



Nadara

The Repowered and Extended Ben Aketil Wind Farm

Proposed Grid Connection Assessment



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1 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 An application for consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 was submitted to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU) in June 2023 by Nadara Limited (Nadara), formerly Renantis UK Limited, (the Applicant) for the construction and operation of the Repowered and Extended Ben Aketil Wind Farm (the Proposed Development) on the Isle of Skye, Scotland. The Proposed Development comprises nine wind turbines in total, of a maximum height of up to 200 m to blade tip. The individual turbine generating capacity is anticipated to be between up to 6.6 Megawatts (MW), with the total installed capacity for the development in excess of 50MW.
- 1.2 The Proposed Development is subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, and an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) was submitted alongside the Section 36 application.
- 1.3 Since the submission of the application for consent, The Highland Council (THC) has lodged an objection to the Proposed Development. This triggered Public Local Inquiry (PLI) proceedings, resulting in the transfer of the proposal from the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) to the Scottish Government's Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA)¹. The PLI was undertaken between 23rd – 27th June 2025.
- 1.4 In February 2026, the judgement in *Raeshaw Farms Limited v Scottish Ministers and Energiekontor UK Ltd* [2026] CSIH 10² was issued in relation to the proposed Wull Muir Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as the 'Raeshaw Farms Case'). The judgement considered whether planning permission had been lawfully granted where the proposed grid connection had not been included within the planning application or assessed as part of the EIA process for the proposed wind farm.
- 1.5 The Court confirmed that it is for the decision-maker to determine the definition of an 'EIA project', and, that they must make such a determination in a case where development associated with the project to be consented is not included in the consent application. In undertaking this exercise in the case of generation plant, the decision-maker should consider whether grid infrastructure should be treated as forming part of the same project for the purposes of EIA.
- 1.6 In light of the *Raeshaw Farms Case*, the Reporter has requested that the Applicant submit Additional Information (AI) comprising an assessment of the likely significant effects of a prospective grid connection linking the Proposed Development to the national grid, to inform the Reporter's recommendation to the Scottish Ministers.

¹ DPEA case reference: WIN-270-22 – available at:
<https://www.dpea.scotland.gov.uk/CaseDetails.aspx?ID=125402>

² Available at: <https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/media/t4eds4lr/2026csih10-raeshaw-farms-limited-against-scottish-ministers-and-another.pdf>

- 1.7 The request stated that *"the assessment should identify the likely cable route or routes (perhaps by identifying a corridor or corridors within which a route is likely to run)" and assess the likely significant effects associated with "the realistic, worst case of any likely route or routes identified"*. The Reporter further noted that *"the detail required for both the route appraisal and the assessment of effects would be proportionate to what can be known at the stage at which the assessment is made"*.
- 1.8 This Proposed Grid Connection Assessment has therefore been prepared at the request of the Reporter and has been prepared as AI in line with Regulation 19(2) of *The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017*. It provides a description of the Proposed Grid Connection and associated infrastructure and presents an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects arising from the Proposed Grid Connection works.

Consenting Framework

- 1.9 Consent and deemed planning permission are not being sought for the Proposed Grid Connection as part of the Proposed Development Section 36 application.
- 1.10 Once the final Proposed Grid Connection has been confirmed through detailed design and consultation with relevant stakeholders, Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SEN) would seek to secure any necessary licences and consents in advance of construction. SEN would be responsible for the construction of the Proposed Grid Connection and would subsequently own, operate and maintain the asset as part of the electricity distribution network.

Proposed Grid Connection Assessment Structure and Definitions

- 1.11 This Proposed Grid Connection Assessment comprises the following:
- **Section 1:** Introduction to this Proposed Grid Connection Assessment, including report structure and key definitions;
 - **Section 2:** Describes the route corridor, alternatives considered, construction requirements, and assumed construction mitigation;
 - **Section 3:** Outlines the assessment approach, including scoped in and scoped out environmental factors, assessment limitations, and rationale;
 - **Section 4:** Provides the assessment of likely significant effects on environmental factors that have been scoped in this assessment; and
 - **Section 5:** Provides the summary and conclusions of this assessment.
- 1.12 The terminology adopted throughout this report, is presented in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1: Report Definitions and Key Abbreviations

Term	Definition
EIAR	The EIA Report for the Proposed Development submitted to the ECU in June 2023.
PoC	Point of Connection.
Proposed Development	The Proposed Development assessed in the EIAR i.e., the Repowered and Extended Ben Aketil Wind Farm, which comprises nine wind turbines in total, of a maximum height of up to 200 m to blade tip.
Site	Application Boundary of the Proposed Development.
Proposed Grid Connection	The underground electrical cables from the on-site substation to PoC.
Proposed Grid Connection Corridor	The assessed corridor within which the final cable route would be designed.
UGC	Underground Cable.

Project Team

- 1.13 This assessment has been compiled by RSK Environment (RSK) on behalf of the Applicant. While RSK had overall responsibility for compiling this report, sub-consultants prepared specialist assessment section inputs.
- 1.14 The relevant expertise and qualifications of specialists involved in preparing this assessment are detailed in Table 1.3 of the EIA Report (June 2023).

2 Proposed Grid Connection

Proposed Grid Connection Corridor

- 2.1 At this stage, the exact cable route for the Proposed Grid Connection has not yet been determined. Accordingly, this assessment considers a cable route corridor within which the final cable route is likely to be developed following consent of the Proposed Development. Upon review of alternative grid connection options, taking into account the location of the Point of Connection (PoC) at Dunvegan Substation, the Proposed Development's substation location, the existing grid connection of the operational wind farm, and consultations with SSEN, the cable route corridor shown in **Figure 1** was established. The cable route corridor together with the grid connection description and characteristics provided in the following section, provide the basis for assessing likely significant effects prior to the completion of detailed design.

Alternatives

- 2.2 The Applicant initially considered an alternative grid connection route corridor between the Proposed Development's on-site substation and Dunvegan Substation; however, this was subsequently discounted following further review. This alternative corridor, shown in **Plate 1**, would have followed the southern access track of the Proposed Development until reaching the A863 public road, before continuing north-west for approximately 3 km and then turning north towards Dunvegan Substation.
- 2.3 This alternative route corridor has not been assessed as it is significantly longer than the preferred route corridor shown in **Figure 1**. Furthermore, it was discounted due to its potential to result in adverse effects on traffic and transport and local amenity. Construction of a grid connection cable along this route would necessitate extensive traffic management measures, including temporary road closures and traffic control arrangements, and greater construction activity that would result in increased disturbance along the public road network, particularly during cable installation works within the verge of the A863.



Plate 1 – Alternative Grid Connection Route Corridor Considered

Proposed Grid Connection Description

Technical Characteristics and Construction Requirements

- 2.4 The existing overhead line (OHL) connecting the operational Ben Aketil wind farm will be utilised for the Repower part of the project. SSEN has confirmed that the Extension part of the scheme requires a new underground cable. It is this new Proposed Grid Connection that this assessment focuses on. It should be noted, however, that the Proposed Grid Connection will be designed, installed, owned, and operated by SSEN.
- 2.5 The technical characteristics of the Proposed Grid Connection and its construction requirements are based on information provided to the Applicant by SSEN as part of the grid connection offer in 2031 for a 33 kilovolt (kV) distribution connection, as well as SSEN's Design and Installation Standards³.
- 2.6 The Proposed Grid Connection is assumed to comprise a continuous buried cable (hereafter referred to as an underground cable (UGC)), extending from the Proposed Development's on-site substation westwards to the PoC at Dunvegan Substation. The cable route would follow upland moorland habitat for the majority of its length and would require crossings of at least two watercourses.
- 2.7 The UGC would terminate at a 33 kV circuit breaker at Dunvegan Substation. In line with SSEN Design and Installation Standards, dual cabling would be installed, with two groups of three ducted electrical cables. A dual cable circuit is required with an example of a trench layout shown in **Plate 2** from the SSEN technical guidance. The construction

³ Available at: <https://www.ssen.co.uk/our-services/tools-and-maps/g81/22kv-and-33kv-cables-and-terminations/>

corridor for the UGC is assumed to be up to 5 m, comprising an approximate 1 m-wide trench and 2 m either side.

- 2.8 The final alignment of the Proposed Grid Connection would be confirmed through detailed design in consultation with SSEN and other relevant stakeholders.

