

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**NORTH PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE  
2 AUGUST 2016**

Agenda Item	5.1
Report No	PLN/035/16

**16/02707/PAN: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission PLC  
810m South West of Noss, Wick**

**Report by Area Planning Manager – North**

**Proposal of Application Notice**

**Description :** Construction of a High Voltage Direct Current Switching Station.

**Ward :** 03 - Wick

**1 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 To inform the North Planning Applications Committee of the submission of the attached Proposal of Application Notice (PAN).
- 1.2 The submission of the PAN accords with the provisions of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and was lodged on 28 Jan 2016. Members are asked to note this may form the basis of a subsequent “National Scale” planning application.
- 1.3 The submitted information attached includes: -
  - Proposal of Application Notice.
  - Site & Location Plan.

**2 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

- 2.1 The proposed development is for a switching station. A switching station is a collection of plant which allows for the flow of power to be switched between different circuits. The purpose of the development is to connect Shetland with the wider transmission network by marine cable. As such, the switching station development should be located close to the marine cable landfall site at Noss Head to minimise the need for additional underground cabling. The development would include landscaping, drainage, access and construction access as identified on the attached plans.
- 2.2 The equipment will be contained within a single large building which will be up to 120m in length, up to 80m in width and up to 21m in height. It may be possible to reduce the dimensions of the building but this will be subject to further design work once a positive determination for the project has been achieved from Ofgem. To reduce the apparent height of the development, it is intended to dig it into the ground by around 4 - 6m and to create low bunding around the switching station building to obscure security fencing. SUDS will be utilised for drainage with

potential for some appropriate low level planting to enhance the immediate area. Lighting towers may be required, but it is intended that this would be a "dark" site, other than during period of maintenance.

- 2.3 The proposed construction access is from Ackergill to the west of the site, following existing access tracks most of the length, then crossing agricultural land and following field boundaries, before joining the minor road between Staxigoe and Noss Head for a short length. It is intended that this access track will be retained as a private access road following the construction period and as such be available for pedestrian access under the Land Reform Act. The site boundary provided on temporary laydown and construction compound areas are located to the north and west of the site and should be contained within the site boundary as shown on the submitted plan.

### **3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 3.1 The site consists of two gently sloping fields of improved grassland in regular cultivation, with field boundaries of stone walls. It is located in open countryside immediately west of the minor road to Noss Head Lighthouse, at a local low point in the road which drops down from the slight higher ground at Wick Airport before rising towards Noss Farm. The site is at between about 23 and 30m AOD. To the north, the land rises gently to the high point of 43m AOD at Noss Farm, and it rises gently to the south towards the airport, which is generally between 35 and 40m AOD. To the east, the land falls very gradually towards the coast at Staxigoe and to the west it falls gradually to the coast at Ackergillshore.
- 3.2 The temporary access road would be constructed to the west of the proposed switching station, and would begin at Ackergill, partly following an existing access track to the north of Wick Airport, and partly within agricultural land, following existing field boundaries.
- 3.3 The development is not located within or close to any international environmental designation and is not within or adjacent to any national or local designated sites. As such it is not adjacent or within any sensitive areas as identified by the EIA regulations.
- 3.4 There are a number of designated sites in the wider vicinity which may suffer indirect impacts as a result of the development. The landscape is relatively flat, with gentle undulation and the development would be visible, although at some distance, in some views from a number of scheduled monuments and Listed Buildings, although at a distance. Scheduled monuments (SAM) and Listed Buildings in the vicinity of the development are as follows: -
- SAM - Cairn of Elsay Broch.
  - SAM - The Pap, Hillhead.
  - Category A Listed Building - Noss Head Lighthouse
  - Category A Listed Building - Ackergill Tower

## **4.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The following policies are likely to be relevant to the assessment of the proposal:

### **4.1 Highland Wide Local Development Plan 2012**

- Policy 28 - Sustainable Development.
- Policy 30 - Physical Constraints.
- Policy 31 - Developer Contributions.
- Policy 36 - Development in the Wider Countryside.
- Policy 55 - Peat and Soils.
- Policy 56 - Travel.
- Policy 57 - Natural and Built and Cultural Heritage.
- Policy 58 - Protected Species.
- Policy 59 - Other Important Species.
- Policy 60 - Other Important Habitats.
- Policy 61 - Landscape.
- Policy 63 - Water Environment.
- Policy 64 - Flood Risk.
- Policy 66 - Surface Water Drainage.
- Policy 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure.
- Policy 72 - Pollution.
- Policy 77 - Public Access.

### **Caithness Local Plan (as continued in Force following adoption of the HwLDP)**

4.2 No specific policies.

### **Caithness and Sutherland Proposed Local Plan**

4.3 The emerging plan may evolve to highlight material considerations. The Proposed Plan is to be reported to two area committees in August 2016. It will highlight the vision covering four outcomes Growing Communities; Employment; Connectivity and Transport and Environment and Heritage. The plan's strategy continues to identify a Settlement Development Area for Wick. It includes supporting and enabling a High Voltage Energy Transmission Network (as identified in NPF3). The site is principally outwith the settlement area of Wick, with the exception being part of the access route to the development site. It therefore falls to be considered within the policies directed to the Wider Countryside.

