



Cruach Clenamacrie

Further Environmental Information Grid Connection Assessment

Department: Development
Project: Cruach Clenamacrie Wind Farm

September 2026

	NAME	FUNCTION	DATE
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ACRONYMS

ACRONYM	DEFINITION	ACRONYM	DEFINITION
BPP	Bird Protection Plan	m	Meters
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan	MW	Megawatt
CP30	Clean Power 30	NESO	National Energy System Operator
DNO	Distribution Network Operator	OS	Ordnance Survey
ECU	Energy Consents Unit	PAWS	Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment	PMP	Peat Management Plan
FEI	Further Environmental Information	PWS	Private Water Supply
GCR	Green Cat Renewables	SAC	Special Area of Conservation
GWDTE	Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystem	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
HDD	Horizontal Directional Drilling	SPA	Special Protection Area
HER	Historic Environment Record	SPP	Species Protection Plan
HES	Historic Environment Scotland	SSEN	Scottish and Southern Energy Networks
HMP	Habitat Management Plan	UGC	Underground Cable
IGCC	Indicative Grid Connection Corridors	UK	United Kingdom
km	Kilometres	WoSAS	West of Scotland Archaeology Service

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Purpose of the Document

- 1.1.1.1 Valtalia UK Ltd (the 'Applicant') submitted an application to the Scottish Ministers under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended) to construct, operate and decommission the Cruach Clenamacrie Wind Farm project (hereinafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development') in November 2024 (ECU00004841). The Proposed Development is located in Argyll and Bute, approximately 7.0 kilometres (km) east of Oban and directly adjacent to Fearnoch Forest. This area will be hereinafter referred to as the 'Site'.
- 1.1.1.2 The Proposed Development comprises six wind turbines of 200 metres (m) to tip height with a combined generating capacity of approximately 45 megawatts (MW) and a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) of up to 20MW, giving a total site capacity of 65MW.
- 1.1.1.3 Regulation 19 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations makes provision for the preparation of Further Environmental Information (FEI) where further work has been done to address additional information requested by the determining authority (which may also be done on behalf of statutory consultees).
- 1.1.1.4 The Applicant is submitting this FEI in relation to the assessment of the potential effects of the grid connection following *Raeshaw Farms Limited v Scottish Ministers* [2026] CSIH 10 (hereinafter referred to as 'Raeshaw'), as requested by the Energy Consents Unit (ECU).
- 1.1.1.5 This Grid Route Assessment FEI Report adopts the same terminology utilised within the **2024 EIA Report** and the **2025 FEI Report** prepared in support of the Proposed Development and, as such should be read alongside both documents.

1.1.2 The Raeshaw Decision

- 1.1.2.1 On 17 February 2026, the Inner House of the Court Session (the Court) quashed planning permission for Wull Muir Wind Farm. This decision was made on the basis that the reporter had failed to properly consider whether the wind farm and grid connection constituted a single project for EIA purposes, and failed to provide adequate reasons for his decision.
- 1.1.2.2 The Court did not, however, hold that a single consent application is required for the whole project; rather, it confirmed that grid connection may form part of the 'project' for EIA purposes whilst being capable of being the subject of a separate consent application. The identity of the 'project' is therefore a matter of evaluative judgment for the decision-maker.
- 1.1.2.3 However, the Court referred to a non-exhaustive list of legal criteria from previous case law including *R (Wingfield) v Canterbury City Council* [2019] EWHC 1975 (Admin) (common ownership, simultaneous determinations, functional interdependence and stand-alone project status). When considering these factors in relation to the Proposed Development, the following conclusions can be drawn:
 - the grid connection will be consented under a separate consenting regime, with the application for consent likely to be made by Scottish and Southern Energy Networks (SSEN), the distribution network operator (DNO);
 - The grid connection infrastructure will be designed, owned and operated by the DNO;
 - The Applicant acknowledges that a grid connection will be required to connect the Proposed Development to the National Grid and, consequently, there is a degree of functional interdependence between the Proposed Development and any grid connection infrastructure.

Response to the Raeshaw Decision

- 1.1.2.4 Following the Raeshaw decision, the ECU requested information from the Applicant on the 30 March 2026 as to whether the Proposed Development and the grid connection could be considered one project under the EIA Regulations. The Applicant provided a response to the ECU on 13 April 2026 which included an Advice Note (**Appendix A.1**), along with their response. Further detail can be found in the advice note but the response is summarised as follows:
- It was stated to the ECU that the question of whether the wind farm and grid connection are one project is a matter for the decision maker. It was noted that, as the detail of the grid connection (including its functionality) is a matter for Scottish and Southern Energy Networks (SSEN), it is not possible to comment on whether it is a single project or not.
 - Furthermore, it was noted that it was not considered necessary for the Applicant to provide a justification where a wind farm and grid are not considered to be one project. Additionally, it was noted that there is nothing in the Court decision or otherwise that creates a presumption either that a wind farm and grid connection are one project or separate projects.
 - It was stated that in the event that Ministers conclude that the wind farm and grid are a single project for EIA purposes, and to assist the Reporter and Ministers in their consideration of the application and minimise the risk of delay, it was proposed that further environmental information on the grid connection could be provided in accordance with Regulations 19 and 20 of the EIA Regulations.
- 1.1.2.5 As such, on the 20 April 2026, the ECU requested that the Applicant submit further environmental information in relation to the potential impacts of the grid connection route.
- 1.1.2.6 Following these initial exchanges with the ECU and the information provided, the Applicant submitted a further response to the ECU on 7 May 2026 which can be found at **Appendix A.2**.
- 1.1.2.7 The Applicant has prepared this proportionate assessment of the Indicative Grid Connection Corridors (IGCC), should the Reporters or the Scottish Ministers consider that they form part of a single 'project' with the Proposed Development for EIA purposes. This assessment identifies, describes and assesses in an appropriate manner, in light of the circumstances relating to the IGCCs, the direct and indirect significant effects of the IGCCs together with the Proposed Development. A design envelope approach has been used to inform this assessment, recognising that the construction and operation of the grid connection infrastructure will be subject to a separate consenting process and will be the responsibility of the DNO. Therefore, precise details on construction and operation methodologies (together with appropriate mitigation) remain unknown, and there are limitations on the level of detail currently available.

1.2 Defined Terms

- 1.2.1.1 The Grid Route Assessment FEI makes use of the following defined terms:

- **Proposed Development** – Cruach Clenamacrie Wind Farm including all associated infrastructure as described in **Chapter 5** of the **2024 EIA Report** and as amended in **Chapter 3** of the **2025 FEI Report**;
- **Grid Connection** – The grid connection between the Proposed Development substation and Taynuilt Substation;
- **Indicative Grid Connection Corridors** – Grid route corridors defined for the purpose of this assessment;
- **Working Corridor** – Corridor in which all works required for the Grid Connection would take place;

- **Application Boundary** – Extent of the area relating to the application of the Proposed Development;
- **2024 EIA Report** – The EIA Report submitted in support of the Proposed Development in November 2024;
- **2025 FEI Report** – The FEI Report submitted in support of the application and in response to consultee comments in September 2025; and
- **The Applicant** – Voltalia UK Ltd.

