoted viewpoints and formal recreational facilities, where the surrounding landscape contributes to the recreational experience, were identified from Ordnance Survey maps, fieldwork, and tourist information. Transport routes are identified from Ordnance Survey maps. The potential for visual amenity effects on users of these features is considered in relation to professional judgements about the likely sensitivity of receptors, observations made during fieldwork and the type and scale of the proposed OHL.
Biodiversity	■ Ramsar Sites (Holford Rule 1) ■ Special Protection Areas (SPA) (Holford Rule 1) ■ Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Holford Rule 1) ■ Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) (Holford Rule 1) ■ Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) Reserves (Holford Rule 2) ■ Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) (Holford Rule 2)	■ To seek to avoid/reduce, as far as practical, effects on the qualifying features of designated sites of nature conservation importance (Holford Rule 1 and 2).	In accordance with Holford Rule 1, areas of highest environmental value are mapped to identify whether any of these areas are located within the study area. In accordance with Holford Rule 2, areas of regional or local value are also mapped to determine their presence (or lack of) within the study area. These include Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) (including RSPB Reserves), Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS) / Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) Reserves. Physical effects on areas of 'highest amenity value' and regional or local value were identified based on the size/location of the designated sites which the route option overlaps, reflecting the potential to avoid locating the wood poles supporting the overhead line (OHL) within the designated site at the detailed design stage. Holford Rule 1 sites will have been avoided where possible in identifying the route options. Where, due to insurmountable technical reasons, a designated site cannot be avoided due to its size or geographic location, the general preference would be to route through the larger site as this is likely to be able to accommodate an OHL more readily than a smaller site (due to the smaller proportion of the overall site area that the OHL would affect). The appraisal also considers the distance of the route options to ecological designations and their qualifying features and identifies a route preference considering these factors. Where possible, the connectivity and pathways for impact (e.g. via watercourse or functionally linked habitat) are also considered with the route options with the lowest potential for pathway-related effects on designations being preferred. Where Holford Rule 1 designated sites with non-avian qualifying species are located within 2km of a route option, these are considered within the appraisal, while Scottish Wildlife Trust Reserves located within 1km of a route option and Local Nature Conservation Sites, Local Biodiversity Sites, and Local Wildlife Sites (including those which are confirmed and proposed) located within each route option were considered within the appraisal. The habitats and species within the designation are considered, as well as any functional ecological connectivity to the route option and the likelihood of effects on the species' metapopulations within and beyond the boundaries of the designated sites. Note that woodlands on the Ancient Woodland Inventory are considered under forestry, below. An ornithological 'trigger for consideration' zone of 2km is applied around designations for which birds are a qualifying feature, including SPAs, Ramsar Sites, SSSIs and RSPB Reserves. A 2km zone is applied because bird species that are qualifying features of designated sites may be reliant on habitats adjacent to, but outside, the designated site boundaries: for example, qualifying species nesting within the SPA may forage up to 2km from nest sites. Hence, the presence of a route within a 2km 'trigger for consideration' zone may present a risk of disturbance and collision for individuals of these species, and the risk is considered to be proportionate to the length of the route which intersects with the 2km zone. The appraisal states the length of route which intersects with the 'trigger for consideration zone' and considers whether this zone can be avoided during the detailed alignment stage and/or whether suitable mitigation can be implemented during construction/operation. Other species such as breeding Schedule 1 birds (outwith the boundaries of designated sites), European Protected Species (such as otters) and other nationally protected species (such as water vole and badger) will be considered during the detailed alignment and subsequent assessment stage, informed by the findings of field surveys.

Criterion	Sub-criteria	Objectives	Methodology
			As far as possible, hydrology and forestry data sets are also reviewed as they indicate the presence of habitats such as open water and woodland. The appraisal considers the level of sensitivity of the habitat, the species this habitat is likely to support, and its distance from/degree of overlap with the route option. Ancient Woodland was also considered within this category. The absence of an ecological feature from the datasets cannot be taken to represent actual absence. Habitat distribution patterns should be interpreted with caution as they may reflect survey/reporting effort rather than actual distribution.
