Chapter 2

Approach to the EIA

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2.1 Introduction

1. The principal aim of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations') is to ensure that the authority granting consent (the 'competent authority') for a particular project makes its decision in full knowledge of any likely significant effects on the environment. The EIA Regulations therefore set out a procedure that must be followed for certain types of project before they can be given 'development consent'. This procedure, known as Environmental Impact Assessment or 'EIA', is a means of drawing together, in a systematic way, an assessment of a project's likely significant environmental effects. This also helps to ensure that the public and consultees understand the significance of the predicted effects and the scope for reducing any adverse effects before a decision is made. Early identification of potentially adverse environmental effects also leads to the identification and incorporation of appropriate mitigation measures into the design of the project.

2. This Chapter sets out the broad approach that has been used in the EIA for the proposed development. It provides an overview of the key stages that have been followed in line with EIA best practice.

2.2 The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

3. The EIA Regulations require that, before consent is granted for certain developments, an EIA must be undertaken. The EIA Regulations set out the types of development that are always subject to an EIA (Schedule 1 developments) and other developments which may require an EIA if they exceed certain thresholds and are likely to give rise to significant environmental effects (Schedule 2 developments).

4. The proposed development includes the carrying out of development which falls within Paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations. The screening threshold is noted below:

> *"(2) an electric line installed above ground -*
>
> *(a) with a voltage of 132 kilovolts or more;*
>
> *(b) in a sensitive area; or*
>
> *(c) the purpose of which installation is to connect the electric line to a generating station the construction or operation of which requires consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989…"*

5. In addition, the proposed development is also *"likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location"*[1]. As such, SPEN has undertaken an EIA of the proposed development to support the application for section 37 consent and deemed planning permission.

2.3 The EIA Process

2.3.1 EIA Regulations and Good Practice Guidance

6. The following legislation and guidance have been followed throughout the EIA process:

- Guidance on The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2000[2];
- The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017;
- Planning Advice Note (PAN) 1/2013 Environmental Impact Assessment (Revised in May 2017)[3];
- Planning Circular 1/2017: The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017[4];
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2017) Delivering Proportionate EIA: A Collaborative Strategy for Enhancing UK Practice[5];
- Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2016) Environmental Impact Assessment Guide to: Delivering Quality Development[6]; and
- Scottish Natural Heritage (2018) A Handbook on Environmental Impact Assessment: Guidance for Competent Authorities, Consultation Bodies and others involved in the Environmental Impact Assessment Process in Scotland (Version 5)[7].

7. In accordance with the legislation and guidance above, the key steps detailed below have been followed.

2.3.2 EIA and the Design Process

8. EIA should be treated as an iterative process, rather than a one-off, post-design environmental appraisal. In this way, the emerging findings from the EIA can be fed into the design process, to avoid, prevent or reduce and if possible offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment. This approach has been used in relation to the design stages of the proposed development. Where the potential for significant adverse environmental effects were identified through the routeing and/or OHL alignment stages for the proposed development or later during the detailed EIA, consideration was given as to how the design should be modified to avoid or prevent these adverse environmental effects where possible. Post-routeing stage modifications to the proposed development design are outlined in **Chapter 3: The Routeing Process and Design Strategy** and in the subsequent assessment chapters.

2.3.2.1 Scoping

9. SPEN undertook a scoping exercise to establish the scope and level of information to be provided within the EIAR. A request for a Scoping Opinion for the proposed development was submitted to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit on 24 June 2020 in accordance with the EIA Regulations. The request was accompanied by the Scoping Report. A Scoping Opinion from the ECU, on behalf of the Scottish Ministers was received in March 2021. See **Section 2.4** below for more detail. In line with Energy Consents Unit (ECU) guidance, it is recommended that advice regarding the requirement for an additional Scoping Opinion is discussed with relevant consultees if no application has been submitted within 12 months of the date a Scoping Opinion has been adopted The result of this process is detailed in **Appendix 2.1 Summary of Scoping Responses**.

10. Although SPEN has taken on board all consultee comments and factored these into assessments, a further scoping exercise was undertaken in May 2022 which involved asking consultees to highlight if they felt that there had been any significant changes to the scoping advice on environmental matters within their remit previously provided. Comments received are included in **Appendix 2.1 Summary of Scoping Responses**.

[1] Regulation 2(1) of The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017
[2] Whilst the guidance has not been updated for the 2017 EIA Regulations, its content remains largely relevant.
[3] Whilst this PAN does not directly concern developments consented under the Electricity Act, the guidance contained within it is relevant.
[4] Whilst this circular does not directly concern developments consented under the Electricity Act, the guidance contained within it is relevant.
[5] The principles outlined in this document are intended to make EIARs more accessible, improve decision making and reduce undue delays.
[6] Whilst the guidance has not been updated for the 2017 EIA Regulations, its content, relating to improving the delivery of mitigation, remains largely relevant.
[7] Provides practical guidance and information relating to the EIA process to make it more effective.

2.3.2.2 Baseline Studies

11. Examine, through baseline studies, the environmental character of the area likely to be affected by the proposed development (i.e. the existing baseline), including identifying relevant natural and man-made processes which may already be changing the character of the site (i.e. the forecasted baseline, which assumes the absence of the proposed development).

12. This helps to determine the sensitivity of receptors and form the benchmark against which predicted changes resultant from the proposed development are assessed to determine the magnitude of any impact.

13. For the proposed development the following baseline studies have been undertaken:

- Landscape and Visual Amenity:
  - desk based study;
  - field survey; and
  - viewpoint survey and photography.
- Hydrology and Geology:
  - desk based study;
  - walkover survey; and
  - targeted peat depth survey.
- Ecology:
  - a background data search;
  - preliminary ecological appraisal;
  - protected species surveys;
  - national vegetation classification survey; and
  - groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystem (GWDTE) survey.
- Ornithology:
  - a background data search;
  - vantage point surveys;
  - winter walkover surveys;
  - moorland breeding bird surveys; and
  - schedule 1 and raptor nest searches.
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage:
  - desk based data collection; and
  - historic environment field survey.
- Forestry:
  - desk based study;
  - field survey; and
  - mensuration data collection.