Table A31.1

Location	For Installers and Designers		For Designers
	Dimension 'X' Minimum Depth of Cover to Top of Cable or Duct	Dimension 'Y' Depth of Trench	Standard Depth (S), Non-Standard Depth (N)Depth
Unmade & Verge	800 mm	1080 mm	S
Footpath	800 mm	1080 mm	S
Carriageway	900 mm	1130 mm	S
Agricultural Land	1100 mm	1380 mm	N
Minimum Trench Width (mm)	Direct Buried - A		Duct - B
	1050		950

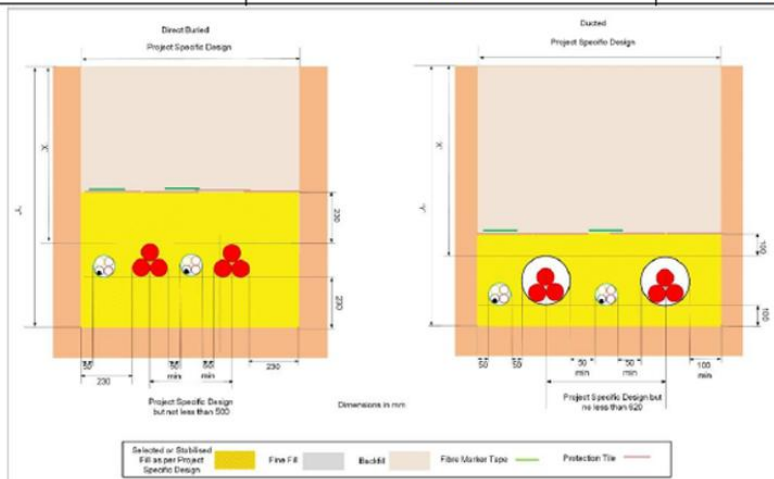


Plate 2 – Example Trench Layout for Dual Cable 33kV Circuit

Watercourse Crossing Methods

- 2.9 Watercourse crossing methods would follow the Sustainable Urban Drainage Scottish Working Party, Water Assessment and Drainage Assessment Guide (2016)⁴. The method adopted would be implemented only with the approval of SEPA.
- 2.10 Watercourse crossings are expected to be carried out by open trench or trenchless methods. The open trench method can be carried out by “damming and fluming” or “damming and pumping” which involves temporarily damming upstream of the crossing point and fluming by diverting the flow of water into a pipe following the watercourse to discharge downstream of the crossing point. Alternatively, this would be undertaken using a pump to extract the water from behind the dam and into the watercourse downstream of the crossing point. The trenchless method utilises a Horizontal Directional Drill (HDD) rig to bore beneath the watercourse.

⁴ SUDSWP (2016). Water Assessment and Drainage Assessment Guide. Available at: https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/163472/water_assessment_and_drainage_assessment_guide.pdf accessed July 2026. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is part of SUDSWP.

- 2.11 Upon completion of trenching (at crossing locations where the trenching method is used), the watercourse would be fully reinstated.
- 2.12 It is assumed that appropriate construction mitigation measures would be implemented by SSEN during the construction of watercourse crossings. Such measures would be implemented in accordance with a detailed Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which would be submitted to THC for approval prior to the commencement of construction works. The CEMP would include measures to prevent sediment and other suspended solids arising from construction activities from entering watercourses.

General Construction Methodology

- 2.13 Prior to finalising the design and routing of the Proposed Grid Connection, ground investigations, including all the necessary control measures to protect the water environment, would be undertaken along the Proposed Grid Connection route.
- 2.14 In advance of construction, SSEN would obtain any necessary statutory approvals are in place as well as agreeing the construction programme and any management measures with THC and SEPA.
- 2.15 Excavation works would be undertaken with due regard to any existing utilities, including maintaining appropriate clearances from existing infrastructure and infrastructure and the most ecologically sensitive habitats. Excavated material would be managed and reinstated appropriately, while groundwater encountered during construction would be treated and discharged in accordance with relevant legislation and permit requirements. All temporary working areas would be reinstated following completion of the UGC installation works.
- 2.16 Following installation, cable route marker posts and signage would be erected at field boundaries to identify the UGC alignment.

Construction Environmental Management

- 2.17 Any assumed environmental management and construction mitigation measures are described in relevant technical sections of this report are for the purposes of informing this assessment. It is also expected that these measures, and any others deemed required at the time of securing relevant licences and consents, would be secured via a CEMP.

Operation

- 2.18 Once commissioned, the Proposed Grid Connection would be maintained by SSEN, who would be responsible for its operation and subsequent decommissioning.
- 2.19 The operational maintenance requirements of the 33kV UGC would be minimal. During operation, activities would be limited to periodic inspections of above-ground markers and substation equipment, together with remote monitoring of cable performance which would likely be between 1-4 visits per year.
- 2.20 No routine excavation or significant maintenance works are anticipated during the normal operation of the UGC. In the event of a fault, localised excavation may be required to

access and repair the affected cable section before reinstatement of the land and roadway.

Decommissioning

- 2.21 Given the anticipated 35-year operational lifespan of the UGC and the industry practice of leaving UGCs in situ following cessation of use, decommissioning is not considered likely to give rise to significant environmental effects. Any future decommissioning strategy would be agreed with the relevant authorities and landowners and implemented in accordance with applicable legislation and best practice.

3 Assessment Approach

Introduction

- 3.1 This assessment generally follows the methodologies and best practice identified in the EIAR submitted with the Section 36 consent application in June 2023. The study area for each environmental factor however is curtailed to the Proposed Grid Connection Corridor and its immediate environs, construction requirements, and working areas, as described in **Section 2**.

Construction Environmental Management Measures and Commitments

- 3.2 In undertaking this assessment, regard has been taken of the relevant measures and commitments set out in the Schedule of Environmental Commitments (Chapter 17 of the EIAR) that apply to the Proposed Development. These are considered to be representative of the types of general construction environmental management measures expected to be required for the Proposed Grid Connection. Where considered appropriate, additional measures that may be necessary per environmental factor are also identified in the technical assessments below.
- 3.3 As any such mitigation cannot be formally secured via the Section 36 consent for the Proposed Development, this assessment identifies where such additional mitigation would be implemented.
- 3.4 It is also assumed for the purpose of this assessment that the Proposed Grid Connection would be delivered, owned, and operated by SSEN as the electricity licence holder. SSEN will be subject to its statutory environmental duties under the Electricity Act 1989. Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act includes a duty to have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, conserving flora/fauna and features of special interest, and protecting sites, buildings and objects of architectural, historic or archaeological interest, while taking reasonable steps to mitigate any effects arising from their proposals. These duties apply to the formulation and execution of works undertaken by licence holders, including the installation and operation of electric lines and associated infrastructure. Accordingly, it is anticipated that SSEN's requirements and environmental standards would apply recognised best practice construction techniques and incorporate environmental mitigation as "embedded mitigation" within the delivery of the Proposed Grid Connection works, consistent with their published approach.
- 3.5 The delivery, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Grid Connection would be undertaken in accordance with SSEN's standard practice General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs)⁵ and Species Protection Plans (SPPs) where applicable, and with reference to SEPA Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPP), in particular:

⁵ Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), 2026. General Environmental Management Plans (GEMP): Standard Practice Construction Protocols. Perth: SSEN Transmission. Available from: [ssen-transmission.co.uk](https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk)

- GPP1: Understanding your environmental responsibilities – good environmental practices⁶
- GPP2: Above ground oil storage tanks⁷
- GPP5: Works and maintenance in or near water⁸
- GPP6: Working at construction and demolition sites⁹
- GPP21: Pollution incident response planning¹⁰

3.6 Where the Proposed Grid Connection is delivered by a contractor appointed by SSEN, it is assumed that all of the same requirements, obligations and best practice measures exercised by SSEN in discharging its Schedule 9 duties would still apply.

Scope of Assessment

3.7 This report considers the likely realistic, worst case significant effects of the Proposed Grid Connection in isolation, and in-combination with the Proposed Development.

3.8 The following environmental factors, which were considered within the EIAR, are scoped out of this assessment as no likely significant effects are anticipated from the Proposed Grid Connection based on the identified grid route corridor and nature of the works associated with the proposed UGC:

- Traffic and Transport;
- Noise;
- Socioeconomics;
- Aviation;
- Telecommunications;
- Shadow Flicker; and
- Climate Change Mitigation.

3.9 The following environmental factors were scoped out of and therefore not considered within the EIAR, and this is similarly the case here as no significant effects are anticipated from the Proposed Grid Connection based on identified grid route corridor and nature of the works associated with the proposed UGC:

- Air Quality;
- Vulnerability to Major accidents and/or disasters; and
- Population and Human Health.

⁶ Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, and Natural Resources Wales. (2021). GPP 1: Understanding your environmental responsibilities - good environmental practices. [online] NetRegs. Available at: [netregs.org.uk](https://www.netregs.org.uk)

⁷ Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, and Natural Resources Wales. (2021). GPP 2: Above ground oil storage tanks. [online] NetRegs. Available at: <https://www.netregs.org.uk/media/1890/guidance-for-pollution-prevention-2-2022-update.pdf>

⁸ Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, and Natural Resources Wales. (2018). GPP 5: Works and maintenance in or near water. [online] NetRegs. Available at: [netregs.org.uk](https://www.netregs.org.uk)

⁹ Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, and Natural Resources Wales. (2023). GPP 6: Working on construction and demolition sites. [online] NetRegs. Available at: <https://www.netregs.org.uk/media/tsybv2y3/gpp6-working-on-construction-and-demolition-sites.pdf>

¹⁰ Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, and Natural Resources Wales. (2021). GPP 21: Pollution incident response planning. [online] NetRegs. Available at: <https://www.netregs.org.uk/media/1436/gpp-21-final.pdf>

- 3.10 All remaining environmental factors considered within the EIAR are assessed in the following sections.
- 3.11 Operational effects have been scoped out of the assessment, as following successful completion of ground reinstatement, maintenance requirements for the UGC would be minimal. As described in Section 2, activities would be limited to periodic inspections of above-ground markers and substation equipment, together with remote monitoring of cable performance.
- 3.12 Similarly, decommissioning effects have been scoped out of this assessment, as leaving the UGC in situ following cessation of use is not considered likely to give rise to significant environmental effects. Any future decommissioning strategy is also considered unlikely to result in any significant environmental effects and would be agreed with the relevant authorities and landowners and implemented in accordance with the applicable legislation and best practice in force at the time of cessation of use.