Cultural Heritage	■ Scheduled Monuments (Holford Rule 1) ■ Listed Buildings (Holford Rule 1) ■ Conservation Areas (Holford Rule 1) ■ Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDL) (Holford Rule 1) ■ Inventory Historic Battlefields (Holford Rule 1) ■ Non-designated heritage assets (Holford Rule 2)	■ To seek to avoid/minimise, as far as practical, direct physical change on designated features of cultural heritage interest ('heritage assets') or change in their settings which would harm their cultural significance or perception (Holford Rule 1 and 2).	In accordance with Holford Rule 1, areas of highest environmental value are mapped to identify whether any of these areas are present within the study area. These include: ■ Scheduled Monuments (SMs): SMs are monuments of national importance, given legal protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. ■ Category A Listed Buildings: In Scotland, Listed Buildings are protected under the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (Scotland) Act 1997. Buildings of special architectural or historic interest are divided into three categories to reflect their degree of interest. Category A Listed Buildings are considered to be of national or international importance. ■ Conservation Areas (CAs): CAs are considered worthy of preservation or enhancement because of their special architectural or historic interest. They are given legal protection under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997. ■ Inventory Gardens and Designed Landscapes (GDLs): GDLs which are particularly important for their scenic quality and historic interest and are an important element of Scotland's historic environment and landscape. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) select nationally important sites for the Inventory under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and maintains that Inventory of GDLs that meet criteria published in HES' Designation Policy and Selection Guidance[29]. ■ Inventory of Historic Battlefields (Scotland): HES maintains an Inventory of Historic Battlefields which is a list of national important battlefields in Scotland that meet the criteria published in HES' Designation Policy and Selection Guidance[30]. World Heritage Sites (WHS) would otherwise be included, but there are no WHS located within the study area. In addition to the areas of highest environmental value above, and in accordance with Holford Rule 2, non-designated heritage assets are also identified to inform the appraisal. For example, non-designated assets recorded on Canmore[31]. Policy and guidance seeks the preservation[32] of heritage assets and their setting and the routeing appraisal therefore focusses on the ways in which harm could arise to assets via: ■ Direct physical change[33]; ■ Change in the setting of assets which affects their cultural significance[34]; and ■ Change in the setting of assets which affects how the asset and its cultural significance is appreciated[35]. The cultural heritage appraisal provides a high-level consideration of effects to the heritage significance of: ■ Designated assets identified by HES data; and ■ Non-designated heritage assets identified using Canmore. The methodology for assessing potential direct physical change comprises identifying the number, extent and nature of designated and non-designated heritage assets. These are then noted in relation to the opportunity, or otherwise, for avoiding direct physical change at the detailed routeing stage.

[29] https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=8d8bbaeb-ce5a-46c1-a558-aa2500ff7d3b
[30] https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=8d8bbaeb-ce5a-46c1-a558-aa2500ff7d3b
[31] National Record of the Historic Environment
[32] Generally held, as a result of legal precedent, as meaning "to do no harm to", i.e. an asset could change but if this change is not harmful to its cultural significance then it would be understood as having been preserved.
[33] For example, this could include change to the key characteristics or fabric of a designated, or non-designated asset.
[34] For example, this could include blocking or obstructing the line of sight from a defensive asset and a topographic feature it was sited to observe/control (e.g. from a medieval castle to the river crossing it policed), or obscuring or obstructing intervisibility between related monuments.
[35] For example, this could include placing infrastructure in a location which affects appreciation of an asset (e.g. a pole being visible on a hillside when the principal elevation of a listed building is seen from its approach road/drive, or where it might lie within a designed vista from a listed building or a GDL).

Criterion	Sub-criteria	Objectives	Methodology
			Potential effects of the OHL arising from how it may affect the cultural significance of historic assets as a result of change within their settings is assessed by initially identifying assets within the route option itself and within 3km of the route options (the distance within which potentially significant effects are considered most likely to occur). These are then reviewed to identify those with susceptibility for harm to their cultural significance associated with the proposed OHL being within their setting. With some exceptions, consideration is not given to effects related to setting change for non-designated heritage assets at this stage. The non-designated heritage assets where effects associated with setting change are considered are due to those assets forming part of a related system with a designated asset and where the proposed OHL may affect how these relationships can be understood (e.g. a Roman fort SM and associated non-designated sections of Roman road).
