

Agenda Item	5.2
Report No	PLS-71-23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: South Planning Applications Committee

Date: 22 November 2023

Report Title: 23/05293/PAN: The Highland Council
Land 325m SW of Whitebridge Cottage, Auchterawe, Fort Augustus

Report By: Area Planning Manager – South

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Substation extension comprising; platform extension and erection of substation buildings, associated plant and infrastructure, associated ancillary development, drainage infrastructure, temporary construction compound and laydown area(s) as required, access improvements and landscape requirements (National Development)

Ward: 12 – Aird and Loch Ness

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 20 October 2023. 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.
- 1.4 There will be two in-person consultation events, the first to take place on Thursday 30 November 2023 between 2pm and 7pm at Fort Augustus Village Hall, and the second provisionally on Thursday 22 February 2024 at Fort Augustus Village Hall, with the date and venue subject to change. The first event was advertised on 20 November 2023 in the Press & Journal, and on 21 November 2023 in the Inverness Courier, 10 and 9 days prior to the public consultation date respectively and within the required statutory period. The advert for the second event will be placed in Press & Journal and Inverness Courier in line with the publication of the first event and at least one week in advance of the event, for which the date is to be confirmed.
- 1.5 Details of all notified parties are contained within the PAN form and include Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Council, as well as local Members, MSP and MP. Information postcards with an invitation to attend the (first) event were delivered by 16 November 2023 to properties within a 10 mile radius. Information was also made available from 15 November 2023 via social media, as well as the dedicated project website: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/BDUP>
- 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 the extension of the existing Auchterawe substation to accommodate additional equipment required to upgrade the existing Beauldy-Denny 275kV circuit to 400kV. The Beauldy-Denny 400kV upgrade can make use of the existing overhead line (OHL) infrastructure but requires additional substations as well as the modification of existing substations along the route. The extension will include the removal of existing 275kV equipment, platform extension, a new substation building, two new 400kV transformers, plant and infrastructure, associated ancillary facilities, temporary construction compound and lay down areas alongside an improved access, drainage, biodiversity net gain and landscaping and compensatory planting requirements. Planning permission 18/00760/FUL was granted previously for an extension with upgrades developed for the site in two phases. Phase One is

complete with Phase Two not yet commenced. This proposal will overlap most of the area covered by Phase Two, however there are some changes to the platform areas and the proposed layout which extends the operational boundary beyond that previously consented.

- 2.2 The developer sought formal pre-application advice from the Planning Authority through the Pre-Application Advice Service for Major Developments in 2023 for the upgrade of the existing Beaully-Denny 275kV circuit to 400kV including alterations/additions to several associated substations including at Fort Augustus (HC ref. 23/03715/PREMAJ).

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The PAN boundary covers approximately of 53.52 hectares taking in the existing Auchterawe substation and surrounding land with the northern boundary running along the public road, the western boundary running alongside adjacent residential property and watercourse/drainage channel, the southern boundary and part of the eastern boundary are also bounded by a watercourse/drainage channel. The site will utilise the existing connections to the Beaully-Denny power line as well as the existing access to the substation. While the site is largely surrounded by forestry and woodland there is a small community with houses grouped along the public road, including adjacent to the site, primarily to the west but also to the east towards Fort Augustus. To the west there is also agricultural grazing land to the south of the public road.
- 3.2 This small informal community, including the site area, is surrounded by woodland and forestry, all of which along (and crossing within) the southern boundary of the site and extending to the River Oich is identified in the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland as Native Pinewood. Further areas of Native Woodland can be found to the south west, north west and north east. Some of these areas are also designated as Ancient Woodland and Long Established Woodland. There are no other natural heritage designations within the site boundary nor is the site within connectivity distance of any Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The topography is relatively flat sloping gently south east from the public road towards the River Oich and Caledonian Canal Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). Torr Dhuin fort SAM lies approximately 1km to the south west and a number of Historic Environment Record sites lie outwith, but in close proximity, to the site. The site falls wholly within the Broad Steep Sided Glen Landscape Character Type 225 as defined by NatureScot's Landscape Character Assessment and Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Area lies approximately 1.9km to the east. There are no Core Paths within the site, however a number of core paths extend from the public road along the site boundary to the north in Auchteraw Woods. The wider path network in the area is extensive and linked to the Core Path Network including Inchnacardoch Forest Walk in the woodland to the south and east of the site. The Great Glen Way, the Great Glen Canoe Trail and National Cycle Network Route 78 all run alongside the Caledonian Canal to the south east of the site and the wider area is also subject to the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 where members of the public may reasonably exercise their rights to public access.
- 3.5 The proximity of the site to a number of watercourses including the Auchteraw Burn which runs along the western and southern boundary of the site means that much of