14. The surveys listed above compliment the pre-existing baseline information available from surveys completed as part of environmental assessments for other developments in the vicinity of the proposed development.

2.3.2.3 Predicting and Assessing Effects

15. Consider the possible interactions between the proposed development and both existing and future site conditions, and predict and assess the likely significant effects, both adverse and beneficial, of the proposed development on the environment.

16. Assessments have been completed by competent experts, in accordance with Regulation 5 of the EIA Regulations, and are presented in this EIAR. The assessment of potential effects has been undertaken using a range of appropriate methodologies specific to each technical discipline. Numerical or quantitative methods of assessment are used to predict values that can be compared against published thresholds and indicative criteria contained in relevant guidance and standards.

2.3.2.4 Mitigation and Monitoring

17. Introduce design and operational modifications or other mitigation measures to avoid, prevent or reduce, and if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects and enhance positive effects.

18. The iterative design process detailed above allowed potential environmental constraints to be avoided or minimised through alterations in design (i.e. embedded mitigation).

19. Where complete avoidance of potential effects was not feasible during refinement of the proposed development design, additional measures were identified to reduce effects. These include a range of mitigation proposals such as the use of construction methods and avoidance of sensitive habitats. Mitigation measures follow standard techniques and best practice, and are, therefore, considered to be effective for the purposes of assessment.

20. Some of the measures described within **Chapters 6 to 11** of this EIAR do not relate only to likely significant adverse effects, but have been included as good practice to reduce the level of adverse effects, or enhance the level of beneficial effects, of the proposed development. Where relevant, these 'good practice measures' are described within **Chapters 6 to 11**.

21. Also, where appropriate, monitoring measures are proposed to monitor any significant effects of the proposed development on the environment. The EIAR sets out details of any post-consent monitoring which is proposed. This includes, where appropriate, proposals to measure the effectiveness of the identified mitigation measures.

2.3.2.5 Integration

22. EIA should be an iterative process which aims to ensure early consideration of environmental issues at all stages of project development, and is founded on appropriate engagement with planning authorities and consultees. In addition to meeting the requirements of the EIA Regulations, EIA should add value to the design process, improving environmental outcomes and creating a framework for community engagement.

23. Consultation has formed an integral part of the EIA process and both the EIA team and SPEN have contacted numerous statutory and non-statutory consultees to determine their views on the proposed development, collected baseline information and refined survey and assessment methodologies. Replies received in response to scoping are detailed within the relevant assessment chapters of the EIAR and summarised in **Appendix 2.1: Summary of Scoping Responses**.

24. Engagement with the local community was undertaken through public information events held in February 2020 and online public information events were held to update on the progress of the proposals in June 2022. Further details on this can be found in **Chapter 3 The Routeing Process and Design Strategy** and in **Appendix 2.2: Gatecheck Report** of this EIAR.

2.3.2.6 Proportionality

25. An EIA should be fit for purpose and must be accessible to the consenting authority, consultees and the public. As such it should focus on significant environmental effects to avoid being overly long in nature.

26. The technical specialists that have contributed to this EIA are experienced in delivering proportionate EIA. Furthermore, consultation with statutory bodies has been conducted throughout the EIA meaning that the scope of the EIA has undergone regular revision so that it focuses only on the key information, whilst remaining in line with the scoping opinion.

2.3.2.7 Efficiency

27. Early identification of assessment and information requirements can ensure a coordinated EIA process and can minimise delays.

2.3.3 EIA Report

28. This EIAR presents the written output of the EIA process. The information contained in this EIAR fulfils the requirements of the EIA Regulations and once submitted, will enable Scottish Ministers, as the decision-making authority, to make their decisions on the application for section 37 consent and deemed planning permission. Regulation 5(2) of the EIA Regulations states that the EIAR should include the following information (at least):

- A description of the development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the development;

- A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment;
- A description of the features of the development and any measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;
- A description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment;
- A non-technical summary of the information above; and,
- Any other information specified in Schedule 4 of the Regulations relevant to the specific characteristics of the development and to the environmental features likely to be affected.

29. This EIAR includes the information required by Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations.

2.4 Scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment

30. To determine which aspects of the proposed development are likely to give rise to environmental effects and to inform the requirements and content of the EIAR, RSK prepared a Scoping Report[8], which was submitted to the Scottish Government ECU on 24 June 2020 together with a request for a Scoping Opinion under Regulation 12 of the EIA Regulations (case reference: ECU00002096)[9]. The Scoping Report set out the components comprising the proposed development, topics to be assessed, proposed assessment methodologies and mitigation as well as topics to be scoped out of the EIA.

31. The purpose of scoping is to ensure that the EIA process focuses on the key environmental issues. Therefore, the Scoping Report sought to focus the EIA on significant environmental effects, with each of the topic-based chapters within the Scoping Report setting out a provisional list of significant effects prior to mitigation and a second provisional list of non-significant effects to be 'scoped out' of full assessment. These were drafted on the basis of the findings of the preliminary survey work undertaken, the professional judgement of the EIA team, experience from other projects of a similar nature, and guidance and standards of relevance to the topic area in question.

32. On this basis, whilst a range of possible effects have been investigated as part of the EIA process, only effects identified as being of likely significance prior to the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures have been addressed fully in the EIAR.

33. RSK and the ECU agreed a list of consultees to be contacted as part of the formal scoping process prior to the request for a Scoping Opinion being made by RSK. The ECU contacted these consultees requesting their input to the scoping process. Scoping responses be provided to RSK by the ECU (by 9 February 2021)[10]. **Appendix 2.1 Summary of Scoping Responses** provides a summary of the overarching issues raised by consultees at scoping and includes details of how these comments have been addressed in the EIAR. A Scoping Opinion from the ECU, on behalf of the Scottish Ministers, received in March 2021.