Structure of Assessment

- 3.13 The following environmental factors are considered in more detail in Section 4 of this report:
- Landscape and Visual Impact;
 - Ecology;
 - Ornithology;
 - Geology, Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Peat; and
 - Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.
- 3.14 A consistent structure has been adopted in **Section 4** of this report, considering each environmental factor scoped into the assessment as follows:
- **Baseline** - a summary of the environmental baseline insofar as it relates to the Proposed Grid Connection.
 - **Construction Effects** – consideration of the potential environmental effects of construction of the Proposed Grid Connection.
 - **Mitigation Measures** – a description of the measures it is assumed and expected would be required and implemented for the Proposed Grid Connection, in order to mitigate potential environmental effects and as a basis for concluding likelihood of significant effects in this assessment.
 - **Likely Significant Effects of the Proposed Grid Connection** – identification of any likely significant effects of the Proposed Grid Connection considered in isolation.
 - **Statement of Significance** – an overall statement of significance summarising the conclusions of the assessment of effects presented.

Cumulative Developments

- 3.15 A review of cumulative developments within a 250 m buffer of the Proposed Grid Connection corridor was undertaken using the e-Planning portal, for proposals recorded by the Highland Council between 18th August 2021 and 18th August 2026. This review identified one cumulative development, which is presented in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1: Cumulative Developments

Planning Reference	Address	Description	Status	Construction Programme and Comments
22/04580/S37 ¹¹	Ardmore Sub-Station Ardmore Hallin Dunvegan	Skye Reinforcement Project - Construct and operate approximately 110 kilometres (km) of new double circuit steel structure 132 kV overhead transmission line and associated infrastructure.	Decided – Approved by Scottish Ministers in June 2025.	According to the EIAR that was submitted for the consented development, the project would take place over a 36-month period, following the granting of consents and discharge of pre-commencement conditions. A further seven months would be required for dismantling works associated with the existing OHL. Therefore, construction of the consented development, part of which lies within the Proposed Grid Connection corridor, may coincide with construction of the Proposed Grid Connection.

¹¹ Available at: <https://wam.highland.gov.uk/wam/caseDetails.do?keyVal=RJBQRXIH0IQ00&caseType=Application>

Assessment Limitations and Assumptions

- 3.16 Given that the design and alignment of the UGC is not yet confirmed, the evaluation of likely significant effects comprises a desk-based assessment using publicly available datasets and survey data collected for the Proposed Development's EIA. No additional field surveys were undertaken to inform the Proposed Grid Connection Assessment.

4 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 4.1 This assessment follows the same methodologies and best practice expressed in the LVIA for the Proposed Development. It also considers the indicative grid connection route in the context of general grid connection routing guidance for landscape and visual matters.
- 4.2 This assessment does not determine the significance of the effect (i.e. major, moderate, minor or negligible). It identifies the key landscape and visual constraints and receptors, and an assessment is made on whether significant effects are likely to arise due to the grid connection on its own, in-combination with the Proposed Development and cumulatively as noted in **Table 3.1**.
- 4.3 As the connection would be underground, there would be no operational effects on Landscape or Visual receptors. Therefore, the assessment will focus on the construction effects only. It is assumed that the construction of the grid connection would take less than 12 months and may occur concurrently with wind farm construction.
- 4.4 **Figure 1** illustrates the Proposed Grid Connection Corridor between the Proposed Development's on-site substation and the point of connection at Dunvegan Substation.

Baseline

- 4.5 As illustrated in **Figure 2**, the grid connection would not pass through any areas designated at the local and/or national level for their landscape quality or scenery. Given the separation distance of 1.8 km and limited extent of influence of the likely grid connection there would be no significant effects on any designated landscapes.
- 4.6 The landscape character types (LCTs) identified by NatureScot are illustrated on Figure 4: Landscape Character, Volume 2B AI March 2025 Figures (CD1.15). The grid connection is likely to originate and end within LCT 359: Upland Sloping Moorland, but would extend across an area of LCT 360: Stepped Moorland.

LCT 359: Upland Sloping Moorland

- 4.7 This LCT includes the upland areas of northern central Skye and is closely associated with LCT 360 Stepped Moorland. The Upland Sloping Moorland broadly undulates with moorland and forestry to form a large-scale patchwork of contrasting colours and textures. The susceptibility of this landscape type would be Low and the value would be Regional, with the overall sensitivity of the landscape considered to be Medium/low.

LCT 360: Stepped Moorland

- 4.8 This LCT includes much of central Skye with pockets and larger areas that are closely associated with LCT 359 Upland Sloping Moorland. The Stepped Moorland has a distinctive stepped landform rising from the coast up to moderate elevation uplands. The susceptibility of this landscape type would be Medium and the value would be Regional, with the overall sensitivity of the landscape considered to be Medium.

Visual receptors

- 4.9 There are no Core Paths within or near the Proposed Grid Connection Corridor. However, the existing Crofter's Track and existing Access Track currently make up part of an informal recreational route through the area. There is also a route to the summit of Ben Aketil. These recreational receptors are considered to be of Community value and High susceptibility with an overall sensitivity of High/medium.
- 4.10 Views from residents in Upper Feorlig, Roskill/Heribost or Lonmore, and road users on the A863 or A850 would be very limited and at distances of 1.5 km-2 km away. Residents are considered to be of Community value and High susceptibility with an overall sensitivity of High/medium. Road users on the A863 or A850 would be Community value and of Medium susceptibility with an overall sensitivity of Medium.

Construction Effects

- 4.11 The construction works required for the installation of the Proposed Grid Connection as described in **Section 2**, would likely include the following activities which might result in landscape or visual effects:
- Woody vegetation removal is unlikely, as there is limited taller vegetation within the Proposed Grid Connection Corridor and where present it is likely to be avoidable;
 - Construction of temporary construction compounds, laydown areas, which would be reinstated after use;
 - Construction of temporary access tracks and watercourse crossings, which would be reinstated after use;
 - Need for watercourse crossings for the UGC;
 - Trenching of cables for undergrounding; and
 - The presence of people, and movement of associated construction vehicles and plant, including any lighting.
- 4.12 The majority of potential effects that could occur during the construction phase would be short-term and reversible.

Cumulative effects

- 4.13 The cumulative assessment considers the effect of the Proposed Grid Connection with the Skye Reinforcement Project, which is consented but unbuilt. The section of the Skye Reinforcement Project between Edinbane to Ardmore (where the Proposed Grid Connection is located) would consist of the existing single circuit wood pole 132kV OHL being replaced with a new, higher-capacity trident wood pole 132kV OHL. The existing alignment and consented alignment are very similar between the Dunvegan and Edinbane substations.

Mitigation Measures

- 4.14 As noted above, it is assumed that any grid connection would be designed and developed in line with general grid connection routing guidance for landscape and visual matters. It is also assumed that SSEN would adhere to their General Environmental Management Plan (GEMP) for Soil Management including restoration to pre-existing condition.

- 4.15 It would be advisable to avoid any disturbance of the distinctive stepped landform of Ben Vic Askill, which is a key characteristic of the LCT 360: Stepped Moorland. There is scope to adjust the route to the south of the stepped moorland outcrops and over the lower shoulder of the ridge between the two connection points. Whilst this would bring the connection closer, there would still be an offset of over 800m to the nearest resident to the northwest and over 900m to the residents to the southwest, the effects would be short-term and reversible.

Likely Significant Effects

Landscape receptors

- 4.16 Construction effects would directly affect both LCT 359 Upland Sloping Moorland and LCT 360 Stepped Moorland. Assuming the mitigation recommended above is included, the impacts of the grid connection on both LCTs are likely to be similar, as both landscapes are very similar and open in nature. It is not anticipated that there would be any notable loss of valued landscape features, and significant adverse effects on the fabric of the landscape during construction would be unlikely.
- 4.17 The grid connection construction would lead to expansion of the man-made influence between the wind farm and the Dunvegan substation, which are currently separated by landform, albeit this would only be short-term and reversible when construction is finished.
- 4.18 This would result in a relatively limited geographic extent of adverse effects on landscape character as a result of the construction of the UGC in isolation. Given the sensitivity of the LCTs and the short duration and reversible nature of the construction effects, significant adverse effects would be unlikely on these LCTs.
- 4.19 In-combination with the Proposed Development, this would result in a relatively limited geographic expansion of the adverse effects on landscape character as result of the construction of the UGC and the wind farm together. However, given the sensitivity of the LCTs and the short duration and reversible nature of the construction effects, significant adverse effects would be unlikely on these LCTs.
- 4.20 Cumulatively, if the Proposed Grid Connection, Skye Reinforcement between Edinbane and Dunvegan substations and the Proposed Development were all to be constructed at the same time, this would expand the area which could be affected by construction activity to a wider extent within the Upland Sloping Moorland and Stepped Moorland LCTs. Whilst these combined cumulative effects would increase the adverse effects on landscape character, the short duration and reversible nature of the construction effects would mean that significant adverse effects would be unlikely on these LCTs.

