

Agenda Item	5.2
Report No	PLN/075/22

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: North Planning Applications Committee
Date: 18 October 2022
Report Title: 22/04160/PAN: SSE Renewables
Land at Strathy South, Strathy Forest, Strathy
Report By: Area Planning Manager – North

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Construction of alternative access for Strathy South Wind Farm
Ward: 01-North, West and Central Sutherland

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the submission of the PAN and highlight any material issues they wish to be brought to the attention of the applicant before the submission of an application for planning permission.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report informs the 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 made valid on 14 September 2022. The PAN is a statutory requirement for planning applications for major or national developments and must be lodged at least 12 weeks prior to the submission of a planning application. Members are asked to note this may form the basis of a subsequent planning application.
- 1.3 The submitted information attached includes:
- Proposal of Application Notice (Application Form)
 - Location Plan
 - Site Layout Plan
- 1.4 An in-person consultation event will be held on week commencing 24 October 2022 date and time to be confirmed at Strathy Village Hall, Strathy. A virtual consultation event will also be held via the project website: <https://www.sserenewables.com/onshore-wind/in-development/strathy-south/> time and date also to be confirmed. The event will be advertised in the Northern Times at least two weeks ahead of the events, which exceeds the statutory minimum of seven days.
- 1.5 Details of all notified parties are contained / appended to the PAN form and include Strathy & Armadale, Melvich, and, Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra Community Councils, and local Members. Event invitation leaflets are also to be hand delivered to properties within these Community Council Areas.
- 1.6 Any forthcoming application will be accompanied by a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) report explaining the consultation undertaken, feedback received, and any resultant amendments made to the planning application.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The proposal is for an alternative access for Strathy South Wind Farm than that approved by Scottish Ministers. The applicant has highlighted that it would retain use of the consented track until a short distance south of the crossing of the Uidh nan Con Luatha watercourse. From there It is proposed that the existing track to serve the consented but not yet built Strathy Wood Wind Farm would be upgraded and form the remainder of the access to the Strathy South Wind Farm. The track section is a little over 6km in length, runs alongside the River Strathy and bypasses a section of forestry track through Strathy Forest used by the Strathy North Wind Farm. The stated purpose of using this track is to avoid the construction of additional track in sensitive areas, which would require the installation of significant water crossing of the River Strathy.

- 2.2 The developer sought formal pre-application advice from the Planning Authority through the Pre-Application Advice Service for Major Developments in 2019 for the larger wind farm proposal (HC ref. 19/02072/PREMAJ).

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The PAN boundary covers the section of access track that the application will relate to, which begins just south of Bowside Lodge and east of Dallangwell and runs southwards loosely following the course of the River Strathy before cutting through the south of Strathy Forest and rejoining the access track to Strathy South Wind Farm as originally approved. The track section connects with the main access route from the A836 to the north, used by all of the wind farm developments at Strathy; namely, Strathy North, Strathy Wood, and Strathy South.
- 3.2 The track section would be constructed over peat and areas of blanket bog, and runs through several natural heritage designations including the Caithness and Sutherland Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservations (SAC), and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The track cuts through the Strathy Forest commercial conifer plantation, however there are no other natural heritage or landscape designations within the site boundary. There are no Core Paths however the track and wider area is subject to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 where members of the public may reasonably exercise their rights to public access. There are no Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments in the vicinity of the site.
- 3.5 The proximity of the site to the River Strathy means some parts of the proposed site are at risk of flooding in a 1:200 year plus climate change fluvial flood event. However, only small sections of the track that relate to this proposal are at risk according to the indicative SEPA Flood Risk Mapping.

4.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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

4.1 Highland Wide Local Development Plan (2012) (IMFLDP)

- 28 - Sustainable Design
- 30 - Physical Constrains
- 36 - Development in the Wider Countryside
- 52 - Principle of Development in Woodland
- 55 - Peat and Soils
- 56 - Travel
- 57 - Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
- 58 - Protected Species
- 59 - Other Important Species
- 60 - Other Important Habitats
- 61 - Landscape
- 63 - Water Environment
- 64 - Flood Risk
- 67 - Renewable Energy Developments
- 77 - Public Access

4.2 Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (2018)

The site is not covered by any specific development allocation or safeguarding notation within the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan).