34. In addition to the consultees contacted by the ECU during the formal scoping process, topic area specialists contacted a number of other parties to obtain background information to further inform the EIA and to allow them the opportunity to raise any concerns that they might have in relation to the proposed development. Details of all relevant consultation are provided in **Chapters 6 to 11**.

2.4.1 Topics Scoped Out of the EIA

35. The Guidance on the 2000 Electricity Works EIA[11] provides advice on the general requirements relating to the preparation and content of an EIAR and states:

> "*… the emphasis of Schedule 4 is on the 'significant' environmental effects to which a development is likely to give rise. Some effects may be of little value or no significance for the particular development in question. They will therefore need only very brief treatment to indicate that their possible relevance has been considered.*"

36. Furthermore, PAN 1/2013 notes that scoping forms a key part of the EIA process, and that its purpose is to:

- Identify the key issues to be considered;
- Identify those matters which can either be scoped out or which need not be addressed in detail;
- Discuss and agree appropriate methods of impact assessment, including survey methodology where relevant; and
- Identify any other project level assessment or survey obligations which may apply.

37. In line with the guidance outlined above, the work undertaken to date, responses to the consultation exercises, and SPEN's expertise and experience in the construction and operation of developments similar to the proposed development, where no likely significant effects have been identified for a particular topic, these have been 'scoped out' as detailed below. In addition to these topics that have been scoped out in their entirety, some elements of the topics which are assessed in detail have been scoped out of assessment e.g. effects on shelter and effects on certain species have been scoped out of the forestry and ornithological assessments, respectively. Where applicable, this is explained in the relevant assessment chapters of the EIAR.

2.4.1.1 Traffic and Transport

38. The proposed development passes or is near to several different grades of roads ranging from access tracks to trunk roads. Notably, the proposed OHL crosses several roads, including the A70 Ayr Road, a network of B-roads including Coalburn Road, Shoulderigg Road as well as unnamed road and tracks providing access throughout Coalburn, Douglas, Glespin and other small settlements located throughout the Study Area.

39. An initial scoping exercise was undertaken with both Transport Scotland (TS) and South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) which led to further discussions regarding potential access points and Construction Traffic routeing.

40. It was indicated by both consultees, that a full EIA chapter will not be required, however, a draft Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) together with a Transport Statement/Technical Note should be appended as part of the application for consent.

41. Further site visits and additional meetings were undertaken with SLC in order to confirm the required information to be provided as part of the impact assessment of the proposed development on the local road network.

42. Given the nature of the proposed development it was agreed that there is a minimal potential for significant traffic and transport effects to be generated. Potential impacts during construction may occur due to the generation of additional vehicle movements associated with construction traffic. However, the volume of traffic likely to be generated is not considered likely to significantly increase average daily flows.

43. The works will require access to pole and cable areas in predominantly rural locations, therefore it will require formation of temporary access points off the public road network, either via formation of new accesses or upgrades to the existing ones. Through conversations with SLC Road Department it has been agreed that a TS/TN including the indicative access junctions/points design drawings will be required together with aforementioned draft CTMP.

44. The Principal Contractor would prepare a full CTMP which would include best practice measures to mitigate the potential impacts such as specifying construction routes to suitable roads and appropriately signed diversions where required. Existing access tracks would be used wherever possible and where this may temporarily impact upon users, this would be communicated and managed. The volume of construction traffic is not predicted to be significant. No significant effects are considered likely.

[8] Accessible at: https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationSearch.aspx using case reference ECU00002096
[9] The Scottish Government ECU administers the issuing of the Scoping Opinion on behalf of Scottish Ministers.
[10] A number of consultees did not respond to the ECU's invitation to comment at scoping.
[11] Whilst the guidance has not been updated for the 2017 EIA Regulations, its content remains largely relevant.

45. On the above basis, assessment on traffic and transport was scoped out of the EIA in its entirety.

2.4.1.2 Construction and Operational Noise

46. The proposed development passes primarily through environments that are relatively rural in nature. Although a number of residential properties were identified within the noise and vibration Study Area, only residential properties within 200 m of the proposed route and the proposed main compound are considered to represent the receptors most affected by noise levels from the proposed development and as such are considered worst case (sensitive receptors). Seven sensitive receptors were identified within 200 m of the proposed route.

47. In the absence of baseline noise data for the receptors in proximity to the proposed route, and the proposed daytime working hours for the construction works, it is considered appropriate to adopt the BS 5228: Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites (2009) Category A criteria of 65 dB $L_{Aeq,12h}$ to ensure a conservative assessment is undertaken.

Construction

48. The following four proposed development construction tasks have been identified as having the potential to generate significant levels of noise:

1. Site establishment and installation of compounds;
2. Access tracks and haul roads – vehicle movements;
3. OHL and cable construction and excavations – removing and loading of material; and
4. Restoration works – unloading and placement of material.

49. Each construction task methodology, along with the associated plant requirements, was estimated to define the characteristics of the proposed development and of the potential noise impacts. To conduct a 'worst-case' assessment, the construction noise impact has been determined at the four receptors at the nearest separation distance from the construction works.

50. The results of the assessment show that predicted noise levels would comply with the BS 5228, Category A criteria of 65 dB L_{Aeq}, for the determination of potential significant noise impact from construction works. It should also be noted that when considering the construction noise impact, that the works are linear in nature and are of a short duration at any one location. The noise generated by the construction of the proposed route will quickly diminish as the construction progresses, moving the activity away from each noise-sensitive location as construction and decommissioning continues.

51. Due to the short term and localised nature of the construction processes for the proposed development, any temporary noise created is likely to be minimal and concentrated in small areas at any one time as the contractors progress along the course of the proposed route.