Visual receptors

- 4.21 The users of the informal recreational routes in the local area would experience some views to parts of the construction of the UGC from 0.5 km to 2 km+ away. However, at these distances the construction of the UGC would only have limited influence on views. Given the High/Medium sensitivity of the recreational users, separation distance from the grid corridor, and short-term nature of construction effects, significant adverse effects are likely to be avoided.

- 4.22 In combination with the Proposed Development, construction of the grid connection would likely get subsumed by the wider construction activity and effects of the wind farm which would be nearer to the receptors and more influential than the grid connection. Therefore the 'additional' effects of the construction of the Proposed Grid Connection would be not significant but the 'combined' effects of the construction phase of both developments would be significant, albeit temporary and reversible.
- 4.23 Cumulatively, if the Proposed Grid Connection, Skye Reinforcement between Edinbane and Dunvegan substations and the Proposed Development were all constructed at the same time, this would increase the adverse visual effects experienced by users of the informal recreational routes, as the Skye Reinforcement crosses the existing Crofting Track. The 'additional' effects of the construction of the Proposed Grid Connection would be not significant but the 'combined' effects of the construction phase of both developments would be significant.
- 4.24 For residents in Upper Feorlig, Roskill/Heribost or Lonmore, and road users on the A863 or A850, views of the construction effects of the UGC would be very limited and when present, at distances of 1.5 km-2 km away. Given the High/Medium sensitivity of residents and Medium sensitivity of road users, separation distance from the grid corridor and short term nature of construction effects, significant adverse effects are likely to be avoided.
- 4.25 In combination with the Proposed Development, construction of the grid connection would be predominantly subsumed by the wider construction activity and effects of the wind farm which would be more influential than the grid connection, but the grid connection would expand the area of construction activity visible. The 'additional' effects of the construction of the Proposed Grid Connection would be not significant but the 'combined' effect of these two would be significant.
- 4.26 Cumulatively, if the Proposed Grid Connection, Skye Reinforcement between Edinbane and Dunvegan substations and the Proposed Development were all constructed at the same time, the Skye Reinforcement would be visible nearer to these residents with the Proposed Grid Connection and Proposed Development being constructed in the distance behind it. This would not expand the area of construction activity visible but increase the intensity of that activity. The 'additional' effects of the construction of the Proposed Grid Connection would be not significant but the 'combined' effect of these three construction phases would be significant for residents in Upper Feorlig, Roskill/Heribost or Lonmore, and road users on the A863 or A850.

Statement of Significance

- 4.27 Effects from the Proposed Grid Connection in isolation on landscape and visual receptors are considered to be **not significant**.
- 4.28 In-combination with the Proposed Development, the 'additional' effects of the construction of the Proposed Grid Connection would be not significant, however the 'combined' effects of the construction phase of both developments would be significant for some visual receptors on or near the Site itself. Remaining in-combination landscape and visual effects would be not significant.
- 4.29 Cumulatively, if the Proposed Grid Connection, Skye Reinforcement between Edinbane and Dunvegan substations, and the Proposed Development were all constructed at the

same time, the 'combined' effects of the construction phases of all three developments would be significant for some visual receptors on or near the Site itself. Remaining cumulative landscape and visual effects would be not significant.

Ecology and Ornithology

- 4.30 This assessment considers the potential for significant adverse effects on ecological and ornithological features arising from the Proposed Grid Connection for the Proposed Development (the Proposed Repowered and Extended Ben Aketil Wind Farm). Details of the Proposed Grid Connection are provided in **Section 2** and are not repeated herein, other than where helpful to provide context to discussion of potential impacts.
- 4.31 It is considered that due to the nature of the Proposed Grid Connection, any associated impacts will be relatively localised. As such, the study area adopted within this assessment is the Proposed Grid Connection Corridor as shown in **Figure 1**.
- 4.32 Baseline ecological and ornithological studies carried out to inform the EIAR for the Proposed Development covered buffers of its boundary, including some areas within the Proposed Grid Connection Corridor. As such, some survey and existing data is available for the area of the Proposed Grid Connection Corridor within the Site, and also for those limited areas outwith the Site as outlined below:
- Ecology:
 - Habitats Survey: 300-350 m buffer of the Site;
 - Protected Mammal Survey: 250 m buffer of the Site; and
 - Bat Roost Survey: 250 m buffer of the Site.
 - Ornithology:
 - Moorland Breeding Bird Survey (MBBS): 500 m buffer of the Site;
 - Raptor Survey: 2 km buffer of the Site (covering almost the entire Proposed Grid Corridor, excluding the Point of Connection);
 - Vantage Point (VP) Survey: Viewsheds of VP1 and VP7 covered a c. 500 m buffer of the Site within the Proposed Grid Corridor; and
 - Existing ornithological data obtained from the Highland Raptor Study Group: the entire Proposed Grid Corridor.
- 4.33 As no substantive changes to the land management within the Site have taken place since the EIAR was submitted, it is considered unlikely that there has been any change to the character and extent of the habitats present such to notably change the outcome of assessment based on the baseline data previously collected. As such, it is considered that the baseline data supporting the EIAR remains representative of conditions at the Site, and that the conclusions of the impact assessments within the EIAR and AI therefore remain valid and suitable to inform consideration of the Proposed Grid Connection.
- 4.34 (SSEN would be responsible for the construction and operation of the Proposed Grid Connection and would seek to secure any necessary licences and consents in advance of construction. The route of the Proposed Grid Connection within the Proposed Grid Corridor would be subject to the completion of environmental surveys and consultation to inform the final routing and detailed design, in accordance with good practice and SSEN's Design and Installation Standards. As such, it is assumed for the purposes of this assessment that design would be in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy, and that

micro-siting of the UGC within the Proposed Grid Corridor would avoid the highest value habitats and sensitive ecological and ornithological features, in so far as is possible.

- 4.35 This assessment takes into account embedded mitigation from the outset, which includes standard good practice measures. Such measures are an integral part of the Proposed Development and would be carried out irrespective of the confirmed presence of Important Ecological and/or Ornithological Features (IEFs/IOFs). An overview of these measures for the Proposed Development is provided in the EIAR and include a CEMP and Species and Breeding Bird Protection Plans (SPPs and BBPPs), including pre-works checks by an Environmental Clerk of Works (EnvCoW). It is assumed that the Proposed Grid Connection would be undertaken in accordance with SSEN's standard practice General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs)¹² and Species Protection Plans (SPPs) where applicable, and with reference to SEPA Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPP).

Baseline

- 4.36 There are no designated sites for ecological or ornithological features within a relevant zone of influence (Zoi) of the Proposed Grid Corridor.
- 4.37 A proportion of the Proposed Grid Corridor overlaps the Site and so has had baseline data collected to inform the EIAR. In addition, a review of aerial imagery indicates the habitats present in the remainder of the Proposed Grid Corridor are contiguous, and likely to be comparable, with the habitats within the Site. Therefore, the community of birds and protected faunal species present can also reasonably be expected to be very similar.

Ecology

- 4.38 Baseline surveys undertaken for the Proposed Development identified that the Site comprises predominantly blanket bog and wet modified bog habitat, with smaller areas of dry and wet heath, acid grassland and marshy grassland. Numerous acid flushes and springs occur throughout the Site and surveys also recorded several habitat communities with the potential to be groundwater dependent (GWDTEs). A network of peat-stained streams and burns drains the Site, primarily via the Caroy River catchment, and these are considered to provide limited optimal fish habitat.
- 4.39 Limited evidence of otter presence was recorded, in the form of five spraints, which is comparable to the results of previous survey work undertaken for the discontinued Gleann Eoghainn Wind Farm proposal and the existing operational Ben Aketil Wind Farm. Potential for holt establishment was considered extremely limited due to the open nature of the bog and moorland habitats. It was therefore not considered that the habitat within a Zoi of the Proposed Development would support a high density of otter, or is likely to be regularly used by this species for purposes other than foraging, grooming and commuting, for which purposes the majority of watercourses are considered suitable.
- 4.40 Evidence of roe deer and red deer, including sightings and droppings, was also recorded, and mountain hare are considered likely to be present within the Site, but no evidence of

¹² Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), 2026. General Environmental Management Plans (GEMP): Standard Practice Construction Protocols. Perth: SSEN Transmission. Available from: [ssen-transmission.co.uk](https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk)

any other terrestrial protected mammal species was recorded within the Site or survey buffer.