the site, including a large part of the development area for extension, is identified as being at high likelihood of river flooding as well as areas both within the development area and wider site being at high likelihood of surface water flooding, according to SEPA's Flood Risk Mapping.

4.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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

4.1 National Planning Framework 4 (2023) (NPF4)

- 1 - Tackling Climate Change
- 2 - Climate Mitigation and Adaptation
- 3 - Biodiversity
- 4 - Natural Places
- 5 - Soils
- 6 - Forestry, woodland and trees
- 7 - Historic assets and places
- 11 - Energy
- 20 - Blue and green infrastructure
- 22 - Flood risk and water management
- 23 - Health and safety
- 25 - Community wealth benefits

4.2 Highland Wide Local Development Plan (2012) (HwLDP)

- 28 - Sustainable Design
- 29 - Design Quality and Placemaking
- 30 - Physical Constraints
- 31 - Developer Contributions
- 36 - Development in the Wider Countryside
- 51 - Trees and Development
- 52 - Principle of Development in Woodland
- 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
- 66 - Surface Water Drainage
- 67 - Renewable Energy Developments
- 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure
- 72 - Pollution
- 74 - Green Networks
- 77 - Public Access

4.3 **Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP)**

No site specific policies or allocations, application will be assessed against the general policies of the HwLDP.

4.4 **Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2**

The relevant emerging local development plan is under review and in March 2023 was submitted to Scottish Ministers for Examination. The outcome of that Examination is not expected until end of January 2024 with likely plan adoption in spring 2024. Its contents are a material consideration in assessing planning applications but it does not form part of the approved development plan for the purposes of section 25 of the 1997 Act as amended until its adoption.

IMFLDP2 contains a biodiversity enhancement policy. Policy 2 Nature Protection, Preservation and Enhancement requires biodiversity enhancement in proportion to the nature and scale of the proposed development. A metric is not stated but the policy does require a baseline, following of a mitigation hierarchy, and an agreed timescale for delivery of mitigation.

4.5 **Highland Council Supplementary Guidance**

- Developer Contributions (November 2018)
- Flood Risk & Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
- Green Networks (Jan 2013)
- Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)
- Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (March 2013)
- Highland Renewable Energy Strategy & Planning Guidelines (May 2006)
- Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (Aug 2010)
- 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)

4.6 **Scottish Government Policy and Other Guidance**

- Onshore Wind Energy Policy Statement (2022)
- Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)
- Scottish Energy Strategy (Dec 2017)
- 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (2011)
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS, 2019)
- PAN 1/2011 - Planning and Noise (2011)
- PAN 1/2013 - Environmental Impact Assessment (2013)
- PAN 60 - Planning for Natural Heritage
- PAN 68 – Design Statements

5.0 POTENTIAL MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- a) Development Plan and other planning policy;
- b) Community amenity including operational noise impacts;
- c) Construction impacts;
- d) Roads and transport;
- e) Flood risk and drainage impacts;
- f) Impact on trees and woodland;
- g) Design, landscape, and visual impact (including cumulative impacts);
- h) Natural heritage including protected species and habitats;
- i) Built and cultural heritage;
- j) Economic impact and tourism;
- k) Construction impacts;
- l) Pollution;
- m) Decommissioning and restoration;
- n) Outdoor access; and,
- o) 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.

Signature: David Mudie
Designation: Area Planning Manager – South
Author(s): Jennifer Mair
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

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.