52. In order to reduce the construction noise impact to as low as reasonably practicable, the works contractor will be committed to implementing accepted good practice measures for controlling construction and decommissioning noise, which may include the following, as appropriate:

- Restricted hours of construction works to avoid sensitive periods;
- The use of equipment with appropriate noise control measures (e.g. silencers, mufflers and acoustic hoods);
- The positioning of temporary site compounds as far as practicably possible from neighbouring residential properties; and
- Additional good practice measures as set out in BS5228:2009.

53. Therefore, there are no significant effects anticipated to be associated with construction noise. Detailed information regarding the construction task methodology, along with the associated plant requirements, assessment methodology and predicted construction noise levels are provided in **Appendix 2.3: Noise Technical Statement**.

Operation

54. Operating high voltage OHLs can generate audible noise, the level of which depends upon the operating voltage and the choice of conductor system. Noise from OHLs is produced by the phenomenon of 'corona discharge', this being a very limited breakdown of the air at points around the surface of the conductor. Conductor systems are designed and constructed to minimise corona discharge, but inevitable surface irregularities caused by surface damage or by deposition of surface contaminants such as insects, organic material such as seeds and dust, raindrops or pollution may locally enhance the electric field strength sufficiently for corona discharge to occur. The discharge can be audible in certain circumstances and would be heard as a crackling sound sometimes accompanied by a low frequency hum. Noise levels would increase during periods of rainfall.

55. The OHL design for the proposed OHL is a 132 kV Trident wood pole construction utilising Single Poplar conductors. With this type of construction and operating voltage, and during certain weather conditions as mentioned above, audible noise would only be perceptible to an observer standing directly beneath the line. Noise levels a very short distance (50 m) from the OHL would likely be imperceptible relative to the background. Therefore, there are no significant effects anticipated associated with operational noise.

2.4.1.3 Air Quality (including Dust)

56. During construction and decommissioning, the operation of equipment, staff transport, construction vehicles and machinery will result in atmospheric emissions of waste exhaust gases containing Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) and Particulate Matter (PM_{10}) pollutants. The quantities emitted will depend on engine type, vehicle age, service history and fuel composition.

57. Based on professional judgement it is considered that the number of vehicle movements anticipated to arise from construction and decommissioning of the proposed development would not result in any exceedance of air quality standards either at the site or within the wider area. There are also no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the surrounding area. Furthermore, dust emitting activities generally respond well to appropriate dust control measures such as those outlined in PAN 50: Controlling the Environmental Effects of Surface Mineral Workings, and negative effects can greatly be reduced or eliminated.

58. SPEN will commit to adopting measures for dust management during construction, focussing in particular on areas within 200m of residential properties, thereby controlling and reducing any potential effects on the potential receptors identified. These measures will be set out in the Construction Method Statements forming part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

59. On this basis, no significant effects are predicted and effects on air quality (including dust) are scoped out of the EIA.

2.4.1.4 Socio-Economics, Recreation and Tourism

60. Due to the short term and localised nature of the construction process, any temporary disturbance created during construction is likely to be minimal and concentrated in small areas at any one time as the contractors progress along the course of the proposed route. Once the proposed development is operational, there will be no further works required unless maintenance works are needed and use of the land can continue as normal, with the exception of the relatively small area of land take along the route. As the construction processes require only a small labour force employed by SPEN, and is short in duration, this also means it is unlikely that the employment created will affect local employment levels or generate a significant source of income for the area.

61. In relation to tourism, no key tourist attractions are noted within 3 km of the proposed development, according to Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, online searches and consultation. VisitScotland and the National Trust for Scotland were consulted at both the public consultation and routeing consultation as part of the scoping process. However, neither provided a response on either occasion. Where there is intervisibility with any key tourism features identified outwith, these have been identified and assessed as key viewpoints within the 3 km landscape and visual assessment study area. Furthermore, it is recognised that there are already existing OHLs and Wind Farms within the area which are not considered to have adversely affected tourism within the area. On this basis, potential effects on tourism are not considered likely to be significant.

62. In terms of recreation, the proposed development crosses core paths CL/3455/1, CL/3457/1, SL103 (right of way) and CL/3310/1; and would run near or adjacent to other core paths CL/3453/1, CL/3452/1, CL/3344/1, CL/5735/3, SL117 (right of way), CL/5192/1, CL/5193/2, SL151 (right of way), CL/3311/1 and SL118 (right of way). These link Glespin, Coalburn and Douglas and pass through areas of plantation and forestry at several locations. While temporary diversions may be required during construction and decommissioning, works at any one location will be short in duration therefore the impact of a diversion would be limited. All recreational paths would be open during operation of the proposed development.

63. The proposed route passes to the east Hollandbush Golf Club for approximately 1 km. The visual effects of the proposed development on recreational resources, such as Hollandbush Golf Club, are assessed in **Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**. It should be noted that there is a distinction between a visual effect and a recreational amenity effect.

Recreational amenity effects are described as effects that would influence the recreational value e.g. use or enjoyment of an asset such as a walking route. It is considered that the proposed development would not have a significant effect on the recreational value of the golf club.

64. The proposed development would result in some local revenue generation through demand for accommodation providers, spend in local shops and material supplies. These socio-economic effects are likely to be negligible to minor on a local and regional scale so not considered to be significant.

65. Overall, it is considered that there is no potential for significant socio-economic, recreation and tourism effects so no further assessment has been conducted as part of the EIA.

2.4.1.5 Climate Change

66. In considering future climate change scenarios, Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) guidance (2015) recommends the use of the UK Climate Projections (UKCP) Website to aid in the characterisation of future extreme weather events and emission scenario uncertainty.

67. The UKCP18 climate change projections anticipate the following climate changes in the Western Scotland region in the year 2060 (when the proposed development nears the end of its operational life) based on an intermediate scenario (Representative Concentration Pathway (RCP) 6.0) and 50 % probability:

- Temperatures are projected to increase by 1.9 ^{O}C in summer and 1.6 ^{O}C in winter;
- Summer rainfall is projected to decrease by 11 % and winter rainfall is anticipated to increase by 14 %;
- There are no significant changes in projected wind speed; and
- There is no evidence in the projections of an increase in the frequency or intensity of storms (albeit there are still large uncertainties in the future predictions of storms).