- 4.41 Habitats recorded within the survey buffer area which falls within the Proposed Grid Corridor show a continuation of the upland mosaic habitats recorded within the Site, comprising blanket and wet modified bog (M4, M17, M18, M19 and M15) and including some M2/M3 bog pool habitat in the northwest corner of the Proposed Grid Corridor where it adjoins the Site. Several headwater tributaries of the Roskill River, with associated flush habitats, either arise in or cross the Proposed Grid Corridor to the west of the Site.
- 4.42 Low potential for roosting bats was identified at the Ben Aketil substation. The remainder of the area of the Site which overlaps the Proposed Grid Corridor is dominated by open blanket bog and wet modified bog habitat which offers negligible roost opportunities.
- 4.43 One sample point for the Fish Habitat Suitability Assessment (FHSA) survey was located on Maesweyn's Burn within the Proposed Grid Corridor. This is a peaty headwater and was classified as unsuitable to support salmonids. It is considered that the watercourses elsewhere in the Proposed Grid Corridor are likely to be similar in character to the peaty headwaters within the Site, and so of a similar suitability for fish as detailed in Chapter Technical Appendix 7.4 of the EIAR.

Ornithology

- 4.44 Baseline ornithological surveys undertaken in 2021 and 2022 identified the Site and surrounding area as supporting a limited assemblage of moorland breeding birds, restricted to a small number of breeding territories of snipe, golden plover, common sandpiper, oystercatcher, ringed plover, and eider. The breeding bird assemblage was assessed as being of low sensitivity.
- 4.45 The Site and adjacent habitats are used by foraging raptors, including golden eagle, white-tailed eagle and hen harrier; however, no Annex I/Schedule 1 raptor or owl breeding sites were identified within the Site itself. A hen harrier and a white-tailed eagle breeding attempt were recorded within 2 km of the Site, while existing records indicate the Site lies within 10 km of several golden eagle, white-tailed eagle and peregrine territories. Survey data suggest the Site does not form an important part of any occupied golden eagle territory, with observed activity largely associated with non-breeding or dispersing birds, and overall levels of bird flight activity and breeding wader use were low.
- 4.46 In view of the habitats likely present, it is considered likely that the Proposed Grid Corridor may support a small number of breeding wader territories, including snipe and golden plover. There is also the potential for the Proposed Grid Corridor to support ground nesting raptors such as hen harrier, merlin and short-eared owl. However, based on the distribution of territories recorded during baseline surveys for the Proposed Development, and the extent of the Proposed Grid Corridor, it would be expected that no more than one territory of any one species would overlap with the Proposed Grid Corridor.

Construction Effects

As described in section 2, within the Proposed Grid Corridor the Proposed Grid Connection comprises an underground cable (UGC); following completion of the

construction phase and reinstatement, no aboveground installations are anticipated. Therefore, the Proposed Grid Connection will not result in any permanent habitat loss and is considered unlikely to result in any impact over short-term habitat disturbance. There is also the potential for minor short-term disturbance to breeding waders and ground nesting raptors, as well as species using the Proposed Grid Corridor for foraging and commuting, during the period that construction is taking place.

Cumulative effects

- 4.47 The potential for cumulative construction phase effects was precluded for all ecological and ornithological features in the EIAR for the Proposed Development, on the basis that such effects would be short-term, temporary and localized. It is considered that the inclusion of the Skye Reinforcement Project (**see Table 3.1**) does not change this conclusion for either the Proposed Grid Connection or the Proposed Development, acting singly or in-combination¹³, and cumulative effects are not considered further.

Mitigation Measures

- 4.48 Protected ornithological and faunal species are mobile, and presence and density may change with time. As such pre-construction surveys would be required in order to prevent a breach of legislation in relation to disturbance and/or injury/mortality, and are proposed irrespective of the absence of likelihood for a significant effect in EIA terms.
- 4.49 It is assumed that ‘embedded’ mitigation would be implemented for any works for the Proposed Grid Connection, including standard good practice, such as sensitive timing of works in relation to the bird breeding season and careful demarcation of working areas, implementing a CEMP, presence of an EnvCoW, SPPs and use of good practice construction techniques to minimise environmental impacts. Good practice mitigation also includes measures to prevent disturbance impacts relating to noise and lighting, and pollution of the water environment. It is assumed that good practice habitat reinstatement measures would be adopted and implemented on areas subject to disturbance during construction works, as soon as it is practical to do so.

Likely Significant Effects of the Proposed Grid Connection

- 4.50 With the implementation of assumed mitigation measures and restoration following laying of the UGC, habitats are likely to recover to baseline conditions within a short time period following construction and reinstatement works. As such it is assumed there would be no measurable permanent habitat loss associated with the Proposed Grid Connection and that any impacts associated with this element would be short-term temporary disturbance during construction, to be mitigated via standard good practice.
- 4.51 Protected faunal species, including otter, are readily protected against injury/mortality and disturbance by assumed mitigation and good practice measures. As such, it is considered

¹³ In the context of this assessment, the term “in-combination effects” is used to describe the combined effect of the Proposed Development and the Proposed Grid Connection. It does not relate to the same term that is used in Habitats Regulations Appraisals to describe cumulative effects from different projects on a designated European site.

that the impact associated with the construction of the Proposed Grid Connection would not give rise to any significant effects, particularly in view of:

- the limited footprint of the Proposed Grid Connection and ability to mitigate by design within the larger Proposed Grid Corridor;
- the availability of alternative habitat in the wider area; and
- the mobile nature of protected faunal species.

- 4.52 Impacts to fish during construction were scoped out of the EIAR on the basis of the low suitability of watercourses within the Site, and the implementation of standard good practice to protect the water environment. It is assumed that good practice in accordance with SSEN's Design and Installation Standards will similarly be applied for any locations where the cable is required to cross a watercourse, to prevent any impacts to watercourses and the aquatic features, including fish, which they may support. Consideration of construction disturbance impacts to roosting and foraging bats was also scoped out of the EIAR on the basis of an absence of suitable habitat and works taking place principally during daylight hours during the bat active season; factors which are equally applicable to the construction of the Proposed Cable Route. As such, it is considered that with the implementation of standard mitigation measures there will be no adverse effects of the Proposed Cable Route on fish or bats.
- 4.53 It was stated in the EIAR that embedded mitigation and good practice are considered adequate to avoid any potentially significant adverse effects upon all moorland breeding waders and ground nesting raptors during the construction of the Proposed Development. Given the very localised, short term and temporary nature of the construction works required for the Proposed Grid Connection, the potential for significant effects associated with this element is lower still.
- 4.54 Given the location of a likely breeding attempt by white-tailed eagle to the north-west of the Proposed Development, in the absence of mitigation there is potential for construction disturbance to breeding white-tailed eagle should a pair continue to establish in this area and depending upon the location of breeding sites in future years. Potential disturbance/displacement impacts for this pair during construction were assessed in the EIAR and are predicted to result in the potential temporary loss of foraging habitat for the pair and non-breeding birds within proximity to construction working areas. It was concluded that such losses are considered reasonably small for any breeding pair, and potential temporary losses resulting from disturbance to non-breeding birds, given the large areas such birds may roam across Scotland, would be trivial. In view of the scale of the works, the magnitude of any impacts associated with the Proposed Grid Connection would be lower than those for the Proposed Development and with the implementation of standard mitigation would be expected to be no more than a temporary Low magnitude effect and would not be significant.
- 4.55 The Site within which construction works would occur is not considered to comprise an important part of an occupied breeding golden eagle range. While there is no potential for disturbance to golden eagles at their breeding sites, there may be some level of disturbance to individual birds which choose to utilise habitats in the vicinity of working areas over the course of construction works. However, given the small spatial scale of the works, and the availability of extensive alternative habitat, it is considered that the

impacts on golden eagle of the Proposed Grid Connection works would be negligible and not significant.

- 4.56 Construction-related effects on all important ecological and ornithological features are therefore predicted to be no greater than low magnitude, temporary and not significant with the implementation of standard mitigation measures.
- 4.57 Given the limited spatial and temporal extent of the construction for the Proposed Grid Connection, and the likely negligible to low magnitude of any impacts with the application of standard good practice, the conclusions of the EIAR for the Proposed Development are considered to be unchanged by the inclusion of the Proposed Grid Connection. As such, no significant effects on any important feature (singularly or in-combination) can reasonably be concluded.

Statement of Significance

- 4.58 There is flexibility during the route selection process (routeing and detailed design) to address any key constraints and any required species related mitigation. Effects from the Proposed Grid Connection on Ecology and Ornithology are predicted to be **not significant**. As such the Proposed Grid Connection is expected to have no significant effects on ecology or ornithology, either alone, in combination with the Proposed Development, or cumulatively, and would not measurably increase impacts on any identified ecological or ornithological features.

Geology, Hydrogeology, Hydrology and Peat

Baseline

Bedrock Geology

- 4.59 The Proposed Grid Connection corridor is underlain by basalt and microgabbro bedrock from the Skye Lava Group. These are igneous rocks of volcanic (extrusive) origin¹⁴. There is a fault line within the Proposed Grid Connection corridor.

Mineral Extraction

- 4.60 The Mining Remediation Authority Map¹⁵ and BGS Geoindex (BGS 2026) show no records of active or historic mining within or near the route corridor.
- 4.61 A number of disused quarries are identified within 1 km of the route corridor.

¹⁴ BGS (2026) GeoIndex Online Geological Mapping, British Geological Survey. Available at: <http://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html>, accessed August 2026.