4.3 Highland Council Supplementary Guidance

- Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (Aug 2010)
- Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
- Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (Mar 2013)
- Managing Waste in New Developments (Mar 2013)
- Physical Constraints (Mar 2013)
- Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)
- Standards for Archaeological Work (Mar 2012)
- Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)
- Trees, Woodlands and Development (Jan 2013)

4.4 Scottish Government Policy and Other Guidance

- Scottish Planning Policy (Jun 2014 and as amended Dec 2020)
- National Planning Framework 3, NPF3 (Jun 2014) and the emerging content of NPF4
- Scottish Energy Strategy (Dec 2017)
- Scotland's Energy Strategy Position Statement (Mar 2021)
- 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (Jun 2011)
- Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map (May 2018)
- PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (Jan 2008)
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (Apr 2019)

5.0 POTENTIAL MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- a) Development Plan;
- b) National Planning Policy (including UK and Scottish Government Energy Policy);
- c) Outdoor Access;
- d) Trees and Woodland;
- e) Natural Heritage;
- f) Built and Cultural Heritage;
- g) Water Environment;
- h) Soils and Peat;
- i) Flood Risk and Drainage; and
- j) Any Other Material Considerations Raised within Representations.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The report presents the information submitted to date as part of the PAN. The policy considerations against which any future planning application will be considered have been summarised 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 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 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(s): Mark Fitzpatrick / Swayamsidha Patra

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

Relevant Plans: Plan 1 – Proposal of Application Notice (Application Form)
Plan 2 – Location Plan
Plan 3 – Site Layout Plan

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.

<p>Applicant – SSE Renewables</p> <p>Address. 1 Waterloo Street Glasgow G2 6AY</p> <p>Phone: 07467 655 742 E-mail: john.appleton@sse.com</p>	<p>Agent – Steven Black (JLL)</p> <p>Address 7 Exchange Crescent Conference Square EDINBURGH EH3 8LL</p> <p>Phone: 0131 225 8344 E-mail: Steven.black@jll.com</p>
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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

Strathy South Wind Farm, Strathy, Sutherland, Highland

Description of Development

Upgrade of existing forestry specification track to a wind farm specification track of six metres running width plus additions drainage and ancillary development including the installation of passing places and upgrading and replacement of watercourse crossings.

(Note: Consent is sought to amend the access arrangements to Strathy South Wind Farm. The proposal is to utilise the access track consented for use for the neighbouring Strathy Wood Wind Farm. This is shown in the drawing attached to this notice.

This avoids the construction of track serving only Strathy South Wind Farm and negates the need for a significant water crossing to be constructed over the River Strathy).

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.

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
Strathy and Armadale Community Council	30 September 2022
Melvich Community Council	30 September 2022
Bettyhill, Strathnavat and Altnaharra Community Council	30 September 2022

Names/details of any other parties	Date Notice Served
The Highland Council Ward Councillors:	
Cllr Michael Baird	30 September 2022
Cllr Marianne Hutchison	30 September 2022
Cllr Hugh Morrison	30 September 2022

Please give details of proposed consultation

Proposed public event : Public Exhibition

Venue : Strathy Village Hall, Strathy, Thurso, KW14 7RZ

Date and time : w/c 24/10/22

Newspaper Advert	Advert date(where known)
Northern Times	The two weeks ahead of the public exhibition

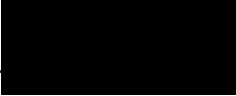
Details of any other consultation methods (date, time and with whom)