Forestry and Woodland	■ Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) (Holford Rule 1) ■ Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) (Holford Rule 2) ■ National Forest Inventory (NFI) (Holford Rule 5)	To seek to avoid/reduce, as far as practical, effects on forestry, particularly areas of ancient woodland (Holford Rule 1) and native woodland (Holford Rule 2, and on future forestry operations (Holford Rule 5).	Notes c) and d) in respect of Rules 4 and 5 of the Holford Rules state "*where possible follow open space and run alongside, not through woodland or commercial forestry and consider opportunities for skirting edges of copses and woods. Protect existing vegetation including woodland and hedgerows, and safeguard visual and ecological links with the surrounding landscape*". On this basis, forest and woodland areas within each of the route options are identified through the use of aerial photography, combined with digital data available from NatureScot and Scottish Forestry (SF) sources. Forests and woodland are divided into three groupings: **Table 1.1:** Ancient Woodland (as recorded on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) of Scotland)[36]. **Table 1.2:** Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS). **Table 1.3:** National Forest Inventory (NFI) for the UK[37]. It is recognised that there is often an overlap between the three records. Appraisal against the forestry and woodland criterion comprises analysis of the extent and location of each forest and woodland type within the route options to identify net areas for these three forest and woodland types. A GIS-based calculation is run to identify the total area (hectares (ha)) of woodland, of each forestry category listed above, present within each route option. As ancient woodland areas are also included in the NFI, the total area of 'other' (non-ancient) woodland is calculated by subtracting the total AWI area from the total NFI area. Although the AWI and NFI datasets do not always precisely align in individual cases (it is possible for areas contained within the AWI not to feature in the NFI), visual inspection indicates that the datasets are sufficiently aligned across the route options for the purposes of route option appraisal using this calculation method. In general terms, the objective in identifying a preferred route is based on identifying the lowest impact for all three types of forest and woodland. This requires a subjective review which places greater weight on reducing the impact on type 1 and also 3 ahead of type 2. This reflects the importance of the local resource of these woodland types and as such, the implications of the proposed removal of this type of woodland within the wayleave (area of woodland felled to accommodate the OHL). The method of appraisal of route options seeks to minimise effects particularly on areas of ancient woodland, due to the value of this resource as reflected in NPF4. In addition, for the AWI designated areas, consideration is given as to whether this woodland type is a Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) rather than continuing to be of native woodland species. While still recognising the importance of PAWS sites it is considered important to identify these separately from other AWI designations. GIS mapping is used to support commentary in the appraisal table as to whether woodland of different types can potentially be avoided through detailed design or whether it cannot (assuming that the final wayleave within woodland will be up to 60 m in width (i.e. 30 m on either side of the OHL)), e.g. if it spans the entire width of the route option, with observations being made concerning the implications of this. Due to the often scattered and broken nature of natural forests and woodland, for example, there is frequently the opportunity to avoid areas through careful consideration of the detailed route alignment. Based on the above, a judgement is made as to which route option is preferred. Consideration is also be given to minimising impacts on forestry and woodland at the detailed route alignment stage, taking account of the need to create long term stable forest edges and to minimise impacts on forestry and woodland

[36] Ancient Woodland (as recorded on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) of Scotland) encompasses: Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and Plantation on Ancient Woodland (PAWS); Long Established woodlands of Plantation Origin (LEPO); and other woodlands on Rob Roy sites.
[37] Updated where necessary to reflect woodlands recently planted and not yet updated in the NFI

Criterion	Sub-criteria	Objectives	Methodology
			management practices. During the alignment/EIA stage consideration will be given to all three forest and woodland types through: ■ taking account of existing, and planned, windfirm boundaries to minimise sterilisation of commercial forestry and woodland areas and reduce the requirements for additional felling outwith the wayleave; ■ taking account of forest design plans and liaising with forestry owners/managers to avoid, or reduce restrictions on forest management operations/techniques e.g. maintaining access to woodland blocks for harvesting/safety; and ■ identification of opportunities to retain and/or plant particularly lower growing shrub species within the wayleave.