¹⁵ Mining Remediation Authority (2026). Mining Remediation Authority Map Viewer. Available at: <https://datamine-cauk.hub.arcgis.com/> Accessed August 2026

Soils and Peat

- 4.62 Soils within the Proposed Grid Connection route corridor consist mainly of peaty gleys, dystrophic blanket peat and peaty podzols¹⁶. Blanket peat soils are described as largely rain-fed and mineral-poor. They usually support heather vegetation communities and nutrient-poor grass. These nutrient-poor upland blanket peat soils have no mineral layer within 50 cm of the surface. Peaty gleys soils are described as wet soils with an organic (peaty) surface layer. A band of brown forest soils with some brown rankers is indicated in the east-central part of the corridor.
- 4.63 The NatureScot Carbon and Peatland 2016 Map¹⁷ indicates that the majority of the Proposed Grid Connection route corridor is underlain by Class 1 peatland soils. These are described as nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitats. There are also sections of Class 3 peatland soils described as predominantly peaty soil with some peat soil, and Class 5 carbon-rich and peat soils. Areas of mineral soils are also present in the Proposed Grid Connection route corridor.
- 4.64 Peat survey data collected along the Proposed Grid Connection route corridor within the Proposed Development Site Boundary indicate variable peat depths ranging from approximately 0.5 m to 3.5 m.

Landscape and Topography

- 4.65 The Proposed Grid Connection route corridor comprises an extensive tract of open upland moorland characterised by a generally undeveloped and exposed landscape. The terrain consists of a series of broad ridges and gently undulating slopes dissected by numerous small watercourses, resulting in a varied topography of shallow valleys, drainage channels and localised depressions.
- 4.66 Topographically, the western section of the route corridor is associated with more elevated and steeper ground, forming part of the surrounding upland landscape.

Hydrology

- 4.67 The Proposed Grid Connection route corridor is located within the Isle of Skye Coastal catchment. Several burns, drainage channels and tributary watercourses cross the corridor, draining from the surrounding upland areas towards the main receiving watercourses. The western section of the corridor is drained by tributaries to the River Horneval, which drains ultimately into Loch Dunvegan. The central section of the corridor drains to the Roskill River, while the eastern section is drained by tributaries of the Caroy River, which ultimately receive runoff from this part of the route corridor. Both the Caroy River and Roskill River drain south into Loch Caroy and Loch Vatten respectively.

¹⁶ Soil Survey of Scotland (1981a). Soil maps of Scotland at a scale of 1:250,000. Macaulay Institute for Soil Research, Aberdeen. Available at: <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/soil-maps/national-soil-map-of-scotland/>, accessed August 2026

¹⁷ NatureScot (2016) Carbon and Peatland 2016 Map. Available at: <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/thematic-maps/carbon-and-peatland-2016-map/> accessed August 2026.

Hydrogeology

- 4.68 The Proposed Grid Connection route corridor is underlain by bedrock classed as a low-productivity aquifer from Palaeogene Unnamed Extrusive Rocks (BGS, 2026). It is described as having flows only in fractures and other discontinuities, with small volumes of groundwater in the near-surface weathered zone and secondary fractures.
- 4.69 The groundwater body associated with the Proposed Grid Connection route corridor is the Skye North groundwater body¹⁸. The Skye North groundwater body has good overall status (Scottish Government, 2026).
- 4.70 Regional groundwater flow will tend to mimic the natural topography, mainly flowing from north to south towards the Roskill River and the Caroy River.

Designated Sites

- 4.71 There are no designated sites within the Proposed Grid Connection route corridor, and there are no designated sites within 1 km of the route corridor.

Flood Risk

- 4.72 SEPA Flood Maps¹⁹ indicate that the Proposed Grid Connection route corridor is not located within an area at risk of river (fluvial) flooding. Areas at risk of pluvial (surface water) flooding are present; however, these are not extensive and are largely confined to existing watercourse channels and associated drainage features. There are areas at risk of river (fluvial) flooding downstream of the Proposed Grid Connection route corridor.

Construction Effects

- 4.73 Excavation of the trenches would generate loose sediment, which could potentially gain access to surface watercourses and waterbodies through entrainment in surface runoff. This could potentially have an effect on the downstream watercourses through damage to fish spawning habitat and changes to dissolved oxygen and nutrient levels in watercourses and waterbodies.
- 4.74 Should HDD be used, drilling fluid comprising non-hazardous bentonite clay would be used to lubricate the bore, transport cuttings to the surface and maintain bore stability. Spillage of fluids, fuels, oils or drilling fluid, or surface break-out of drilling fluid could have an effect on surface water quality, and major spillages could have a potential influence on the Roskill River and the Caroy River.
- 4.75 Excavation of cable trenches could lead to groundwater flow between sub-catchments if the trenches act as preferential flow paths.
- 4.76 Proposed construction activity, particularly plant and vehicle movements, soil stripping and stockpiling, would affect the nature of the soils across the Proposed Grid Connection route. Plant movements would act to compact soils through movements over unstripped

¹⁸ Scottish Government (2026). Groundwater classification. Available at: <https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/>, accessed August 2026.

¹⁹ SEPA (2026) SEPA Flood Maps. Available at: <https://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmaps/> accessed August 2026

ground. All activity requiring removal, transport and stockpiling of soils would have the potential to lead to soil erosion and loss of structure, resulting in overall soil degradation.

Cumulative effects

- 4.77 Although construction of the Skye Reinforcement Project, part of which lies within the Proposed Grid Connection corridor, may coincide with construction of the Proposed Grid Connection, impacts are unlikely to be significant assuming both developments would be undertaken in accordance with SSEN's standard practice GEMPs.

Mitigation Measures

- 4.78 It is assumed that SSEN's standard practice GEMPs would be adopted at all times, and that all management and control measures, including emergency response procedures, would be set out in a CEMP produced by the appointed Contractor prior to any works beginning. This would be a live document and would be updated as required throughout construction. Key measures assumed to be required in the CEMP include the following.
- Surface water from areas surrounding the trenches would be prevented from entering the working areas by appropriate use of peripheral bunding and cut-off drains. During excavation works, silt fencing or appropriate alternative sediment control protection would be installed on the downhill side of the excavation to prevent inadvertent discharge of silty water into any watercourse. Pre-construction installation of long-term drainage would provide an additional level of sediment control.
 - Drilling fluids would be collected, treated and recirculated through a fluid management system, thereby minimising fluid consumption and waste generation, and fluid properties and drilling performance would be continuously monitored throughout the works.
 - Excavated material, drilling cuttings and any excess drilling fluids would be stored temporarily within the working area and removed by licensed waste contractors for disposal at appropriately authorised facilities.
 - All engineering work adjacent to watercourses would require appropriate sediment control measures to be established prior to any ground works, and vegetation retained along watercourse banks where possible to act as additional protection. Where open trench crossings are proposed, vegetation removal would have to take place but this would be kept to a practical minimum for the working area.
 - Construction activities are likely to be restricted during periods of wet weather, particularly for any work occurring within 20 m of a watercourse to minimise mobilisation of sediment in heavy rainfall.
- 4.79 All necessary permissions relating to trench excavation works, plus accompanying pollution prevention plans, would be obtained prior to any construction work commencing.
- 4.80 A water quality monitoring programme would be established at key locations across the Proposed Grid Connection route. Monitoring would begin prior to any construction works, to allow pre-construction baseline quality to be determined.
- 4.81 Oil and fuel storage and handling along the Proposed Grid Connection route would be undertaken following published guidance, in particular Guidance on Pollution Prevention 2 – Above ground oil storage tanks. The details would be contained in the CEMP.
- 4.82 The Spillage and Emergency Procedures would form part of the CEMP, would be prominently displayed at the Site, and staff would be trained in their application. The

Procedures document would incorporate guidance from the relevant SEPA Guidance Notes.

- 4.83 In the event of any spillage or discharge that has the potential to be harmful to or pollute the water environment, all necessary measures would be taken to remedy the situation.
- 4.84 All proposed traffic routes would be clearly demarcated, and vehicles would not be permitted access outwith these areas. Only tracked or low-ground-pressure vehicles would be permitted access to unstripped ground.
- 4.85 Use of a lift-and-turn mole plough or similar would be considered if ground conditions permit. This would help to minimise disturbance of peat and soils along the Proposed Grid Connection route and would minimise the requirement to stockpile excavated peat and soil material.
- 4.86 Soil stripping would be undertaken with care and would be restricted to as small a working area as practicable. Topsoil would be removed and laid in a storage bund, up to 2 m in height, on unstripped ground adjacent to the specific working area. It would be attempted to retain the turf layer vegetation-side-up where possible, although ground conditions may make this challenging. Subsoils and superficial geological deposits would be removed subsequently and laid in storage bunds, also up to 2 m in height, clearly separated from the topsoil bund. Care would be taken to maintain separate stockpiles for separate soil types in order to preserve the soil quality.
- 4.87 It is not considered that any other specific mitigation measures than those identified here, except for SSEN's standard practice GEMPs, would be required in order to mitigate geology, hydrogeology, hydrology and peat effects of the Proposed Grid Connection.