### **Other Policy and Advice**

#### **National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3)**

4.4 NPF3 identifies as National Development certain classes of development forming part of an enhanced High Voltage Electricity Transmission Network. The proposal is understood to be part of that National Development; that status establishes the need for a project, but it does not grant development consent. Planning permission and any other necessary assessments and consents will still be required.

## **Highland Council Supplementary Guidance**

- 4.5
- Sustainable design guide.
  - Managing waste in new developments.
  - Flood risk and drainage impact assessment.
  - Construction and environmental management – largescale projects.

### **5.0 POTENTIAL MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1
- Development Plan Policy.
  - National Planning Policy.
  - Access and Transport Impacts.
  - Water, Waste Water, Drainage and Flood Risk.
  - Layout, Design and Mitigation.
  - Master-planning / Phasing / Permitted Development Rights.
  - Landscape and Visual Impacts.
  - Natural (Ecology and Ornithology)Heritage.
  - Cultural Heritage.
  - Socio Economic Impacts.
  - Aviation Issues.
  - Noise (including Construction Noise).
  - Construction Impacts including connectivity to Transmission Grid.

### **6.0 CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The report presents the information submitted to date as part of the PAN. Summarised are the policy considerations against which any future planning application will be considered as well as the potential material planning considerations and key issues based on the information available to date. The list is not exhaustive and further matters may arise as and when a planning application is received and in the light of public representations and consultation responses.

### **7.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 7.1 It is recommended the Committee notes the submission of the PAN and advises of any material issues it wishes to be brought to the applicant's attention.

Designation: Area Planning Manager – North

Author: Ken McCorquodale

Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in ecase file.

## PROPOSAL OF APPLICATION NOTICE MOLADH BRATH IARRTAIS

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning Etc. (Scotland) Act 2006  
Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008

**The Council will respond within 21 days of receiving the Notice. It will advise whether the proposed Pre-application Consultation is satisfactory or if additional notification and consultation above the statutory minimum is required. Please note that a planning application for this proposed development cannot be submitted less than 12 weeks from the date the Proposal of Application Notice is received by the Council and without the statutory consultation requirements having been undertaken. The planning application must be accompanied by a Pre-application consultation report.**

<b>Applicant</b>	Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc .....	<b>Agent</b>	.....
<b>Address</b>	200 Ashgrove Road West ..... Aberdeen ..... AB16 5NY .....	<b>Address</b>	..... .....
<b>Phone No.</b>	01224 667166 .....	<b>Phone</b>	.....
<b>E-mail</b>	james.wheater@sse.com.....	<b>E-mail</b>	.....

**Address or Location of Proposed Development** Please state the postal address of the prospective development site. If there is no postal address, please describe its location. Please outline the site in red on a base plan to a recognised metric scale and attach it to this completed Notice

SITE 700M SOUTH WEST OF NOSS, WICK, KW1 4QT AS PER ATTACHED LOCATION PLAN

**Description of Development** Please include detail where appropriate – eg the number of residential units; the gross floorspace in m<sup>2</sup> of any buildings not for residential use; the capacity of any electricity generation or waste management facility; and the length of any infrastructure project. Please attach any additional supporting information.

The proposal is to construct a high voltage direct current (HVDC) Switching Station. The Switching Station will be contained within a large building of approximately 120m in length, up to 80m in width and up to 21m in height. Ancillary landscaping and drainage infrastructure will be provided in the immediate vicinity of the building. Upgrades to the local road infrastructure (public and private) will be required.

**Pre-application Screening Notice**

Has a Screening Opinion been issued on the need for a Proposal of Application notice by the Highland Council in respect of the proposed development?

If yes please provide a copy of this Opinion.

YES.....

NO.....

**Community Consultation [See checklist of Statutory minimum consultation attached]**

State which other parties have received a copy of this Proposal of Application Notice.

Community Council/s	Date Notice Served
Wick Community Council.....	14/06/2014
Sinclairs Bay Community Council.....	14/06/2014

Names/details of any other parties	Date Notice Served
Gail Ross MSPS	14/06/2016
Paul Monaghan (MP)	14/06/2016
Ward 3 Councillors	14/06/2016

**Please give details of proposed consultation**

Proposed public event	Venue	Date and time
Public consultation/exhibition	Wick Assembly Hall	17 August 2016 14:30 - 17:30
Public consultation/exhibition	Staxigoe Village Hall	18 August 2016 14:30 - 17:30

Newspaper Advert – name of newspaper	Advert date(where known)
John o Groats Journal	TBC - Two weeks prior to public consultation
Caithness Courier	TBC - Two weeks prior to public consultation

**Details of any other consultation methods (date, time and with whom)**

Letters will be issued to all interested parties including Community Councils, Local Ward Member MSPs and the relevant MP. All those whom have attended previous events will be notified by email. Feedback forms will be available at the event and online and comments will be accepted for a period of three weeks following the consultation events.

Signed ...

Date: 14/06/2016