1.3 The Project Team

1.3.1.1 Green Cat Renewables Ltd (GCR) has been commissioned by the Applicant as the Environmental Consultant to lead and compile the Grid Route Assessment FEI Report in support of the Proposed Development.

1.3.1.2 In line with Regulation 5(5) of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations), the Grid Connection Assessment has been undertaken by a qualified project team as outlined in **Table 1.1**.

TABLE 1.1 - PROJECT TEAM

TECHNICAL DISCIPLINE	SPECIALIST	COMPANY	QUALIFICATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
Project Management and EIA Coordination	Isla Ferguson	GCR	MSc, BSc (Hons), AISEP	5+
	Corey Simpson		BA (Hons)	15+
Planning	Alison Sidgwick	ReAmp	BSocSc, MURP, MRTPI	25+
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	Mary Fisher	Abseline	BSc. (Hons), MA, CMLI	25+
Cultural Heritage and Archaeology	Victoria Oleksy	AOC Archaeology Group	BA, MA, MCIfA	20
	Lisa Bird		MA, MSc, ACIfA	10+
Noise	Kira Marshall	GCR	BA (Hons), MloA	5+
	Merlin Garnett		MSc, MloA	13+
Geology, Hydrogeology, Hydrology and Soils	Catherine Isherwood	WRc	BA (Hons) MSc PhD FGS CGeol MIMMM	20+
	Lucy McCulloch		BSc (Hons) MSc AMIEEnvSc	4+
Ecology and Ornithology	Craig Macdonald	Avian Ecology	BSc (Hons) PgDip MSc	15+
Transport and Access	Paul Hawthorne	GCR	BSc (Hons), HND, Dip IoA	3+
Climate Change and Carbon Balance	Olivia Selby	GCR	MSc, MA (Hons), AISEP	3+

1.4 Public Viewing and Representations

1.4.1 Availability of the FEI Submission

1.4.1.1 Digital copies of the FEI Submission will be available at the links below:

- Energy Consents Unit (ECU) website : <https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx?cr=ECU00004841>
- Cruach Clenamacrie Wind Farm website: <https://www.cruach-clenamacrie.co.uk>

1.4.1.2 Hard copies of the FEI Submission will also be available for inspection, free of charge at the following locations:

Oban Public Library

Albany Street
Oban
PA34 4AL

Opening Times:

Sunday & Monday: Closed
Tuesday & Wednesday: 9:30 am–16:30 pm
Thursday: 9:30 am–18:30 pm
Friday & Saturday: 9:30 am–13:00pm

Connel Village Hall

PA37 5AL

Opening Times:

Monday – Sunday: 10:00am – 19:00pm
Times may vary, please check the online hall diary on the Connel Village Hall website, <https://www.connelvillagehall.org.uk/index.asp>

Materials will be displayed at front entrance of village hall

1.4.1.3 Hard copies of this FEI Report can be provided for £150 per hard copy upon request. Electronic copies of this FEI Report on a USB drive are available for £20 per copy upon request. To request copies of the FEI Report please contact Green Cat Renewables:

Address: Stobo House, Roslin, EH25 9RE
Email: info@greencatrenewables.co.uk
Tel: 0131 541 0060

1.4.2 Representations

1.4.2.1 Representations to the Scottish Ministers can be submitted via the portal via the following link: <https://www.energyconsents.scot/RepresentationSearch.aspx>, using the relevant project name or ECU reference number. Please note that you must be in possession of a working email address to submit a representation virtually.

1.4.2.2 Alternatively, representation can be submitted by writing to:

Energy Consents Unit,
Scottish Government,
5 Atlantic Quay,
150 Broomielaw,
Glasgow,
G2 8LU.

1.4.2.3 Representations are published on the portal as soon as reasonably practicable after they are received.

1.4.2.4 In your representation to the Scottish Government, you should:

- Identify the proposal and specify the grounds for representation;
- Provide the date the representation is made; and
- Clearly state the name (in block capitals) and full return postal address of those making the representation.

1.4.2.5 If additional environmental information regarding an application is received from the applicant, all previous representations received in relation to the development remain valid.

2 GRID CONNECTION DETAILS

2.1 Grid Reform

- 2.1.1.1 Through grid reform, the National Energy System Operator (NESO) and the network partners, who are responsible for operating the grid networks across the United Kingdom (UK), are aiming to achieve a refined queue of viable projects that would facilitate achieving the UK Government's Clean Power 2030 (CP30) Action Plan and remove stalled projects from the queue. This process provides a replacement of the 'first come first served' system with a 'first ready and needed, first connected' approach. This process will facilitate NESO, SSEN and other network operators to plan and develop the transmission network that is vital to meet government targets and growing demands.
- 2.1.1.2 NESO has also undertaken the Gate 2 to Whole Queue (G2TWQ) process, which applies the reformed connection criteria retrospectively across the existing transmission and distribution connection queue. Projects are assessed against defined readiness requirements and strategic alignment criteria; those meeting the relevant Gate 2 thresholds can retain or secure a firm queue position and connection offer, while projects that do not may be reclassified to Gate 1 or removed from the queue.
- Gate 1 applies to projects that do not meet the Gate 2 criteria. Gate 1 projects will not be assigned a confirmed connection date but may progress through future windows if readiness is demonstrated.
 - Gate 2 applies to projects that meet the new requirements for readiness and strategic alignment. These projects can secure a confirmed connection date, connection point, and queue position.
- 2.1.1.3 Projects must meet and maintain the following Gate 2 readiness criteria:
- secure sufficient land to meet NESO's minimum acreage requirements;
 - provide an Original Red Line Boundary defining the project site; and
 - demonstrate secured land rights.
- 2.1.1.4 Additionally, projects must meet one of the Gate 2 Strategic Alignment criteria and must either be:
- covered by one of the specified protections for existing projects;
 - within the technology/capacity requirements identified through the CP30 Action Plan and NESO's Connections Network Design Methodology;
 - specifically designated through the Project Designation Methodology; or
 - fall within an eligible category that sits outside the scope of the CP30 capacity framework.

2.1.2 Cruach Clenamacrie Gate Status

- 2.1.2.1 The Proposed Development has been allocated a Gate 2 status. This means that it meets the requirements for readiness and strategic alignment and that it has a confirmed connection date, connection point, and place in the queue.
- 2.1.2.2 Whilst the Proposed Development has a Gate 2 connection offer, detailed design and engineering of the associated network infrastructure remains subject to SSEN's ongoing design process

2.2 Proportionality of Assessment

- 2.2.1.1 The grid connection does not form part of the application for the Proposed Development and will be designed, promoted and constructed separately to the Proposed Development by the DNO. As such, consent is not sought for the grid connection at this stage.
- 2.2.1.2 As such, this Grid Connection Assessment provides an assessment of the potential for significant effects to occur from the Grid Connection based on the information currently available. The purpose of this is to:
- ensure the implications of the grid connection are understood sufficiently;
 - avoid the artificial separation of functionally related infrastructure, while recognising that further assessment will be undertaken through a separate consenting process if required; and
 - identify whether the likely effects of the grid connection for the Proposed Development, when considered in combination with the Proposed Development, are likely to give rise to additional significant effects.