Peat, Geology, Hydrology & Hydrogeology	■ NatureScot Priority Peatland Habitats (Class 1 and Class 2) (Holford Rule 1) ■ NatureScot Peatland Habitats (Classes 3, 4 and 5) ■ Geological Conservation Review (GCR) Area ■ Waterbodies / watercourses ■ Flood Zones and Drinking Water Protected Areas	■ To seek to avoid/reduce loss of peatlands in accordance with National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (Holford Rule 1). ■ To avoid locating wood poles within/near watercourses and waterbodies to reduce/eliminate any negative impact on water quality/quantity ■ To cross flood zones at their narrowest point to minimise locating infrastructure within flood zones, where possible.	The presence of NatureScot Priority Peatland Habitats is also considered during the route appraisal. NatureScot have published a series of maps and guidance documents relating to Priority Peatlands (Mapping of Carbon Rich Soil, Deep Peat and Priority Peatlands (CPP) (July 2016)). By dividing peatland habitat types into 5 broad 'classes', NatureScot have mapped those areas of Scotland of greatest value for carbon sequestration through peat formation. Class 1 and 2 peatlands are those which offer greatest restoration and carbon-sequestration potential and should be avoided as far as possible. GIS is used to identify the location of Class 1 and 2 peatlands with respect to the length and/or area of intersection of the route option. Professional judgement is applied to identify the possibility of avoiding effects upon the constraint via detailed design; and, where the constraint is unavoidable, the severity of potential effects upon it is identified, taking into account mitigation. The avoidance of all peat is a consideration and areas of Class 3, 4 and 5 peat will also be considered in the route appraisal using the NatureScot GIS data to identify locations. It should be noted there is no Class 2 peatland located within the Study Area. Geological Conservation Review Areas, as mapped and identified by NatureScot[38], have also been mapped and considered as part of the Routeing considerations for completeness. GCR were initially identified by the Nature Conservation Committee in 1977 and have informed the process of selecting areas of national and international importance for geology and geomorphology across the UK. Since then, GCRs are regularly updated by the UK's conservation bodies, including NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage). Where GCRs have already informed SSSI or LNCR designations, these have been commented on within the Biodiversity appraisal. GIS is also used to map watercourses / waterbodies and Drinking Water Protected Areas to identify those which interact with the route options. The location of each constraint with respect to the route option; the length and/or area of intersection of the route option with the constraint is identified. Professional judgement is then applied to identify the possibility of avoiding effects upon the constraint via detailed design; and, where the constraint is unavoidable, the severity of potential effects upon it, taking into account mitigation. To avoid potential conflicts with policy relating to flooding and to avoid potential increases to flood risk, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) online flood mapping tool is used to review SEPA flood zones and location of the route options relative to the flood plain and SEPA 200-year + climate change flood zones are mapped using GIS. When appraising the route options, the ability to span the flood zone (maximum span of approximately 100m for wood poles) is considered. The appraisal considers the potential to cross the flood zone at the narrowest point, all other environmental / technical considerations being equal.
Planning and Land Use	■ Local Development Plan (LDP) Allocations (Holford Rule 7) ■ Committed Development (Consented and Undetermined[39] Planning Applications) (Holford Rule 7) ■ Scotland Land Capability for Agriculture Classes 1, 2 and 3.1 (Holford Rule 7)	■ Avoid, where possible, land use conflict with committed development including consented and undetermined planning applications and land allocated within an LDP (Holford Rule 7). ■ To seek to avoid/reduce, as far as practical, effects on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land (Holford Rule 7). Identify potential areas of former mine workings or instability	The land use appraisal identifies potential conflicts between the route options and existing and future, i.e. planned or consented but not yet constructed/operational, land uses. Land which is already allocated for development within the route options, for example, through a Local Development Plan (LDP), and land which is subject to a valid planning application or planning permission, also presents the potential for future land use conflicts. Land of this type is referred to as 'committed development' in the appraisal, although it is taken into account that the degree of likelihood of future land use conflict varies within this type (e.g. land with a planning consent as against land with a validated planning application that has not yet been determined). All approved and validated planning applications available on the relevant planning authority's online Planning Portal as of the 25 April 2024, including those at appeal, have been considered as part of this planning

[38] Geological Conservation Review Sites have been identified by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/local-designations/geological-conservation-review-sites
[39] Undetermined planning applications are those which have been validated, i.e. are 'live' applications, but have not yet been decided.