2.4.1.6 The Potential Impact of Climate Change on the proposed development (Adaptation)

68. The construction phase of the proposed development is planned to be completed in 2025 and the climate is unlikely to change notably between the submission of the application and then. For this reason, climate change adaptation during the construction phase has been scoped out of the EIA.

69. The vulnerability of the proposed development to climate change during operation will not be significant.

70. SEPA's Indicative Flood Map (SEPA, 2021c) was consulted to gain an overview of the likelihood of flooding within the study area. Flood risk is shown to be relatively minor within the study area, with some localised regions of surface water (pluvial) and river (fluvial) flood risk.

71. River flooding within the study area is largely confined to the main watercourse channels, notably the flood plain around the Douglas Water from the M74 down to Glespin which has a high likelihood of flooding, defined as having a 10 % chance of flooding in any given year. To the north-east of Coalburn there is region of high flooding likelihood along the Coal Burn watercourse. Additionally, there are a few small, isolated locations of high fluvial flood risk scattered across the study area, mainly associated with small watercourses, ponds or lochans.

72. There are small areas at high risk of surface water flooding scattered across the study area, particularly to the south-west of Coalburn and within the areas of the former opencast workings at Glespin and Dalquhandy.

73. To the north of Coalburn on the very northern boundary of the study area, the region surrounding Lesmahagow has been classified as an area potentially vulnerable to flooding.

74. The proposed development has minimal risk of flooding from any source. The only identified flood risk along the proposed route is river flooding along the banks of the Douglas Water near Glespin, to a limited extent along the Windrow Burn in the centre of the route, and along the Poniel Water. In all cases, the identified flood risk is confined to the watercourse channel and adjacent floodplain areas.

75. Flood risk is identified in **Chapter 7: Geology, Hydrogeology and Hydrology** of this EIAR. It is also unlikely that the proposed development would have any adverse effect on the ability of receptors to adapt to climate change.

76. The materials and structures for the proposed development, wood poles and conductors will be designed to withstand and operate within both the current and projected climate conditions.

77. Given the above, it is considered that no significant effects are likely to arise in relation to climate change adaptation during operation.

2.4.1.7 The Potential Impact on Greenhouse Gas Emissions During Operation

78. It is unlikely that the any significant effects will arise of the proposed development's impact on climate during the operational phase as vehicle movements will be restricted for maintenance purposes only.

2.4.1.8 Land Use (Agriculture)

79. The Land Capability for Agriculture (LCA) classification (James Hutton, 2010) is used to rank land on the basis of 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.

80. The LCA is a seven class system. Four of the classes are further subdivided into divisions. Class 1 represents land that has the highest potential flexibility of use whereas Class 7 land is of very limited agricultural value. Based on the classifications, the predominant land use capability classes through which the proposed development passes are:

- 4.1 – Land capable of producing a narrow range of crops, primarily grassland with short arable breaks of forage crops and cereal;
- 4.2 – Land capable of producing a narrow range of crops, primarily on grassland with short arable breaks of forage crops;
- 5.2 - Land capable of use as improved grassland. Few problems with pasture establishment but may be difficult to maintain;
- 5.3 – Land capable of use as improved grassland. Pasture deteriorates quickly; and
- 6.2 – Land capable of use as rough grazings with moderate quality plants.

81. The proposed development is not located within any areas of 'best and most versatile land' (Classes 1, 2 and 3.1). In relation to existing agricultural land use, effects will be limited to short term disturbance during construction and decommissioning, in the longer term, to the areas underneath the permanent development footprint, e.g. under wood poles and steel towers. As wood poles have a very small footprint, grazing can continue as per current activity. Furthermore, the proposed development is on land not considered to be 'prime agricultural land', and used predominantly for grazing and commercial forestry, with little (or no) arable agricultural crop production taking place. On the basis of the above, effects on agricultural activity are not likely to be significant.

82. In relation to managing potential effects on land use (including agriculture), SPEN's 'Grantor's Charter' outlines its commitment to landowners which includes:

- How land will be accessed;
- How works will be undertaken on the land;
- How any resulting damage/compensation will be dealt with;
- How annual wayleave payments are derived; and
- Line of communication and contact information.

83. The proposed development crosses existing OHL; however, through best practice measures during construction and appropriate design of the proposed development there would be no effect on the existing OHL.

84. The South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan 2 was reviewed and there are no planning designations or allocations within the proposed route corridor.

85. The proposed route does not impinge on any residential developments or consented planning applications.

2.4.1.9 Aviation, Defence and Telecommunications

86. National Air Traffic Services (NATS), the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Glasgow Airport, Glasgow Prestwick Airport and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) were consulted as part of the scoping process. NATS and the DIO responded to confirm that there are no safeguarding issues identified with the proposed development. Glasgow Airport stated that full analysis would be provided once an application is submitted. The proposed development is outside of the Obstacle Limitation Surfaces for Glasgow Airport but may impact on Instrument Flight Procedures. Glasgow Prestwick Airport stated that the proposed development would have no aviation safeguarding impact on the airport. No Scoping Response was received from CAA. On the basis that the proposed development would be within a landscape comprising windfarms and existing OHLs, which have not caused any aviation issues, it is not considered likely that there will be any aviation and defence issues caused by operation of the proposed development. This topic has been scoped out of the EIA.

87. BT was consulted as part of the scoping process and confirmed that the proposed development would not cause interference to the current or planned radio network in the area. Given that the existing OHLs do not cause any telecommunication interference, this does not require further investigation for the proposed development. Therefore this topic has been scoped out of the EIA.