2.3 Indicative Grid Connection Corridors

- 2.3.1.1 The point of connection for the Proposed Development will be Taynuilt Substation. For the purpose of this assessment, it is assumed that the Proposed Development will connect via approximately 10km of 33kV underground cable. The assessment identifies two potential IGCC options which are illustrated on **Figure 2.1, 2.1a** and **2.1b**. These corridors are assumed to be approximately 10 - 15m wide to allow for ground conditions, environmental constraints and potential access requirements.
- 2.3.1.2 These IGCC options have been devised based on the understanding that the Grid Connection for the Proposed Development will be an Underground Cable (UGC). This position has been guided by early discussions with SSEN and through knowledge of the surrounding environment from the Proposed Development survey and assessment work. It should be noted that the specific options for the direct route are unknown at this stage, although the UGC is likely to follow one of the two IGCC Options identified below.
- 2.3.1.3 The two IGCC Options being considered are described as follows and illustrated on **Figure 2.1, 2.1a** and **2.1b**.
- **IGCC Option 1:** Leaves the Proposed Development substation heading north to the Application Boundary. The route follows the edge of Fearnoch Forest along the field boundaries for approximately 1.3km where it would turn north-east towards Fearnoch and the A85. From here the cable would largely follow road edges, with a few diversions where there is existing transmission network infrastructure.
 - **IGCC Option 2:** Leaves the Proposed Development substation and heads east where it would follow along the access track which forms part of the Proposed Development and makes use of a number of existing forestry tracks. IGCC Option 2 would follow this route until it reaches the A85 at Dailnamac, where it would follow the same route as IGCC Option 1.
- 2.3.1.4 The final Grid Connection route will be selected and designed by the DNO through a thorough design process. This final design will identify and take into consideration all the known environmental constraints and will utilise mitigation through design in order to minimise potential impacts in line with the mitigation hierarchy.

2.4 Grid Connection Components and Construction

- 2.4.1.1 For the purpose of this assessment, the grid connection will comprise the installation of approximately 10km of 33kV UGC using cut and fill trenching of approximately 2m in width and approximately 1.3m in depth, although working corridors may be required to be wider in some locations due to ground conditions or for construction access.

2.4.2 Construction Method

- 2.4.2.1 Trenching would be completed in sections of approximately 25m in length, with one section being completed and reinstated before moving onto the next, ensuring that the works at each location would be temporary and short term. The precise length of cable being laid on a given day will be dependent upon the nature of the ground encountered, having regard to existing constraints such as infrastructure and trees.
- 2.4.2.2 Digging will be undertaken using mechanical aids except where trees or other obstructions exist, when installation techniques such as hand digging, vacuum excavation or horizontal directional drilling (HDD) will be employed. When installing cables within hard surfaced areas (such as roadway), these sections will be open cut using a disc cutter and/or a mechanical pecker to break up the top surface. Mechanical means would then be used to remove the subsurface and associated materials to the correct depths. If a mechanical method is not appropriate for the location, alternative methods may be introduced. Once the cable is installed, the original surface would then be reinstated to the specifications for the type of surface in agreement with Argyll and Bute Council.
- 2.4.2.3 Land above the cable route would be reinstated to its original condition upon completion. Reinstatement would use excavated material where possible in order to minimise environmental impact. Areas of existing permeable surface therefore remain permeable. For areas of verge and unmade ground, reinstatement will be carried out using existing excavated materials where possible. If the original turf is unable to be re-laid or is of a poor quality, then new topsoil and grass seed would be required.
- 2.4.2.4 The approximate working corridor for the grid connection route for sections not within the public road will be approximately 10m – 15m depending on the specific plant and cable laying equipment used, and the specific local conditions and easements. Where cable is to be laid within the public road or verge, it is envisaged that the working corridor would be reduced to a minimum width of around 3.5m with appropriate traffic management.
- 2.4.2.5 Delivery of construction materials to cable locations will be achieved by access from public roads to the roadside verge at the point of construction. Given the cable will largely be laid in roadside verges, it is assumed that there will be localised traffic management at the point of construction.
- 2.4.2.6 Construction of the grid connection is assumed to take place over a period of up to 12 months and may occur concurrently with wind farm construction. Construction would operate as a mobile working area progressing along the route, including welfare and storage facilities.

3 ASSESSMENT OF GRID CONNECTION

3.1 Overview of Constraints

3.1.1.1 Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was used to undertake constraints analysis for the area surrounding the IGCCs using information available from the survey work for the Proposed Development, mapping, environmental datasets and application material for the Proposed Development and publicly available data from the following sources:

- Ordnance Survey;
- NatureScot;
- Historic Environment Scotland;
- Argyll and Bute Council; and
- Scotland's Environment.

3.1.1.2 The initial constraints analysis can be seen in **Figure 3.1, 3.1a** and **3.1b**. The key constraints identified include:

- Ancient Woodland Inventory;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Special Areas of Conservation;
- Core Paths;
- Class 2 Peat;
- Listed Buildings;
- National Records of the Historic Environment (NRHE) sites; and
- Settlements.

3.2 Approach to Assessment

3.2.1 Scope and Methodology

3.2.1.1 As previously mentioned, the IGCC Options may be subject to change over which the Applicant would not have control. This assessment is therefore proportionate and presents a high-level assessment based on the information known at the time of writing (September 2026). There has been no additional survey work or consultation undertaken as part of this assessment and the desk-based analysis undertaken is considered to be sufficient to inform this assessment.

3.2.1.2 The assessment makes use of publicly available information and the survey and environmental assessment work undertaken for the Proposed Development and the sources presented within the **2024 EIA Report** and **2025 FEI Report**. This assessment will assess and identify the potential for likely significant effects to occur for identified receptors

3.2.1.3 Impacts upon the following technical disciplines will not be caused by the grid connection infrastructure in its own right and therefore these issues are scoped out of further assessment within this document:

- Telecommunications;
- Aviation; and
- Shadow Flicker

3.2.2 Assessment Scenarios

- 3.2.2.1 Each technical discipline assesses the Proposed Development in combination with each IGCC Option, as if they were considered to be one project under the EIA Regulations and determines the potential for any additional likely significant effects to occur which would not occur from the wind farm alone.
- 3.2.2.2 The grid connection route is not assessed in isolation, as this scenario would not occur (i.e. the Grid Connection would not come forward in the absence of the Proposed Development).
- 3.2.2.3 In terms of assessing cumulative effects with other projects, each technical discipline assesses the potential for additional likely significant effects to occur cumulatively with third-party energy and EIA-scale projects within 1km of the Grid Connection options unless otherwise specified within the relevant assessment. The projects included are outlined in **Table 3.1**.

TABLE 3.1- PROJECTS INCLUDED IN CUMULATIVE ASSESSMENT

CUMULATIVE PROJECT	PROJECT TYPE	DISTANCE	STATUS	REFERENCE
Corr Chnoc Wind Farm (Access Track)	Access for a Wind Energy Development	0m	In Planning	ECU00006023
Bein Ghlas Repower (Access Track)	Access for a Wind Energy Development	0m	In Planning	25/01240/PP
Taigh an Uillt Energy Storage Park	Battery Energy Storage System	35m	Consented	PPA-130-2094 24/02083/PP

3.3 Grid Connection Assessment

3.3.1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Key Findings from 2024 EIA Report / 2025 FEI Report

- 3.3.1.1 A summary of the landscape and visual impacts arising from the Proposed Development is provided at **Section 6.10** of the **2024 EIA Report**. The subsequently submitted **2025 FEI Report** did not alter those findings, but supplemented the assessment in relation to potential cumulative effects. A summary of that cumulative assessment update is provided at **Section 4.3** of the **2025 FEI Report**.