Criterion	Sub-criteria	Objectives	Methodology
	Coal Authority Planning Review Area		appraisal. Developments consented prior to April 2019[40] are considered either likely not to be constructed (as the consent will likely have expired[41]) or to have already been constructed and therefore should now be captured as existing development within relevant data used to inform the appraisal across all topics. Planning applications considered within the cut-off period include applications which have received planning permission or planning permission in principle (PPiP) consent; applications for approval of matters specified in conditions (AMSC) associated with PPiP consents granted prior to the April 2019 cut-off date; and applications which have been validated, i.e. are 'live' applications, but not yet determined. To avoid duplication, applications for Non-Material Amendments, Condition Variations or Discharge of Conditions were not referenced in the appraisal where these related to a planning application which had already been captured under other categories. When appraising the route options, where a committed development is located (fully or partially) within the route option, the implications of this for the detailed routeing/alignment design and/or subsequent environmental assessment stage are highlighted. Both residential and non-residential committed developments have been considered within the appraisal: for example, residential dwellings, holiday lets, agricultural buildings, etc. However, small scale householder planning applications within the curtilages of existing residential properties have not been included within the appraisal table; it is understood that detailed routeing will ensure sufficient minimum distances are maintained where practicable between dwellings and the Cloich Forest Wind Farm Connection Project, and minor applications can be spanned and avoided. Route options with the lowest number of committed developments present, or where the committed developments could be avoided through detailed design, are generally preferred. As outlined above, the land use appraisal also considers land which is allocated for a specific purpose within the LDP for each Council area: ■ The City of Edinburgh Council (CoEC); ■ West Lothian Council (WLC); ■ Midlothian Council (MC); ■ South Lanarkshire Council (SLC); and ■ The Scottish Borders Council (SBC). The appraisal assesses the extent to which areas allocated within the LDPs are present within the route options. A judgement is made as to whether areas allocated under either LDP can or cannot be avoided during the detailed design stage. Route options which avoid or cross fewer allocated areas within the LDPs are preferred. Areas of current or future mineral extraction areas have also been identified as part of the planning history search and through the review of the LDP policy allocations, and what the implications for the routes are (i.e. whether these areas should or can be avoided, or what mitigation would need to be considered at detailed siting stage). The Coal Authority interactive map[42] has been reviewed to obtain information on areas of potential shallow mine workings and locations of mine entries for completeness. The appraisal also considers the Land Capability for Agriculture classification system which is used to rank land based on its potential productivity and cropping flexibility. This is determined by the extent to which the physical characteristics of the land (soil, climate and relief) impose long term restrictions on its use. The LCA is a seven-class system, whereby classes 1, 2 and 3.1 in Scotland are referred to as 'Best and Most Versatile' land (with regards to agricultural productivity) and are afforded a degree of protection from development[43]. These grades of agricultural land are subject to predictive mapping and opportunities to avoid them during routeing are appraised. The appraisal assesses the area (hectares) of BMV agricultural land present within each of the route options and the route which avoids the most BMV agricultural land is preferred.

[40] Under Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), any planning permission granted expires after a period of 3 years beginning with the date on which permission was granted. Generally, unless the planning permission states otherwise, planning permissions expire three years following the date granted to commence development.
[41] Using 5 years as a buffer to account for the impacts of covid legislation which extended the time period of consents to the 31st March 2022.
[42] Coal Authority (2024) Available at: https://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/coalauthority/home.html (accessed 11th April 2024)
[43] Bibby, J.S., Douglas, H.A., Thomasson, A.J. & Robertson, J.S. (1982) Land capability classification for agriculture. Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, Aberdeen.