Likely Significant Effects of the Proposed Grid Connection

- 4.88 Effects relating to geology and soils are usually very localised. As a result, the Proposed Grid Connection would not generate any significant effects on geology and soils, as impacts do not extend over any noticeable distance.
- 4.89 The Proposed Grid Connection is not likely to have significant effects on hydrology or hydrogeology given the nature of the works proposed.
- 4.90 It is considered that best practice construction methods, including SSEN's standard practice GEMPs and pollution control and prevention methods, would be in place for all relevant works given the status of these receptors, and therefore effects on the Roskill River and the Caroy River are considered to be minor and temporary.
- 4.91 Taking into account the potential construction effects of the Proposed Grid Connection, and the assumed mitigation measures identified above, it is not considered that there would be any significant geology, hydrogeology, hydrology and peat effects in isolation, in combination with the Proposed Development, or cumulatively.

Statement of Significance

- 4.92 The Proposed Grid Connection is expected to have no significant effects on Geology, Hydrogeology, Hydrology and Peat, either alone, in combination with the Proposed Development, or cumulatively.

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Baseline

- 4.93 Four heritage assets (**3, 4, 5, 6**) were identified within the EIAR within the Grid Connection Corridor. No further heritage assets are recorded in the Grid Connection Corridor by Historic Environment Scotland²⁰, the National Record of the Historic Environment²¹, the Highland Council Historic Environment dataset (date received 09/08/2022 to inform EIAR) or in the Highland Council HER online data²².
- 4.94 The HER records that Assets (**3** and **4**) were the remains of possible shieling huts. While turf mounds were noted at the locations of these shieling huts during field survey, carried out for the EIAR, it could not be confidently stated that these are not natural mounds and there was little evidence on the ground to assign these mounds as the remains of shieling huts. Accordingly, these two assets are assessed as being of little or no intrinsic heritage value and of negligible sensitivity.
- 4.95 Asset (**5**) is the record of a shieling hut overlying a hut circle, and as a possible prehistoric settlement site surmounted by a medieval to post medieval shieling this asset is assessed to be potentially of value at the regional level and of medium sensitivity.
- 4.96 Asset (**6**) is a group of 21 degraded shielings surviving as low turf bank footings. As components of the local historical landscape the assets are assessed as being of heritage value at the local level and of low sensitivity.
- 4.97 Taking into account the current land-use and the evidence for occupation and settlement within the Inner Study Area for the EIAR, it was assessed that there is a low to moderate potential for hitherto undiscovered archaeological remains to survive within the study area. Such remains are most likely to be of post-medieval date and associated with crofting practices. It is considered that given the similarity in topography and land use of the Grid Connection Corridor (which lies partly within and to the east of the Inner Study Area identified in the EIAR) the archaeological potential of this area can also be assessed as being of low to moderate.

Construction Effects

- 4.98 Any ground-breaking activities associated with the construction of the grid connection (such as the excavation of a trench to lay the UGC, the creation of access tracks and the construction of compounds) have the potential to disturb or destroy heritage assets. Other construction activities, such as vehicle movements, soil and overburden storage and landscaping also have the potential to cause direct, permanent, and irreversible effects on heritage assets.
- 4.99 Given the relatively discrete nature of the cultural heritage assets recorded within the Grid Connection Corridor, and the limited construction footprint of a grid connection, it is

²⁰ Historic Environment Scotland, Designations Portal (Available at <https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/apex/f?p=PORTAL:downloads:::DATASET:ALL> accessed August 2026)

²¹ Historic Environment Scotland, Trove (Available at <https://www.trove.scot/> accessed August 2026)

²² The Highland Council Historic Environment Record, (Available at <https://her.highland.gov.uk/map> accessed August 2026)

considered that it would be possible to design a grid connection route to avoid or minimise any direct construction impacts on known cultural heritage assets.

- 4.100 Within the Grid Connection Corridor, it is assessed that there is low to moderate potential for hitherto unrecorded archaeological assets to survive subsurface. Given the minimal footprint of the proposed grid connection, it is considered that significant effects on any previously unrecorded archaeological remains are not considered likely from the construction of the grid connection.

Cumulative effects

- 4.101 Construction of the Proposed Development would not give rise to any cumulative direct construction effects on cultural heritage assets.

Mitigation Measures

- 4.102 NPF4 (2023) provides a mitigation hierarchy: avoid, minimise, restore and offset. Avoidance and minimisation measures can be achieved through design, whilst compensatory measures offset effects that have not been avoided or minimised.
- 4.103 Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) requires the recognition, care and sustainable management of the historic environment. The mitigation measures presented below take this policy advice and planning guidance into account and provide various options for protection or recording and ensuring that, where practical, surviving assets are preserved intact to retain the present historic elements of the landscape.
- 4.104 It is assumed that 'embedded' mitigation would be implemented for any works for the Proposed Grid Connection, including standard good practice, such as avoidance through design and preservation in-situ. It is assumed that good practice demarcation of known heritage assets (**3, 4, 5, 6**) would be adopted where practicable to ensure the preservation of these assets through avoidance. Following best practice guidelines if any archaeological discoveries are made during works, and it is not possible to preserve those discoveries in situ, provision will be made for the excavation where necessary, of any archaeological remains encountered. The provision would include the consequent production of written reports on the findings, with post-excavation analysis, conservation of finds, and publication of the results of the works where appropriate.

Likely Significant Effects of the Proposed Grid Connection

- 4.105 Taking account of the mitigation commitments set out above, the following residual construction effects have been identified:
- Residual effects of no more than minor significance (not significant in EIA terms) on any buried remains revealed through archaeological watching briefs and investigated and recorded to a standard acceptable to THC HET.
 - The known heritage assets (**3, 4, 5, 6**) within the grid connection corridor will be avoided through design and marked out to ensure no accidental impact. Following this mitigation there will be no impact on the heritage assets

Statement of Significance

- 4.106 The Proposed Grid Connection is expected to have no significant effects on Archaeology and Cultural Heritage, either alone, in combination with the Proposed Development, or cumulatively.

5 Summary and Conclusions

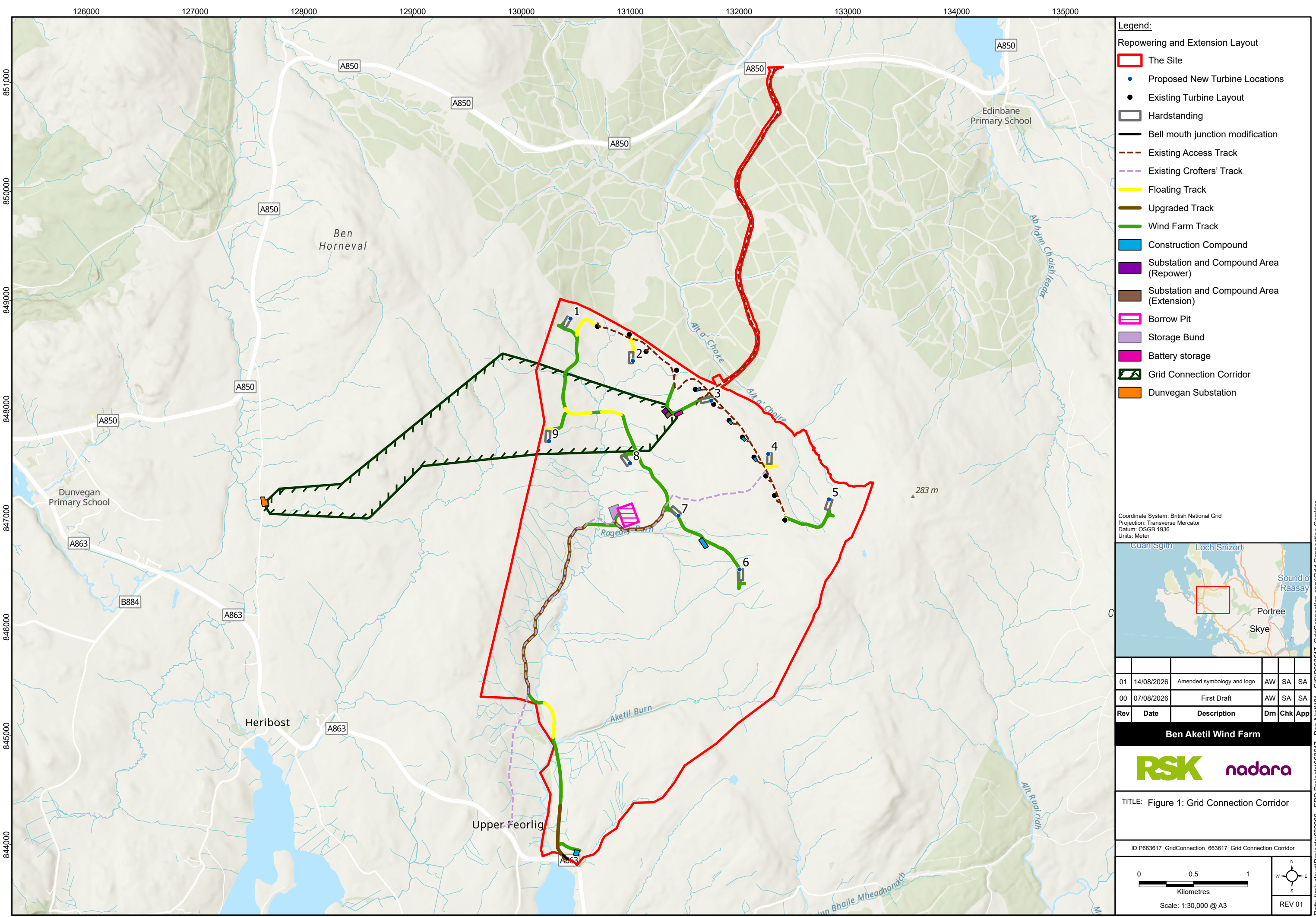
- 5.1 This document has been prepared at the request of the Reporter, who required the Applicant to submit Additional Information comprising an assessment of the likely significant effects of a prospective grid connection linking the Proposed Development to the national grid, to inform the Reporter's recommendation to the Scottish Ministers.
- 5.2 This assessment supplements the information contained within the EIAR by providing a description of the Proposed Grid Connection and a structured assessment of any likely significant environmental effects associated with the works.
- 5.3 This assessment considers the likely significant effects of the Proposed Grid Connection in isolation. As well as potential in-combination and cumulative effects arising from the interaction of the Proposed Grid Connection with the Proposed Development and cumulative developments in the vicinity.
- 5.4 The assessment presented within this document focuses on potential construction effects associated with the Proposed Grid Connection. Operational and decommissioning effects have been scoped out where no potential for significant effects has been identified, with assessment scope and the rationale for this approach provided in **Section 3**.
- 5.5 The assessment of the Proposed Grid Connection has considered a realistic worst-case scenario, considering the following parameters:
 - An identified grid connection corridor in which a buried 33kV cable will be placed;
 - A defined working width and construction parameters;
 - Identification of temporary construction activities; and
 - Assessment of construction phase activities.
- 5.6 On the basis of the assessment, the statement of significance for each environmental topic assessed concluded:
 - **Landscape and Visual:** The landscape and visual effects are assessed as not significant. In combination with the Proposed Development, the additional effects from the Proposed Grid Connection during construction would be not significant. However, the combined construction impacts of both projects would be significant for some visual receptors located on or near the Site. All other combined landscape and visual effects would be not significant. Cumulatively, if the Proposed Grid Connection, Skye Reinforcement between Edinbane and Dunvegan substations, and the Proposed Development were all built simultaneously, the combined construction-phase impacts would be significant for some visual receptors on or near the Site. Aside from these localised construction impacts, all other cumulative landscape and visual effects would be not significant.
 - **Ecology and Ornithology:** The Proposed Grid Connection is expected to have no significant effects on ecology or ornithology, either alone, in combination with the Proposed Development, or cumulatively, and would not materially increase impacts on any identified ecological or ornithological features. Flexibility within the route corridor selection and detailed design are expected to enable key constraints to be avoided and any required species-related mitigation to be incorporated. Given the nature of the development, no significant ecological or ornithological effects are anticipated at this stage.
 - **Geology, Hydrogeology, Hydrology and Peat:** The Proposed Grid Connection is expected to have no significant effects on Geology, Hydrogeology, Hydrology and Peat, either alone, in combination with the Proposed Development, or cumulatively.