Potential for Additional Significant Effects

- 3.3.1.2 Both of the likely Grid Connection routes shown on **Figure 2.1, 2.1a** and **2.1b**. would be via underground cables as set out at **Section 2.3** and would largely follow existing tracks and the A85 road corridor. During construction, there may be a need for some limited tree and scrub vegetation removal from the edges of tracks and within road verges, but assuming best practice is followed this would be avoided where possible.
- 3.3.1.3 Potential landscape and visual impacts during construction would arise from:
- Limited removal of vegetation in roadside verges and within forested areas during construction;
 - the presence of roadworks along the A85 to install the cable in that area during construction; and

- the presence of localised construction work within the forested area during construction.
- 3.3.1.4 The effects on landscape fabric arising from the limited removal of vegetation would not alter the conclusion of the **2024 EIA Report** that *“Effects on landscape fabric are not considered to be significant. The elements which make up the landscape fabric of the Site are commonplace both within the study area and within Scotland, and the felling of forestry is an expected outcome within its normal lifecycle.”*
- 3.3.1.5 The presence of roadworks along a major road, and plant and activity within a commercial forest is not atypical of their character. The short-term presence of the works in each place and the limited area in which they would be perceptible would also limit the impact. Impacts arising on landscape character during the construction of the Grid Connection would not alter the findings of the **2024 EIA Report** in relation to effects on landscape character.
- 3.3.1.6 The main visual receptors likely to see views of the work would be road users along the A85, and residents of Fearnoch for IGCC Option 1. It is assumed that cycle route users within Fearnoch Forest would be diverted away from active works during construction. As noted above, roadworks are not atypical along a main road, and would only be briefly seen by road users as they go past. At Fearnoch, local residents would see very short-term construction works near their homes while that section of the route is laid. Impacts arising on visual receptors during the construction of the Grid Connection would not alter the findings of the **2024 EIA Report** in relation to effects on visual receptors.
- 3.3.1.7 The potential grid connection routes would not be within a designated landscape and would be sufficiently distant from designated landscapes that the construction of the Grid Connection would not alter the findings of the **2024 EIA Report** in relation to effects on designated landscapes.
- 3.3.1.8 During operation, the grid connection would be underground and would not give rise to landscape or visual effects. It is assumed that the cables would remain in place after decommissioning such that landscape and visual effects would not arise during that stage. If they were to be removed the short term works during decommissioning would be expected to have similar landscape and visual effects to those during construction.
- 3.3.1.9 Given the very limited landscape and visual effects arising from the Grid Connection for the Proposed Development, the cumulative effects during construction with the projects listed in **Table 3.1** would also not alter the findings of **Chapter 6** of the **2024 EIA Report**.

Summary

- 3.3.1.10 The Grid Connection (via either of the routes considered) would not give rise to any additional significant effects which would not occur from the Proposed Development alone. This would not notably alter effects as set out in **Chapter 6** of the **2024 EIA Report** or within the **2025 EIA Report**.

3.3.2 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

Key Findings from 2024 EIA Report / 2025 FEI Report

- 3.3.2.1 **Chapter 7** of the **2024 EIA Report** identified eight non-designated heritage assets (Assets 139-146) within the Application Boundary, which were considered to be of Negligible importance. Direct physical impacts were anticipated on four of those assets following **2025 FEI Report**, with the effect significance judged to be between Negligible and Minor. These levels of effect are not considered to be significant in EIA terms.

- 3.3.2.2 **Chapter 7** of the **2024 EIA Report** judged there to be a High potential for paleoenvironmental remains to survive in deep peat deposits within the Application Boundary. There was considered to be the potential for impacts on paleoenvironmental remains. The impact magnitude was judged to be Low. Therefore, the effect significance would be Negligible. This level of effect is not considered to be significant in EIA terms.
- 3.3.2.3 The baseline set out in **Chapter 7** of the **2024 EIA Report** judged there to be a Low potential for hitherto unknown archaeological remains to survive within the Application Boundary. The importance of unknown archaeological remains could not be predicted.
- 3.3.2.4 Mitigation in the form of toolbox talks, and invasive archaeological works including; a watching brief; and an archaeological coring programme were included in **Chapter 18** of the **2024 EIA Report**. Based on the results of invasive archaeological works the Applicant may undertake a programme of public benefit.
- 3.3.2.5 All designated heritage within 10km of the Application Boundary were identified in **Chapter 7** of the **2024 EIA Report** and reassessed as part of the **2025 FEI Report**, in order to assess the potential for the Proposed Development to impact their settings. **Chapter 7** identified Minor and Neutral effect significance and No Impact on the settings of the grouped and individual designated heritage assets within the 10km Study Area.
- 3.3.2.6 The impact of the cumulative developments identified for the **2024 EIA Report** and the **2025 FEI Report**, on the settings of designated heritage, where Minor or greater impacts were identified, was undertaken. At worst the Proposed Development was considered to have a Minor impact on the settings of designated heritage assets with the cumulative impact judged to result in no greater effect than the Proposed Development on its own.

Potential for Additional Significant Effects

- 3.3.2.7 As both IGCC Option 1 and IGCC Option 2 are assumed to be a UGC, only the potential for additional direct physical significant effects are being considered. There would be no potential for significant effects upon the setting of heritage assets.
- 3.3.2.8 Data on known assets and events within IGCC Option 1 and IGCC Option 2 and the associated Working Corridor have been collated from the following sources:
- The National Record for the Historic Environment (NRHE) as held by Historic Environment Scotland (HES);
 - The Historic Environment Record (HER) as supplied by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) received on 6th August 2026;
 - National Library of Scotland (NLS) for the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey maps.
- 3.3.2.9 All heritage assets identified within both IGCC Option 1 and IGCC Option 2 and the associated Working Corridors have been given a unique 'Asset No.' and all previous archaeological investigations have been given a unique 'Event No.' number. These are recorded in the Heritage Assets Gazetteer (**Appendix B**) which is a continuation of **Appendix 7.1: Gazetteer of Heritage Assets and Events** submitted as part of the **2024 EIA Report**. This is to allow for the consistent use of the numbering system and ease of reading. **Figure 3.3.2** accompanies this section and shows the location of heritage assets discussed below.

IGCC Option 1

- 3.3.2.10 There are no designated heritage assets within IGCC Option 1 or the Working Corridor. The Category B Listed Taynuilt, Taynuilt Hotel (LB107; Asset 93) is located immediately south of the A85.