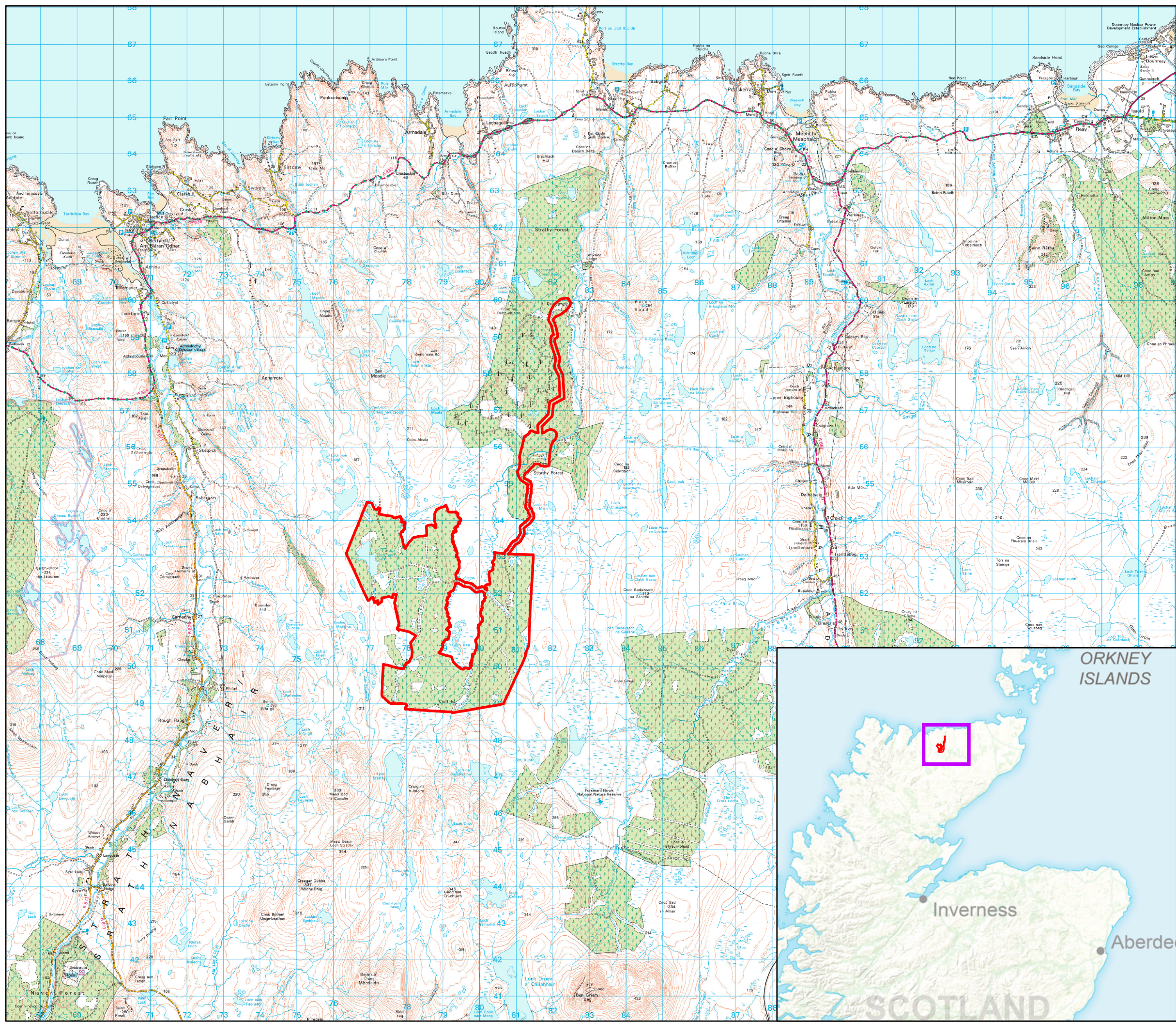
There will be updates to the Strathy South Wind Farm project website – including the public exhibition materials.

Updates will be provided to the community councils named in this notice.