Applicant: Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc	Agent: N/A
Address: 10 Henderson Road, Inverness, IV1 1SN	Address
Phone: 07423 240 276	Phone
E-mail: sarah.rauch-lynch@sse.com	E-mail

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.

On land adjacent to the existing Fort Augustus Substation, Auchterawe. Approximately 1km south-west of the village of Fort Augustus.

Description of Development

Please include detail where appropriate – eg the number of residential units; the gross floorspace in m 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.

Substation extension comprising; platform extension and erection of substation buildings, associated plant and infrastructure, associated ancillary development, drainage infrastructure, temporary construction compound and laydown area(s) as required, access improvements and landscape requirements (National Development).

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

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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

Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Council;

Names/details of any other parties

Date Notice Served

Ward 12 (Aird and Loch Ness) Councillors:

Cllr Chris Ballance - Chris.Ballance.cllr@highland.gov.uk

Cllr Helen Crawford - Helen.Crawford.cllr@highland.gov.uk

Cllr David Fraser - David.fraser.cllr@highland.gov.uk

Cllr Emma Knox - emma.knox.cllr@highland.gov.uk

MSP: Kate Forbes - Kate.Forbes.msp@parliament.scot

MP: Drew Hendry - drew.hendry.mp@parliament.uk

Notice served to parties listed above: 30th October 2023 by email.

Please give details of proposed consultation

Proposed public event

Venue

Date and time

1st public event: In-Person Public Consultation; Fort Augustus Village Hall, Church Road, Fort Augustus, PH32 4DG from 2pm – 7pm, 30th November 2023.

2nd public event: In-Person. In excess of 2 weeks from first public event and prior to submission of planning application (programmed for late Spring 2024). The date is provisionally 22nd February 2024 and is subject to change. The venue is provisionally Fort Augustus Village Hall, Church Road, Fort Augustus, PH32 4DG and is subject to change.

Newspaper Advert – name of newspaper

Advert date (where known)

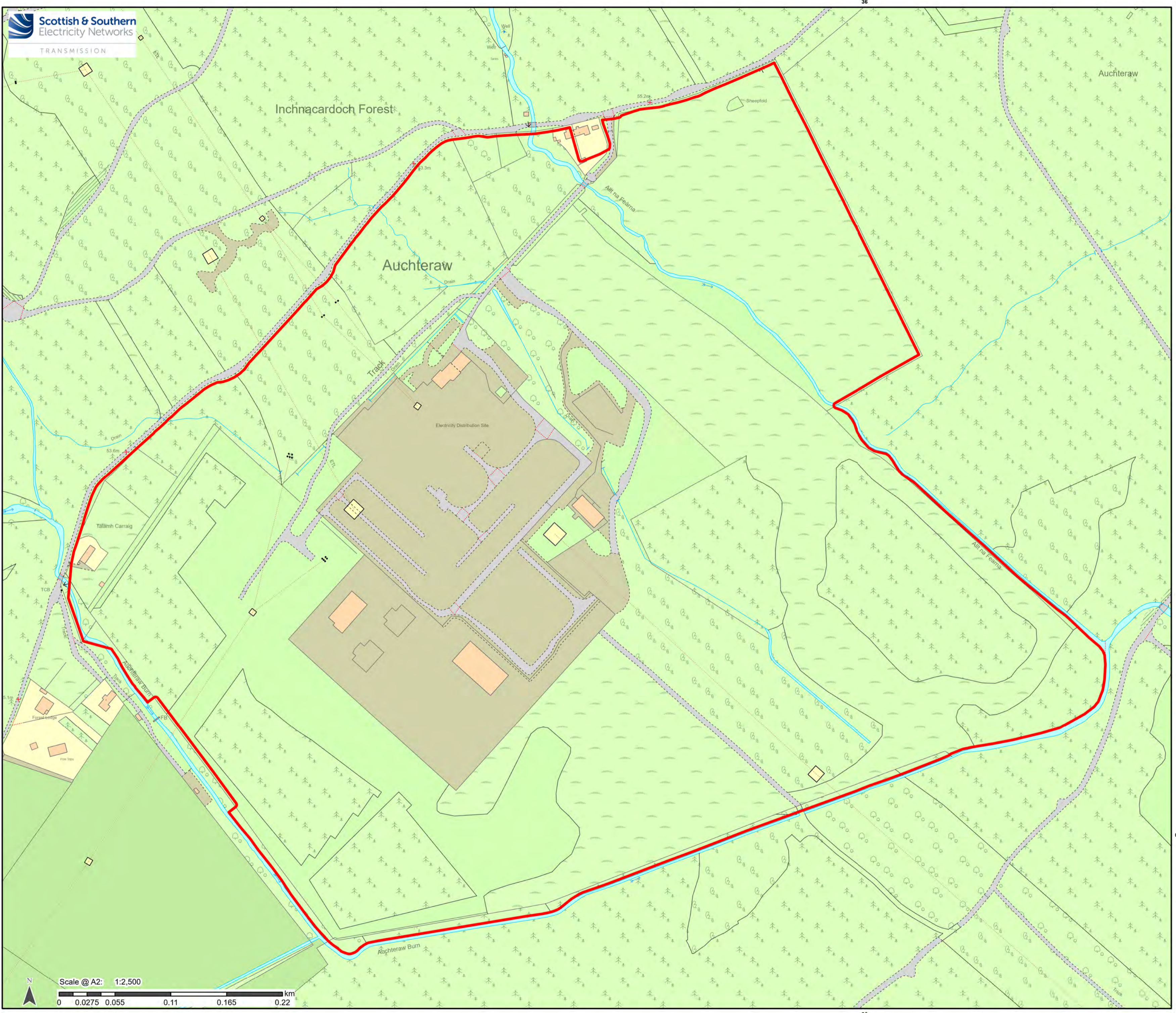
Press and Journal - An advert will be placed in this newspaper on 20th November 2023.