- 3.3.2.11 There are four non-designated heritage assets (Assets 147, 148, 149, 152) within IGCC Option 1 and its associated Working Corridor; these include the historic locations of two post-medieval buildings recorded on historic Ordnance Survey (OS) maps (Assets 147 & 148), a post-medieval bridge (Asset 152); and a modern war memorial (Asset 149).
- 3.3.2.12 In line with **Table 7.2, Chapter 7** of the **2024 EIA Report**, such assets are considered to be of Low importance. The construction of the UGC would at worst result in the total loss of these assets, resulting in a High impact magnitude. The resulting effect significance would be Moderate and Significant in EIA terms. However, mitigation including avoidance of known heritage assets and the proposed location of the UGC within the public road or verge, in previously disturbed ground would lower the impact magnitude to Negligible at worst. An effect significance which would be considered to not be significant in EIA terms.
- 3.3.2.13 Two events have been recorded as extending into the eastern extent of IGCC Option 1; Events 150 and 151. The northern extent of a watching brief (centred Event 150) undertaken in 2024 for the erection of croft house and associated driveway identified a series of pits, postholes and a hearth, although there was a paucity of archaeological remains with only one struck flint recovered from a tree bole. The report has not been found readily available online.
- 3.3.2.14 The extent of the study area of the proposed underground of the cable route from Taynult and Tullich (centred Event 151) extended into the extent of IGCC Option 1. WoSAS's records indicate the additional heritage assets were recorded within the study area however none are identified within the extent of Event 151 as recorded by the HER. The report is not readily available online.
- 3.3.2.15 The **2024 EIA Report Chapter 7** baseline judged there to be a Low potential for hitherto unknown archaeological remains to survive within the Application Boundary. Similarly, and particularly given the proposed location of the UGC within the public road or verge, in previously disturbed ground, there is considered to be a Low potential for hitherto unknown remains to survive within IGCC Option 1.
- 3.3.2.16 Whilst there is Low potential for archaeological remains to survive within IGCC Option 1 the possibility cannot be totally discounted. The importance of unknown archaeological remains cannot be predicted. If such remains do survive then there is the potential for impacts of high magnitude which could result in significant effects. However, this is deemed unlikely given the archaeological potential, the previous disturbance on site and given the Low importance of known archaeological remains within IGCC Option 1. Any such impacts could likely be avoided or could be mitigated via standard archaeological conditions.

IGCC Option 2

- 3.3.2.17 There are no designated heritage assets along the route of IGCC Option 2.
- 3.3.2.18 A roughly north-east, south-west aligned boundary bank (Asset 141) was recorded during a walkover in 2024. The alignment of the bank would cross IGCC Option 2. The bank was judged to be of Negligible importance in the **2024 EIA Report**. The Proposed Development was considered to have a Low magnitude of impact with the resulting effect significance considered to be Negligible and not significant in EIA terms. The potential construction of IGCC Option 2 is not considered to increase the magnitude of impact, as ground breaking would likely be contained to the existing track or immediate adjacent land which has been subject to ground disturbance associated with forestry works. As such the effect significance is unlikely to reach the significance threshold.
- 3.3.2.19 Within the Proposed Development in the vicinity of IGCC Option 2, one non-designated heritage asset has been recorded: a mound (Asset 140) of unknown date recorded during a walkover survey in 2024. The **2024 EIA Report** judged the mound to be of Negligible importance, with the predicted magnitude of impact considered to be Negligible and the

resulting effect significance being Negligible and not significant in EIA terms. The construction of IGCC Option 2, at worst, could result in a High magnitude of impact, which may result in Minor effect significance. This level of effect significance is not considered to be significant in EIA terms.

- 3.3.2.20 The **2024 EIA Report Chapter 7** baseline judged there to be a Low potential for hitherto unknown archaeological remains to survive within the Application Boundary. Based on that potential and the proposed location of the UGC within the forestry track or verge, in previously disturbed ground, there is considered to be a Low potential for hitherto unknown remains to survive within the IGCC Option 2.
- 3.3.2.21 Whilst there is Low potential for archaeological remains to survive within IGCC Option 2 the possibility cannot be totally discounted. The importance of unknown archaeological remains cannot be predicted. If such remains do survive then there is the potential for impacts of high magnitude which could result in significant effects. However, this is deemed unlikely given the archaeological potential, the previous disturbance on site and given the Negligible importance of known archaeological remains within IGCC Option 2. Any such impacts could likely be avoided or could be mitigated via standard archaeological conditions.

Summary

- 3.3.2.22 The Grid Connection (via either of the routes considered) would be unlikely to give rise to any additional significant effects, subject to mitigation, and would not notably alter effects as set out in **Chapter 7** of the **2024 EIA Report** or within the **2025 FEI Report**.

3.3.3 Noise

Key Findings from 2024 EIA Report / 2025 FEI Report

- 3.3.3.1 The **2024 EIA Report** found that the Proposed Development would meet noise limits during both the construction and operational phases of the development. The assessment demonstrated that any potential impacts would be acceptable and therefore not significant in relation to noise. These findings remained unchanged with the submission of the **2025 FEI Report**, which provided an additional cumulative assessment.

Potential for Additional Significant Effects

- 3.3.3.2 As the proposed grid connection would be UGC, once constructed, no operational noise would contribute to the overall Proposed Development immission levels. The proposed Grid Connection would therefore not alter the reported findings and conclusion in the **2024 EIA Report** and subsequent **2025 FEI Report**.
- 3.3.3.3 Noise impacts may arise during the construction phase of the proposed grid infrastructure. Under Section 60 of the Control of Pollution Act (1974), the Local Authority has powers to control the impact of construction noise. It is expected that the construction activities will follow best practice guidelines and all activities would comply with the recommended limits as outlined within BS5228-1. As construction activities would happen sequentially, the conclusions of the construction noise assessment provided within the **2024 EIA Report** remain valid and no additional assessment is required.

Summary

- 3.3.3.4 The Grid Connection (via either of the routes considered) would not give rise to any additional significant effects and would not notably alter effects as set out in **Chapter 8** of the **2024 EIA Report**.

3.3.4 Geology, Hydrogeology, Hydrology and Soils

Key Findings from 2024 EIA Report / 2025 FEI Report

- 3.3.4.1 An assessment of geology, hydrogeology, hydrology and soils was undertaken in **Chapter 9** of the **2024 EIA Report** which identified several key environmental receptors that could potentially be affected by the Proposed Development, including peat and soils, watercourses and the surface water environment, Private Water Supplies (PWS), designated sites, groundwater and groundwater flow, groundwater-dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTE), and flood risk.
- 3.3.4.2 Key impacts included excavation and compaction of soils and peat, the potential for increased risk of peat landslide, and contamination of surface water via sediment or spills of fuel or oil. Impacts to PWS were assessed and only one supply (Achnacloich House) was considered to have a potential linkage. Two designated sites (Loch Etive Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Clais Dhearg Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)) were found to be located adjacent to, or downstream of, parts of the Proposed Development and could theoretically be affected by sediment release or pollution incidents. Groundwater resources within the Site were found to be minimal and an assessment of GWDTE was carried out which concluded that none of the identified sensitive habitats were truly groundwater-dependent. Flood risk within the Site was also found to be minimal.
- 3.3.4.3 With appropriate mitigation in place the **2024 EIA Report** found that there would be no significant impacts to any of the identified receptors as a result of the Proposed Development. Key mitigation measures included avoidance of areas of peat where practicable, use of micro-siting and floating road where appropriate, and implementation of best practice handling and storage guidance for peat and soils. Use of pollution prevention and control measures including appropriate drainage systems and water quality monitoring would manage impacts to the water environment, PWS and designated sites. Appropriate drainage systems, including the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), would mitigate against flood risk to the Proposed Development and areas downstream.
- 3.3.4.4 After submission of the **2024 EIA Report**, further information was requested relating to peat slide risk, encroachment into watercourse buffers and peat excavation volumes. Changes to the Proposed Development layout were proposed as a result of the concerns raised which required the PMP calculations to be revised. While the amount of peat being excavated was increased by the revised layout there was an overall decrease in the amount of catotelmic peat being excavated and greater consideration was given to peat reuse within the Proposed Development.
- 3.3.4.5 The number of watercourse crossings was reduced by one and overall, the **2025 FEI Report** found that there would be no significant effects relating to geology, hydrogeology, hydrology and soils as a result of the changes to the Proposed Development layout.