2.4.1.10 Human Health

88. The EIA Regulations require that potential effects on human health are considered. However, it is not proposed to undertake a separate assessment of potential effects of the proposed development on human health on the basis that noise, air quality (including dust), traffic and transport and socio-economic impacts are being scoped out of the EIA. Furthermore, it is considered that air quality, noise and dust will be adequately mitigated through implementation of good practice construction methods.

An assessment of the effects of electromagnetic fields (EMFs) is presented in **Appendix 2.4: Electric and Magnetic Fields Report**. The assessment concludes that the proposed development would be fully compliant with Government policy. Specifically, all the EMFs produced would be significantly below the relevant exposure limits, and the proposed OHL would comply with the policy on optimum phasing. Therefore, there would be no significant EMF effects resulting from the proposed development and cumulatively with other developments. Therefore, no significant effects on human health associated with the proposed development are likely.

2.4.1.11 Risk of Major Accidents and Disasters

89. The proposed development is not located in an area with a history of natural disasters such as extreme weather events. Severe weather resilience is a core component to the network design, and includes consideration of flooding resilience, overhead line design and vegetation management to reduce the risk of unplanned power cuts. Avoidance of flood risk areas was a key consideration in the routeing process, and crossing of floodplains has been minimised where possible. Whilst peat is present within the vicinity of the proposed development, peat slide risk is not considered to be a significant issue and a detailed peat slide risk assessment has not been undertaken. Details of the peat survey and assessment work undertaken for the proposed development are provided in **Chapter 7: Geology, Hydrogeology and Hydrology**.

90. The construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development would be managed within the requirements of a number of health and safety related Regulations, including the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Crisis management and continuity plans are in place across SPEN. These are tested regularly and are designed for the management of, and recovery from, significant energy infrastructure failure events. Where there are material changes in infrastructure (or the management of it) additional plans are developed.

91. As such, it is not considered that the proposed development represents a risk of a major accident or disaster and therefore this has been scoped out of the EIA.

2.4.1.12 Existing Utilities

92. The locations of existing gas, electricity and water services have been identified by SPEN through consultation with the relevant service providers. On the basis of this, SPEN advised that there will be no disruption to gas and water services during all phases of the proposed development.

93. Therefore significant effects on existing services are unlikely and not assessed further.

2.5 Consultation

94. Stakeholder engagement, including public involvement, is an important component of the Scottish planning and consenting system. While there are no formal pre-application requirements for consultation in respect of applications for section 37 consent/deemed planning permission, legislation and government guidance aim to ensure that the public, local communities, statutory and other consultees and interested parties have an opportunity to have their views considered throughout the planning process.

95. Striking the right balance can be challenging, and in seeking to achieve this, SPEN recognises the importance of consulting effectively on proposals and of being transparent about the decisions reached. SPEN has engaged with key stakeholders including local communities and others who have had an interest in the proposed development, particularly during the routeing stage (during 2019 and 2020) and the feedback received has been considered during the detailed design of the final route alignment.

2.5.1 Consultation during Design Development

96. For the proposed development, SPEN began by establishing a number of possible ‘route options’. This process involved designing routes in accordance with the Holford Rules[12], that best fit the landscape and minimise effects on visual amenity, whilst avoiding wherever possible areas of high environmental value. To allow identification of a preferred route, an appraisal of the route options was undertaken against technical, economic and environmental considerations.

97. Having identified the preferred route option, public consultation was undertaken between January and March 2020 to invite views on the preferred route for proposed development and information of any other issues, suggestions or feedback, particularly views on the local area, for example areas used for recreation, local environmental features, and any plans to build along the route. The consultation consisted of:

- A Routeing Consultation Strategy Document (RCD) describing the route selection process for the proposed grid connection, published in December 2019, and made available for public viewing in January 2020 during normal hours at South Lanarkshire Council’s offices in Hamilton, Coalburn Miners Welfare One Stop Shop and Douglas St Brides Hall, giving interested stakeholders the information required to engage and comment on the project at an early stage;
- Two community consultation events on the preferred route option, held in Coalburn and Douglas in February 2020 to provide members of the public with access to more information on the project and the opportunity to speak with members of the project team. The exhibitions were held on 5th and 6th of February 2020 at the following locations:
  - Coalburn Miners Welfare One Stop Shop, 42 Coalburn Road, Coalburn, South Lanarkshire, ML11 0LH; and
  - Douglas St Brides Hall, Braehead, Douglas, Lanark, ML11 0QW.

98. Venues were chosen to ensure that people near to the route were only a short distance from their nearest exhibition by car or public transport. Members of the public were given until 15th March 2020 to submit consultation responses.

99. The public consultation events were advertised in a variety of different methods. The events were advertised in the Carluke and Lanark Gazette. An email notification was sent to local councillors and community councils and consultees. A poster was created and distributed locally in Coalburn and Douglas.

[12] It is generally accepted across the electricity industry that the guidelines developed by the late Lord Holford in 1959 for routeing overhead lines, ‘The Holford Rules’, should continue to be employed as the basis for routeing high voltage overhead lines. A subsequent review of the Holford Rules (and NGC clarification notes) was undertaken by Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Limited (SHETL) in 2003 to reflect Scottish circumstances.

100. Public information events were also held online to update on the progress of the proposals in June 2022.

2.5.2 Scoping Consultation

101. Following public consultation, all responses were considered and their relevance to the preferred route assessed. In light of this the preferred route was reviewed. This process resulted in the preferred route being taken forward to EIA Scoping and further analysis. A Scoping Request was submitted alongside a Scoping Report to the ECU on 24 June 2020, who then contacted a number of interested parties to determine their views on the preferred route and to collect baseline information. Replies received from consultees in response to scoping are detailed in **Appendix 2.1 Summary of Scoping Responses** and responses from other consultees who were contacted for further information to inform the EIA are detailed in the relevant assessment chapters.

102. In line with ECU guidance, a further scoping exercise was undertaken in May 2022 which involved asking consultees to highlight if they felt that there had been any significant changes to the scoping advice on environmental matters within their remit previously provided.