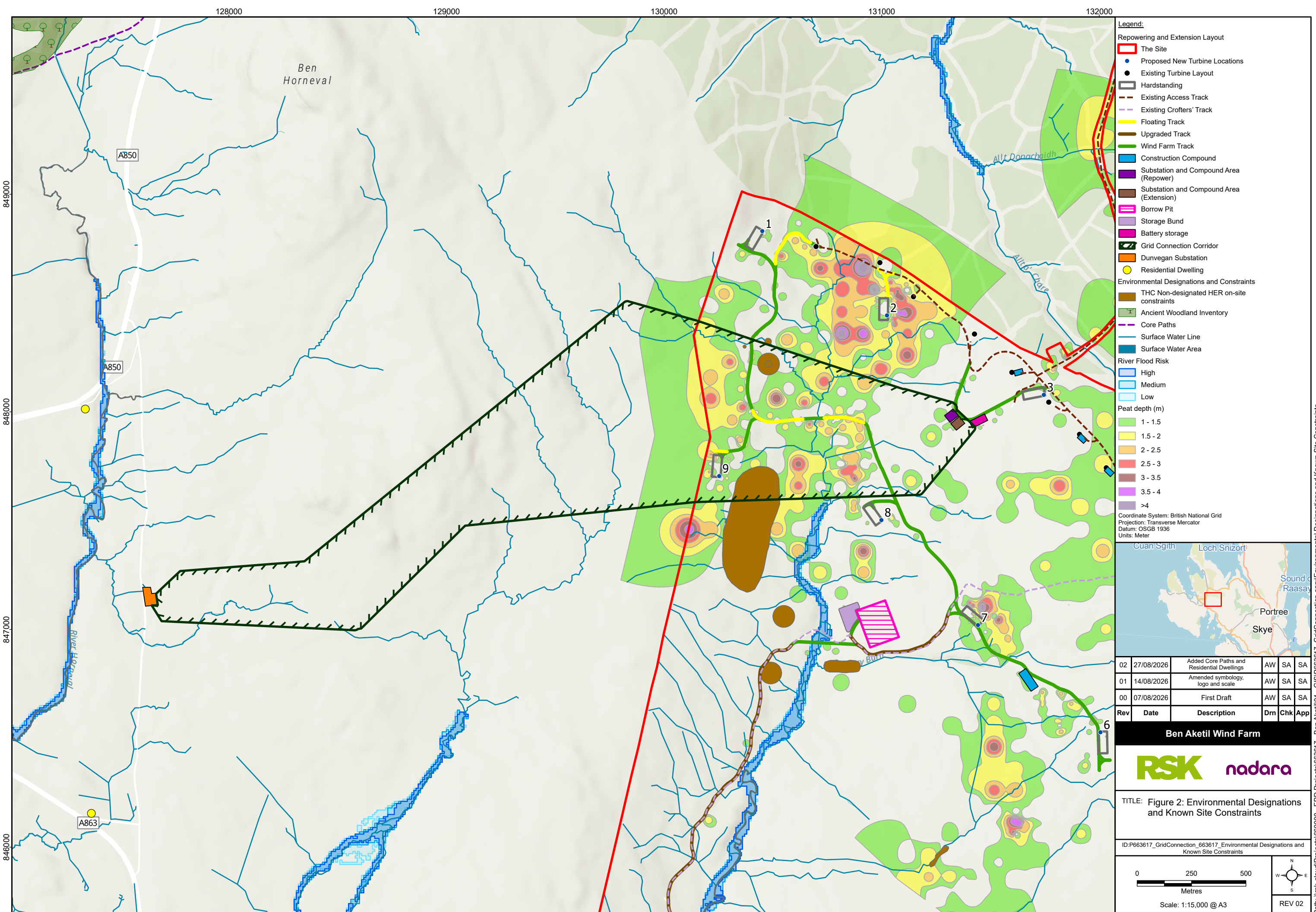
- **Archaeology and Cultural Heritage:** The Proposed Grid Connection is expected to have no significant effects on Archaeology and Cultural Heritage, either alone, in combination with the Proposed Development, or cumulatively.
- 5.7 The assessment has also identified legal requirements which would apply to the construction of the Proposed Grid Connection to mitigate environmental effects. Where appropriate, additional mitigation measures have been proposed to further reduce adverse environmental effects.
- 5.8 Accordingly, the EIAR, as supplemented by this document, provides sufficient information to enable the Reporter to consider the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development, including the Proposed Grid Connection, in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Regulations.

Figures

Figure 1: Grid Connection Corridor

Figure 2: Environmental Designations and Known Site Constraints





Legend:

Repowering and Extension Layout

- The Site
- Proposed New Turbine Locations
- Existing Turbine Layout
- Hardstanding
- Existing Access Track
- Existing Crofters' Track
- Floating Track
- Upgraded Track
- Wind Farm Track
- Construction Compound
- Substation and Compound Area (Repower)
- Substation and Compound Area (Extension)
- Borrow Pit
- Storage Bund
- Battery storage
- Grid Connection Corridor
- Dunvegan Substation
- Residential Dwelling

Environmental Designations and Constraints

- THC Non-designated HER on-site constraints
- Ancient Woodland Inventory
- Core Paths
- Surface Water Line
- Surface Water Area

River Flood Risk

- High
- Medium
- Low

Peat depth (m)

- 1 - 1.5
- 1.5 - 2
- 2 - 2.5
- 2.5 - 3
- 3 - 3.5
- 3.5 - 4
- >4

Coordinate System: British National Grid
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: OSGB 1936
Units: Meter

02	27/08/2026	Added Core Paths and Residential Dwellings	AW	SA	SA
01	14/08/2026	Amended symbology, logo and scale	AW	SA	SA
00	07/08/2026	First Draft	AW	SA	SA
Rev	Date	Description	Drn	Chk	App

Ben Aketil Wind Farm

RSK nadara

TITLE: Figure 2: Environmental Designations and Known Site Constraints

ID:P663617_GridConnection_663617_Environmental Designations and Known Site Constraints

0250500

Metres

Scale: 1:15,000 @ A3

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