Potential for Additional Significant Effects

Peat and Soils

- 3.3.4.6 IGCC Option 1 would introduce a new corridor of development, which in many areas would run through previously undisturbed ground. Carbon and Peatland Mapping (NatureScot, 2016) indicates that the majority of the proposed route runs through Class 0 Mineral Soils and Class 5 soils, where the soil data takes precedence and no peatland habitats are recorded. Only one area of Class 2 nationally important carbon rich soils is recorded at the start of the route, where it leaves the proposed substation and heads north towards Fearnoch Forest and the Application Boundary (**Figure 3.3.4.1**).
- 3.3.4.7 Limited peat data is currently available for IGCC Option 1; however, the available data indicates that peat is more likely to be found along the parts of the route that are situated near the proposed substation and that as the route moves north-eastwards towards the A85 peat is unlikely to be encountered except perhaps as small, isolated pockets (**Figure 3.3.4.2**). Progressive excavation and reinstatement of the cable trench would minimise the duration of soil and peat disturbance, allowing shorter storage and handling times and reducing overall impacts. IGCC Option 1 is therefore unlikely to have significant impacts on peat although excavation of soil would be greater than that for IGCC Option 2.
- 3.3.4.8 IGCC Option 2 follows the existing road from Taynuilt Substation before joining the proposed wind farm track. Therefore, additional peat and soil disturbance would not be significant as excavation would largely be confined to areas already influenced by construction works, reducing the extent of new peat loss and soil stripping. For IGCC Option 2 the increase in effects on peat and soils would be limited and effects are likely to remain consistent with the residual effects assessed for the Proposed Development alone.

Watercourses and Surface Water Environment

- 3.3.4.9 IGCC Option 1 runs parallel to the Eas nam Meirleach for over 1km, encroaching within a 15m watercourse buffer in some areas. This would increase the potential for sediment mobilisation, accidental pollution incidents and alteration of local drainage pathways beyond that assessed for the Proposed Development alone. The proximity of the trenching activities to the watercourse would increase the likelihood of suspended sediment entering the water environment during construction. Enhanced embedded mitigation would be required for sediment management and pollution control to minimise effects on water quality.
- 3.3.4.10 Additionally, IGCC Option 1 would require 17 watercourse crossings, of which 11 would be major watercourses. Only two new crossings would be required, one of these being an unnamed tributary to the Eas nam Meirleach just to the north of the substation and the other being a minor watercourse adjacent to the existing forestry track.
- 3.3.4.11 IGCC Option 2 would run parallel to the Allt na Seabhaig and Eas na Làraiche Mòire for some distance. However, in these areas the cable would be laid in the verge of the forestry track that would be used as access to the Proposed Development and therefore environmental impacts would be no greater than those already assessed in the **2024 EIA Report** for upgrading the existing forestry tracks.
- 3.3.4.12 IGCC Option 2 would require 12 watercourse crossings. Two are existing crossings along the Proposed Development access track and ten are existing crossings along the A85.
- 3.3.4.13 Both IGCC Option 1 and 2 would fall within Allt Nathais Catchment which is the main catchment for the Proposed Development. The easternmost section of each route, from Taynuilt Substation up to the Allt Nathais Catchment, would pass through (from east to west) the River Awe Catchment, River Nant Catchment and the Etive Coastal Catchment.

Private Water Supplies

- 3.3.4.14 IGCC Option 1 would pass within 38m of the indicated PWS source for Achnacloich House and within 28m of the indicated source for Fearnoch Village Supply. Both IGCC Option 1 and IGCC Option 2 would pass within 25m of the indicated source for Eltham Cottages, 100m of Dailnamac and 87m of Ichrachan Cottage. Muckairn House is also located 1.3km downstream of both IGCC Option 1 and 2. The source location of these PWS would need to be confirmed prior to works commencing on either cable route and, if the source is within 250m of proposed works and there is a hydraulic connection, mitigation would be required to ensure that the supplies are not compromised.

Designated Sites

- 3.3.4.15 IGCC Option 1 would run parallel to and within 50m of the Clais Dhearg SSSI and Loch Etive Woods SAC for over 1km. Although the principal impact pathways remain indirect (via hydrology, water quality and sediment transfer), the increased proximity to the designated sites would increase the sensitivity of the receiving environment and reduce the available buffer between construction activities and protected habitats. Pollution prevention and mitigation measures are likely to be identified at the detailed design stage. These measures will inform the assessment undertaken to support any consent application.
- 3.3.4.16 IGCC Option 2 would run roughly parallel to part of the Loch Etive Woods SAC and Airds Park & Coille Nathais SSSI but at a distance in excess of 100m at all times. As this route forms part of the proposed wind farm track no increase in effects on the SAC or SSSI would be anticipated and effects are likely to remain consistent with the residual effects assessed for the Proposed Development alone.
- 3.3.4.17 Where both routes run along the A85 they would also pass through part of the Loch Etive Wood SAC and the Airds Park & Coille Nathais SSSI. Impacts here would be lower since the cable would be laid in the existing road verge and therefore would cause less disturbance. However, indirect impacts via hydrology, water quality and sediment transfer would still be possible. Therefore, compared with the Proposed Development alone, IGCC Option 1 would represent a notable increase in potential effects on designated sites which could be significant in EIA terms. IGCC Option 2 would lead to a slight increase in potential effects which is expected to be not significant in EIA terms.

Groundwater and GWDTE

- 3.3.4.18 Groundwater resources within the area were assessed as limited and no genuine GWDTE were identified within the **2024 EIA Report**. Consequently, the increase in effects on groundwater receptors is likely to be relatively small. However, additional trench excavation, particularly in areas of previously undisturbed ground, could locally alter shallow groundwater flow, especially in areas of peat or other superficial deposits if not appropriately designed. Cable trenches can act as preferential drainage pathways and therefore mitigation measures as outlined in the **2024 EIA Report** should be employed.
- 3.3.4.19 IGCC Option 1 runs through significant areas of previously undisturbed ground and therefore has the potential to increase the opportunities for localised hydrogeological change compared with the Proposed Development alone. By following existing roads and access tracks IGCC Option 2 would largely be located within ground already subject to excavation and drainage modification. Therefore, any increase in groundwater-related impacts relative to the Proposed Development are likely to be very small.

Flood Risk

- 3.3.4.20 Flood risk is primarily associated with the river channels and does not directly interact with either cable route except where they cross watercourses. Once constructed, buried cables

are resilient to flooding and therefore impacts from flooding are considered to be not significant. Similarly, buried cable routes do not generally increase downstream flood risk as they do not cause a decrease in permeable surfaces; therefore, impacts to flood risk as a result of the proposed grid connection are likely to be minimal.