103. As shown in **Appendix 2.1 Summary of Scoping Responses**, the scoping responses received indicated that, generally, the scope of the EIA had been defined appropriately. However, a number of consultees did highlight issues where further investigation or clarification was required. This has been highlighted and addressed where appropriate within the EIAR.

104. The preferred route underwent further iteration during the EIA process. This resulted in the proposed route alignment described and assessed in this EIAR, which causes, on balance, the least disturbance to the environment and the people who live, work and enjoy recreation within it and is technically and economically feasible.

2.5.2.1 Landowners

105. Before formal consultation commenced on the proposed development in December 2019, and when the preferred route had been identified, SPEN identified all landowners who own land within the preferred route. Owners were identified via a title deed search at the Land Registry.

106. SPEN made contact with these landowners to make them aware of the proposed development and of the potential for the proposed development to directly affect land owned by them. SPEN encouraged individual landowners to attend one of the public exhibitions to discuss the proposed development with SPEN staff and, in addition, offered individual face-to-face meetings with each landowner.

107. Following the consultation period and during the detailed design stage of the proposed development, SPEN has continued to hold individual meetings with landowners and their representatives to gather feedback on the proposed development design. For reasons of privacy and commercial confidentiality, the details of these meetings and discussions are not included in this EIAR. However, SPEN has sought to address the concerns raised and suggestions received from landowners where reasonable and where other technical, environmental and economic considerations allow.

2.6 Baseline Conditions

108. The purpose of the EIA is to ensure that the likely significant effects of a development proposal (both positive and negative) are properly understood before any development consent is granted. This requires that work is carried out within the proposed development area to determine and describe the environmental conditions against which future changes (including those which may take place independently of the development) can be measured or predicted and assessed. These conditions are referred to as the 'baseline' and are usually established through a combination of desk-based research, site survey, and empirical studies and projections.

109. Consideration will also be given to a 'do nothing' scenario which describes the future baseline of the proposed development area and surroundings in the absence of the proposed development. Together, these describe the current and future characteristics of the receiving environment, and the value and vulnerability of key environmental resources and receptors. As the proposed development is a grid connection predicated on the operation of the Kennoxhead Wind Farm, for the purposes of the EIA the Kennoxhead Wind Farm has been included in the baseline.

110. Making predictions about how parameters such as land use, landscape, views and other environmental characteristics may change in the future relies on assumptions about future development and environmental trends. For this reason, where other development is not proposed in the vicinity of the proposed development area, the baseline adopted for the EIA is normally taken as the current character and condition of the area and surrounds, and the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed development are then assessed in the context of the current conditions alone. It is accepted that the baseline conditions will gradually alter through time as a result of climate change, which has the potential to alter the landscape and species of flora and fauna which are currently located within the study area. However, as outlined earlier in this Chapter, these climate change effects are unlikely to materially alter the findings of the EIA.

111. Baseline conditions for each topic and the means by which these have been established are set out in **Chapters 6 to 11** of this EIAR.

2.7 Identification and Assessment of Effects

2.7.1 Approach to Assessment of Effects

112. Each topic assessment defines the scope of the construction and operational assessment for the proposed development.

2.7.2 Significant Effects

113. The identification of the significance of effects (whether adverse or beneficial) arising from a development is a key stage in the EIA process. This judgement is vital in informing the decision-making process.

114. As the identification of significant effects will differ depending on the context and the receptors affected by the proposed development, there is no general definition of what constitutes significance. In EIA, the term significance reflects both its literal meaning of 'importance' and its statistical meaning where there is an element of quantification. This combination of judgemental/subjective and quantifiable/objective tests has become the standard approach to understanding and applying the test of 'significance'.

115. Each assessment chapter identifies the likely significant effects on the environment that may arise as a result of the proposed development. The significance of environmental effects is typically assessed by considering both the character of the change (i.e. the magnitude and duration of the effect) and the value/sensitivity of the environmental resource that experiences this effect (i.e. the receptor).

116. Effects may be direct, indirect, secondary or cumulative. Within these categories, they may also be short, medium or long-term, permanent or temporary, beneficial or adverse. Direct (or primary) effects are changes to the baseline arising directly from activities that form part of the proposed development, for example, effects associated with felling of the wayleave to accommodate the proposed development. Indirect (or secondary) effects are those that arise as a result of a direct effect, for example effects associated with areas of 'windthrow' following felling of the wayleave.

117. Specific significance criteria have been defined for the majority of topics, and these are detailed in the assessment chapters. As the specialists undertaking each element of the assessment have defined these criteria based on guidance/professional judgement, there is some variation. However, each of the sets of criteria is based on the following aspects:

- Type of effect (adverse/beneficial);
- Extent and magnitude of effect;
- The likelihood of the effect occurring, based on a scale of certain, likely or unlikely;
- Nature of effect: reversible, irreversible, long term, short term;
- Value and/or sensitivity of receptor based on a scale of high, medium and low and in some instances negligible;
- Consideration of legal requirements, policies and standards; and
- Consideration of relevant environmental thresholds.

118. Using the criteria in each assessment chapter, the significance of the effects arising from the proposed development has been categorised, where possible and unless otherwise stated within the chapter, as follows:

- Major;
- Moderate;
- Minor; or
- None.

119. Unless stated otherwise in methodologies set out in the individual assessment chapters, effects of 'major' or 'moderate' significance are considered to be 'significant' in the context of the EIA Regulations.

120. Whilst each topic assessment has assessed the effects of the proposed development, it has been necessary to also consider the way in which an Infrastructure Location Allowance (ILA) (or micrositing allowance) of 25 m either side of each proposed development component may change the significance of effects predicted, and this has been considered in the topic assessments within **Chapters 6 to 11**. The ILA is described in more detail in **Chapter 4: Development Description**.

121. Each assessment chapter concludes with a summary of the likely significant effects identified in the assessment. Where no significant effects are likely, a simple statement to this affect is given.