Inverness Courier - An advert will be placed in this newspaper on 21st November 2023.

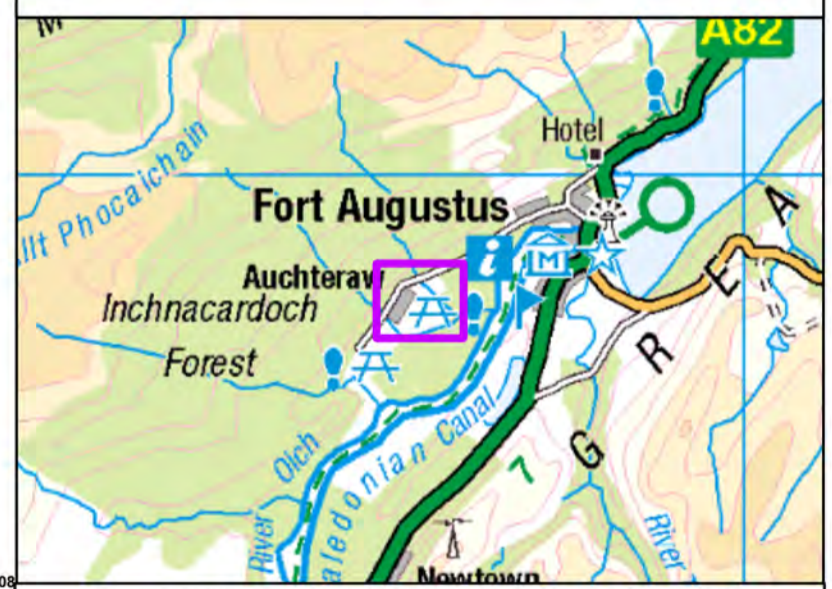
Details of any other consultation methods (date, time and with whom)

Information postcards with an invitation to attend the event will be sent to properties within a 10mile radius of the site and will be delivered by 16th November 2023. Information will also be made available via the project webpage and social media from 15th November 2023: <https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/BDUP>

SignedSarah Rauch-Lynch..... Date.....30/10/2023.....



Legend
 Redline Boundary - 53.52 Ha



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Project No:	LT000519
Project:	Fort Augustus Substation
Title:	Location Plan - Red Line Boundary
Drawn by:	BC
Date:	13/10/2023
Drawing:	LT000519_ENV_001_LocationPlan_RLB