Summary

- 3.3.4.21 IGCC Option 1 would break more new ground than IGCC Option 2, leading to greater impacts on peat and soils, although available data indicate that peat would be unlikely to be encountered along much of the route. A greater number of watercourse crossings would also be required, including more new crossings. This, coupled with the proximity to the Eas nam Meirleach over a significant distance, increases the likelihood of impacts to water quality. IGCC Option 1 may also have greater impacts on PWS as it could impact two additional supplies compared with IGCC Option 2, namely Achnacloich House and Fearnoch Village Supply. Further investigation would be required to understand the potential impacts. This route would also have a greater potential to impact designated sites due to proximity over a substantial distance to the Clais Dhearg SSSI and Loch Etive Woods SAC. The route may also have a slightly greater impact on groundwater and groundwater flow due to increased encroachment into previously undisturbed areas.
- 3.3.4.22 IGCC Option 2 would largely follow existing infrastructure corridors where drainage arrangements and construction management measures are already proposed. Although temporary construction risks would still arise from excavation of the cable trench, the increase in risks to the water and soil environments compared with the Proposed Development alone would be limited and remain similar to the residual effects outlined in the **2024 EIA Report**.
- 3.3.4.23 Given the extent of the route in proximity to watercourses and sensitive designated sites, there is potential for IGCC Option 1 to give rise to significant residual effects, even when best practice construction methods are employed throughout. As such, the best management method the DNO could adopt is through design, ensuring avoidance where possible.
- 3.3.4.24 If best practice construction methods are used and mitigation as outlined in the **2024 EIA Report** is adhered to, it is unlikely that impacts from IGCC Option 2 would be significant when considered together with the Proposed Development.

3.3.5 Ecology & Ornithology

Ecology

Key Findings from 2024 EIA Report / 2025 FEI Report

- 3.3.5.1 **Chapter 10** of the **2024 EIA Report** assessed the potential effects of the Proposed Development on designated sites, habitats and protected or otherwise notable species. No statutory designated sites were identified within the Site. However, Loch Etive Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Clais Dhearg Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and Airds Park and Coille Nathais SSSI are situated close to the Proposed Development and its access route. Their relevant interests include woodland and wetland habitats, Otter (*Lutra lutra*) and Marsh fritillary butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*), with Clais Dhearg being an important Scottish site for odonatan, supporting 15 species of dragonfly and damselfly, which is the largest number of any site in Scotland.
- 3.3.5.2 The habitat surveys that were undertaken across the Site and access route identified a mixture of blanket bog, heathland, marshy grassland, wetlands, watercourses, broadleaved

woodland and commercial forestry. Areas listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) are present along parts of the wind farm access route. Much of the woodland within Fearnoch Forest comprises commercial plantation, including areas classified as Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). Although these areas have been modified by commercial forestry, they retain value through their ancient woodland soils, ecological continuity and potential for restoration to native woodland.

- 3.3.5.3 Protected and notable species identified as relevant to the assessment included bats, fish, Otter, Red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), Wood ants (*Formica* spp. particularly *F. aquilonia*) and Marsh fritillary. Woodland edges, watercourses and other linear features were considered to provide suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat, while several trees with potential roost features were recorded. Watercourses within and adjoining the Proposed Development provide habitat for fish and may also be used by otter. Red squirrel and wood ants were recorded within Fearnoch Forest, while suitable habitat for marsh fritillary occurs in the wider area and the species is a notified feature of the nearby SSSIs.
- 3.3.5.4 The **2024 EIA Report** identified the potential for significant effects before mitigation in relation to certain habitats and species, including blanket bog, bats, fish and Wood ants. Effects on designated-site Marsh fritillary interests were also identified as requiring mitigation and habitat-management measures. Proposed mitigation included sensitive infrastructure design, avoidance of important habitats where practicable, pre-construction surveys, Species Protection Plans (SPPs), pollution-prevention measures, appointment of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) and implementation of the outline Habitat Management Plan (HMP).
- 3.3.5.5 Subject to the application of the identified mitigation and habitat-management measures, the **2024 EIA Report** concluded that the Proposed Development would not result in significant residual ecological effects.
- 3.3.5.6 The **2025 FEI Report** considered limited design changes to the Proposed Development, including realignment of a section of access track to reduce effects on peat and watercourse buffers and removal of one watercourse crossing. These changes reduced potential effects on Clais Dhearg SSSI, blanket bog and bats, but did not alter the conclusions of **Chapter 10** of the **2024 EIA Report**. The **2025 FEI Report** also recorded further agreed mitigation for Marsh fritillary and Wood ants following consultation with Butterfly Conservation and Buglife Scotland. The **2025 FEI Report** assessed the revised Proposed Development only and did not assess either proposed Grid Connection route.

Potential for Additional Significant Effects

Designated Sites and Hydrological Connectivity

- 3.3.5.7 IGCC Option 1 would introduce a new construction corridor through areas of previously less-disturbed ground. For more than 1km, it would run parallel to and within approximately 50m of Loch Etive Woods SAC and Clais Dhearg SSSI. It would also run close to the Eas nam Meirleach watercourse, including locations where the indicative corridor encroaches into the 15m watercourse buffer. Where possible, this route would make use of any available forestry tracks or clearings.
- 3.3.5.8 The principal pathways by which IGCC Option 1 could affect the designated sites would be sediment release, accidental pollution, changes to surface-water drainage and localised alteration of shallow groundwater movement. Such effects could potentially influence designated woodland and wetland habitats and species dependent upon the water environment. The reduced separation between construction activity and the designated sites would provide less opportunity for interception of sediment or pollution than was available for the Proposed Development infrastructure assessed in the **2024 EIA Report**.

- 3.3.5.9 IGCC Option 2 would follow the Proposed Development access track and other existing infrastructure corridors for much of its length. Along this section, it would generally remain more than 100m from the SAC and SSSIs and would principally use ground already subject to access-track works and drainage modification. The potential for additional effects would therefore be lower than for IGCC Option 1.
- 3.3.5.10 From just east of the access to Fearnoch Forest car park, both IGCC options would follow the same route along the A85 towards Taynuilt Substation. This common section would pass between parts of Loch Etive Woods SAC and Airds Park and Coille Nathais SSSI. Installation within an existing road verge should reduce the extent of habitat disturbance. Nevertheless, works very close to the boundaries of the designated sites could result in direct disturbance of verge or woodland-edge habitat, in addition to indirect effects associated with sediment, pollution and drainage.
- 3.3.5.11 Taking account of the indicative routes, the design envelope and the mitigation measures that the DNO would be expected to incorporate, neither IGCC option is predicted to give rise to additional significant residual ecological effects on designated site interests in EIA terms over and above those identified for the Proposed Development. Route-specific surveys and detailed design undertaken to support the subsequent Grid Connection application would refine the required enhanced embedded mitigation and pollution-prevention measures. Potential effects on the qualifying interests of Loch Etive Woods SAC and the notified features of Clais Dhearg SSSI and Airds Park and Coille Nathais SSSI would likewise be addressed through that process.