2.7.3 Interrelationships between Effects

122. Although the EIAR is structured in standalone topic specific chapters, many of the considerations are interrelated, such as ecology and hydrology. As such, the interrelationship between potential effects between two topic areas is also considered in accordance with the EIA Regulations and addressed in **Chapters 6 to 11.**

2.7.4 Assessing Cumulative Effects

123. Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations state that types of effect identified "*should cover direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects.*"

124. Both 'inter-project' and 'intra-project' cumulative effects have been considered, as described in PAN 1/2013: "*Cumulative effects arising from different elements of a project on environmental receptors (intra-project effects) and from projects combined with other activities (inter-project) impacts are commonly identified.*"

125. Likely 'inter' cumulative effects have been defined as the effects that the proposed development may have in combination with other developments which are at application stage, consented, under construction or operational (i.e. the incremental effects resulting from the addition of proposed development if all other developments are assumed to be in the baseline).

126. It should be noted that cumulative assessments will be specific to each technical discipline so the cumulative sites might differ. Details of the rationale for the cumulative developments are included in the assessments within each assessment chapter.

127. The cut-off date for cumulative data collection as agreed in consultation with South Lanarkshire Council and NatureScot was 1st June 2022, which corresponds with the date the last scoping response was received following the re-consultation in May 2022. Changes to the cumulative baseline have not been included after this cut-off date to allow time for the assessment to be prepared. SPEN are aware of the following other construction projects that may coincide with the construction of the proposed development, these other developments will be considered in **Appendix 4.1: Outline CEMP** and any traffic management proposed in **Appendix 2.6: Transport Statement**:

- Coalburn 33 kV 60 MVAr Shunt Reactor;
- Douglas North Collector 132/33 kV;
- Hagshaw Hill Windfarm Connection;
- Hagshaw Hill Phase 2 WF;
- Coalburn to Douglas North Collector SS 132 kV Cable Reinforcement;
- Douglas West Extension;
- Cumberhead West Windfarm Connection;
- SGT4 360 MVA, 400/132 kV Transformer at Coalburn Substation;
- Coalburn Battery Energy Storage Facility 2; and
- Coalburn North 400 kV Substation.

128. Likely 'intra-project' cumulative effects have been defined as individual effects which may combine to have a total effect on an individual receptor. These effects have been considered under the 'interrelationship between effects' heading in each assessment chapter.

2.8 Mitigation and Monitoring

129. The EIA Regulations state that an EIAR should include "*a description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements (for example the preparation of a post-project analysis*)". These measures have been termed 'mitigation' measures for the purposes of the EIAR.

130. While mitigation has been embedded through the design process for a range of assessment topics, specific additional mitigation measures ('additional mitigation') are also proposed to prevent, reduce and offset likely adverse effects which could not be avoided through design. These additional mitigation measures have been identified through the EIA process. Therefore, each assessment chapter recognises:

- Embedded mitigation – items that are embedded through the design of the proposed development are described in the topic chapters, and these will be delivered during the construction process (see **Appendix 4.1: Outline CEMP**); and
- Additional mitigation – items that are further required to mitigate the likely adverse effects of the proposed development and which will be implemented to avoid, reduce or offset these effects identified in relation to particular topics.

131. The assessments presented in **Chapters 6 to 11** of the EIAR have been undertaken on the basis that the embedded mitigation forms an integral part of the proposed development (i.e. being in place for assessment purposes). The best practice/industry standard measures which form the embedded mitigation to be implemented during the construction process across all topic areas are, by their nature, ones which are well understood, and for which there is a high degree of confidence as to their effectiveness. In other words, it is highly likely that these measures would be successful. The assessment chapters detail the additional mitigation identified during the assessment process to address localised site/issue specific likely adverse effects.

132. To provide a single reference source, all additional mitigation are included on a topic by topic basis in **Appendix 2.5 Schedule of Mitigation and Monitoring**. The implementation of all measures noted will be secured either through conditions attached to the section 37 consent or through other regulatory mechanisms e.g. Construction Site Licence or a licence required in terms of the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011. Each assessment chapter also sets out details of any post-consent monitoring which is proposed for the proposed development. These measures are also summarised in **Appendix 2.5 Schedule of Mitigation and Monitoring**.

133. By assuming that embedded mitigation is an integral part of the proposed development and will be effective, and then making a professional judgement on the likely effectiveness of the additional mitigation measures proposed, the remaining likely effects are then documented within this EIAR as 'residual effects' within each assessment chapter.

2.9 Data Gaps and Uncertainty in Assessment

134. Paragraph 6 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations requires that EIARs provide "*details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved*".

135. Whilst any assessment limitations are discussed in **Chapters 6 to 11**, it is considered that this EIAR contains adequate information to enable the Scottish Ministers to form a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment.

2.10 References Lists

136. Part 10 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations requires that EIARs include "*a reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the EIA Report*". References to data sources, guidance and other information of relevance to the assessments are included as endnotes in **Chapters 6 to 11**.

2.11 Preparation of the EIA Report

137. Regulation 5(2) of the EIA Regulations provides a list of the minimum information that must be contained in an EIAR, including:

> *"(a) a description of the development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the development;*
>
> *(b) a description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment;*
>
> *(c) a description of the features of the development and any measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;*
>
> *(d) a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment;*
>
> *(e) a non-technical summary of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (d); and*
>
> *(f) any other information specified in schedule 4 relevant to the specific characteristics of the development and to the environmental features likely to be affected".*

138. This EIAR has been prepared in accordance with these requirements. Regulation 5(5) states that to ensure completeness and quality of the EIAR:

> *"(a) the developer must ensure that the EIA report is prepared by competent experts; and*
>
> *b) the EIA report must be accompanied by a statement from the developer outlining the relevant expertise or qualifications of such experts".*

139. A statement of competency, setting out the qualifications and experience of chapter authors is provided in **Chapter 1: Introduction**.

2.12 References

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