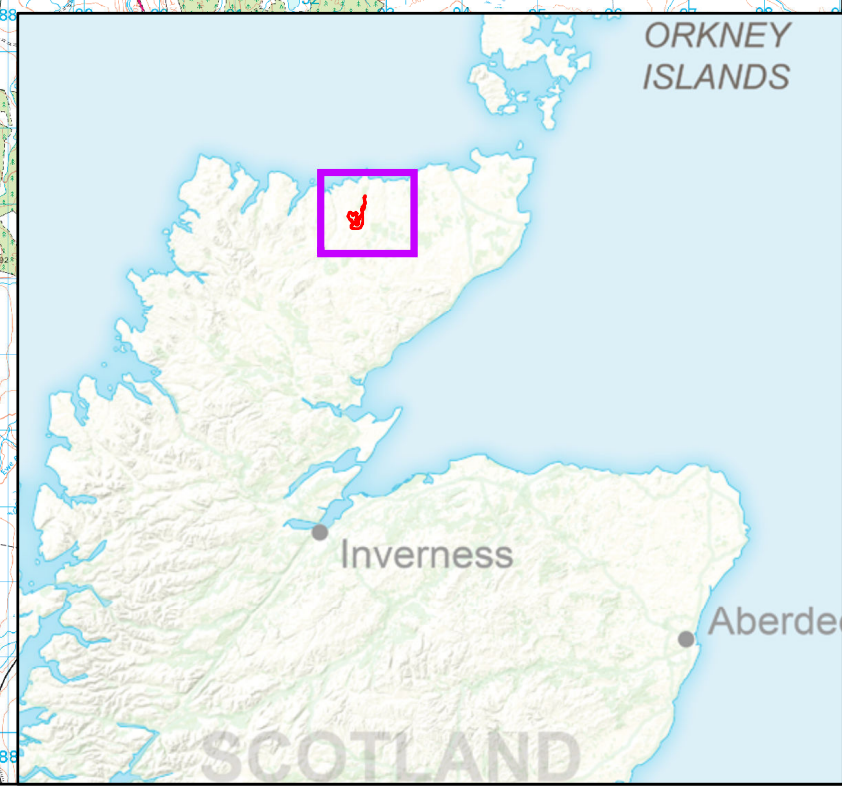
The applicant will write to residents in the Strathy & Armadale CC, Melvich CC and Bettyhill, Strathnaver & Altnaharra CC areas with details of the public event and with information regarding the application.

A virtual event will be held where members of the project team will be available to answer questions members of the public may have. This will be advertised alongside the public exhibition.

Signed ..  Date...30 September 2022.....



Key
 Site Boundary



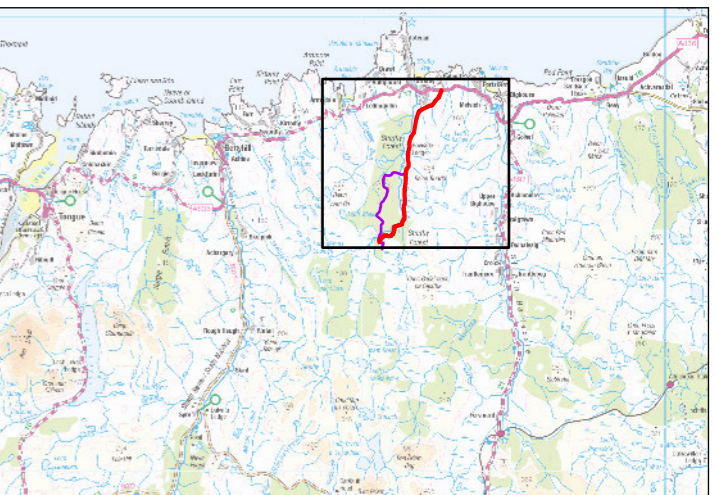
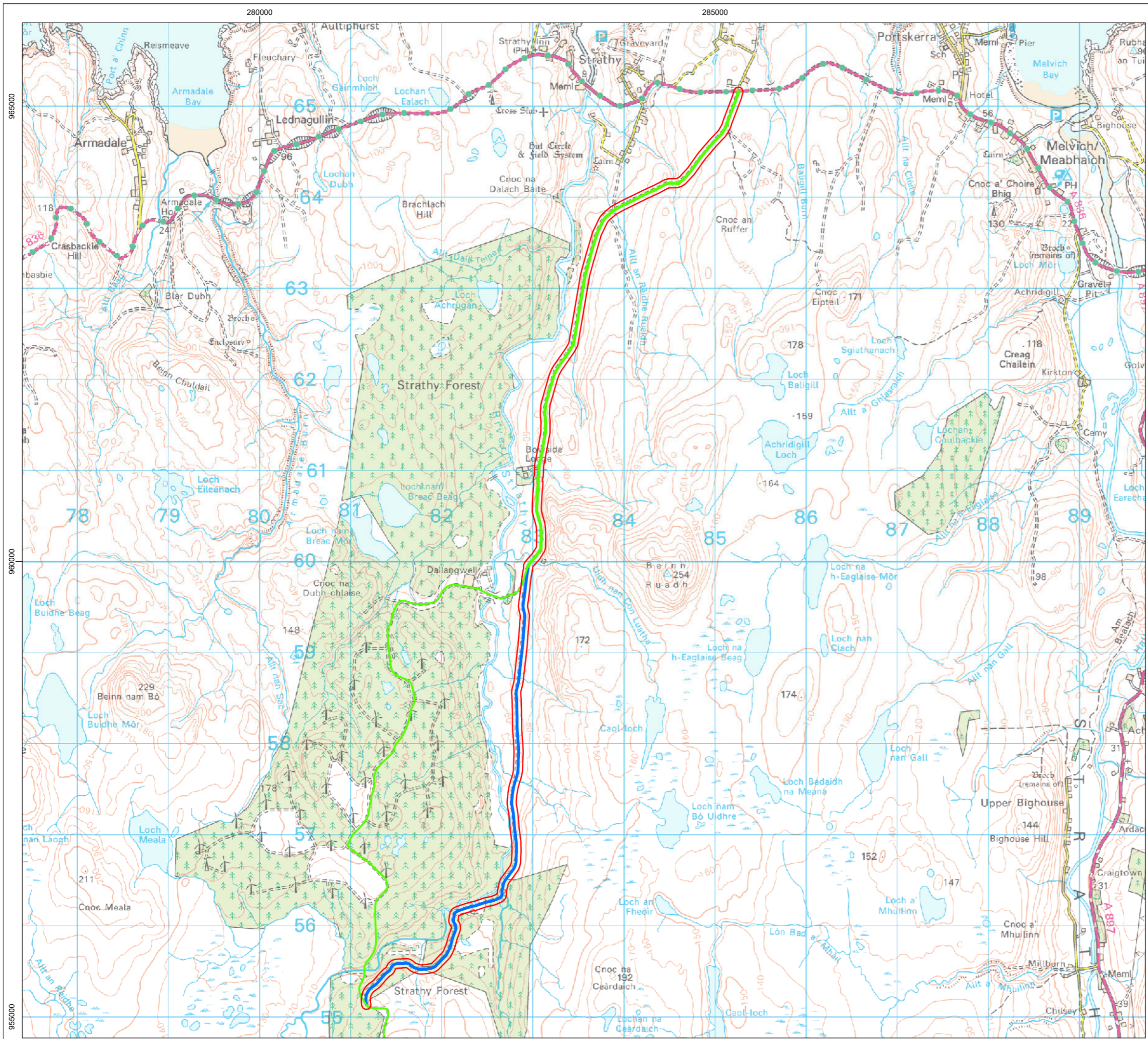
Scale 1:100,000@ A3

0 5 Km



Figure 1.1
Site Location

Strathgairn South Wind Farm
EIAR 2020



- Legend**
- Consented Access
 - Proposed Alternative Access
 - Alternate Access Red Line Boundary

Proposed Alternative Access with 30m Buffer = 727,922 sqm

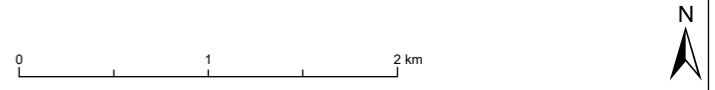
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00	26/09/22	First issue	DL	JA	-
Rev	Date	Status	Drwn	Chkd	Appd



Project
STRATHY SOUTH

Title
**ALTERNATE ACCESS
- RED LINE BOUNDARY**



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Scale	Plot Size	Datum	Projection
1:40,000	A3	OSGB36	BNG
Drawing Number	Sheet No.		
LN1000017-STS-SID-SK-0002-05	001 OF 001		