Habitats, Woodland and PAWS

- 3.3.5.12 IGCC Option 1 would require additional woodland removal where it enters or passes alongside Fearnoch Forest. The forest contains extensive Plantation on Ancient Woodland (PAWS) and areas listed on the AWI. PAWS should not be considered equivalent to recently established commercial plantation of low ecological sensitivity. Although the existing crop may comprise non-native conifers, the underlying soils can retain ancient woodland characteristics, including surviving flora, seedbanks and fungal communities, as well as the potential for restoration to native woodland.
- 3.3.5.13 Cable trenching and the associated working corridor could result in removal of trees and ground vegetation, disturbance or loss of ancient woodland soils, woodland fragmentation and changes to woodland-edge conditions. Cable trenches could also act as localised drainage pathways if appropriate measures are not incorporated into the design. These effects could conflict with the PAWS-restoration objectives identified in the Taynuilt Land Management Plan¹.
- 3.3.5.14 Restocking and compensatory planting would address the area of woodland removed but would not necessarily replace the ecological characteristics or continuity of an ancient woodland site. The mitigation hierarchy should therefore be applied, with avoidance of PAWS and other ancient woodland areas prioritised over subsequent planting. Where avoidance is not possible, the working width should be minimised and the route micro-sited to make use of existing tracks, verges, open ground and previously disturbed areas.
- 3.3.5.15 IGCC Option 2 would principally use the Proposed Development access corridor assessed in the **2024 EIA Report**. The **Chapter 13** of the **2024 EIA Report** identified felling and restocking requirements for that access route, including native broadleaf planting intended to contribute to PAWS restoration in areas available for restocking. Provided that the cable working area

¹ Online, available at: <https://www.forestryandland.gov.scot/living-and-working/communities/land-management-plans/active-plans/taynuilt>

remains within the previously assessed and cleared corridor, IGCC Option 2 should require no or substantially less additional woodland removal than IGCC Option 1, given that there would be an existing wayleave - into which the cable trench would be located.

- 3.3.5.16 The detailed footprint for the chosen IGCC Option should consider tree root-protection requirements and the long-term ability to restock land above or beside the cable.
- 3.3.5.17 The original EIA conclusion that no genuine groundwater-dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTEs) were present related to the wind farm study area. It should not automatically be applied to previously un-surveyed parts of IGCC Option 1. Route-specific habitat and peat surveys should confirm the presence or absence of sensitive wetland habitat, particularly near the existing (Taynuilt) substation and other areas where peat or superficial deposits may occur.

Watercourses and Aquatic Receptors

- 3.3.5.18 IGCC Option 1 would require 17 watercourse crossings, including two new crossings. IGCC Option 2 would require 12 crossings; all associated with existing crossings along the Proposed Development access track or A85. IGCC Option 1 would consequently provide a greater number of opportunities for disturbance of watercourse habitat, sediment release, pollution and interruption of fish and Otter passage.
- 3.3.5.19 Fish and otter were identified as relevant ecological receptors in the **2024 EIA Report**. Watercourse-crossing design should seek to avoid in-channel works where practicable, retain natural bed conditions and fish passage, and prevent sediment or other pollutants entering the water environment. Pre-construction surveys should also confirm whether otter shelter or resting features, or other protected-species evidence, particularly Water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*), are present close to the crossing locations and construction compounds.
- 3.3.5.20 Where trenchless installation is proposed, launch and reception pits should be positioned outside sensitive riparian habitat, and appropriate measures should be incorporated to control drilling fluids, surface-water runoff and accidental pollution. Where open-cut crossings cannot be avoided, works should be subject to an agreed method statement, appropriate seasonal restrictions and ecological supervision.
- 3.3.5.21 Plant movement, trench excavation, dewatering and loading near watercourse bank tops could cause local instability or bank collapse. Temporary works should therefore include site-specific plant-exclusion zones, load-spreading measures where required, controls on spoil and material storage, flow and weather restrictions, ecological supervision and an emergency response procedure.
- 3.3.5.22 The selected route should also be assessed against private water supplies, hydrologically connected designated sites and groundwater-dependent habitats. The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and water-management documentation should be coordinated with the ecological mitigation and Special Protection Plans (SPP) so that the same pathways and receptors are addressed consistently.

Bats and Bridge or Culvert Crossings

- 3.3.5.23 The proposed cable routes may interact with existing bridges, culverts or other crossing structures. Bridges can provide potential bat-roost features in masonry joints, cracks, abutments, parapets, soffits, drainage voids and expansion joints. The potential risk would depend on the construction method and whether works would affect the structure itself or generate disturbance close to potential roost features.
- 3.3.5.24 A crossing schedule and construction method statement should be prepared for all watercourses, bridges and culverts. This should address hydrology, geomorphology, fish

passage, Otter habitat, bat-roost potential, bank stability, pollution and sediment control, flood risk and any authorisations required under the Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Regulations 2018, and any separate structural or roads approval requirements for structures that could be physically affected by trenching, drilling, cable attachment or other works.

- 3.3.5.25 Where potential bat roost features are present and cannot be fully inspected or a roost cannot otherwise be ruled out, further bat survey may be required before the construction method is finalised. The presence of a bat roost would not necessarily prevent the crossing from being constructed, but avoidance should be considered first. This could include keeping the cable and fixings away from potential roost features, retaining access points, adopting a trenchless crossing that avoids the structure, altering the timing or method of work and controlling vibration, noise and lighting. Where effects on a confirmed roost cannot be avoided, an appropriate licence and detailed mitigation strategy would be required before works commenced. Bridge or trenchless solutions should not be assumed to be impact-free and should be subject to crossing-specific assessment.
- 3.3.5.26 Trees requiring removal or pruning should also be checked for potential bat roost features and bird nests. Construction lighting should be directed away from woodland edges, watercourses, bridges and other potential commuting or foraging habitat, and night-time working should be avoided in sensitive locations where practicable.

Other Protected and Notable Species

- 3.3.5.27 Additional clearance within Fearnoch Forest could affect Red squirrel habitat and potential dreys, as well as Wood-ant nests recorded along the existing forestry access system. Suitable road-verge, grassland or wet-heath habitat could also support Marsh Fritillary or its principal larval foodplant Devil's-bit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*). Updated pre-construction surveys should therefore be undertaken throughout the final working corridor and associated compounds. The potential presence of Badger (*Meles meles*) and Pine marten (*Martes martes*) should also be considered, as these mobile species can establish setts or dens within relatively short periods. Reptiles and amphibians should likewise be considered because their habitat requirements vary between aquatic and terrestrial environments throughout the year.
- 3.3.5.28 Where protected or notable species are recorded, the avoidance buffers, seasonal restrictions and SPPs identified in the **2024 EIA Report** should be applied or updated for the grid connection. Where Wood-ant nests cannot be avoided, specialist advice may be required regarding translocation.
- 3.3.5.29 Potential effects on birds, including breeding birds and populations of birds potentially associated with designated sites or those receiving a higher degree of protection, which may arise from vegetation clearance and construction disturbance are considered separately within the **Ornithology Section** below.
- 3.3.5.30 **Assessment and Mitigation of the IGCC Options**
- 3.3.5.31 Consistent with normal DNO practice and applicable environmental requirements, the DNO would be expected to control construction through a CEMP, supported by route-specific SPPs and a suitably qualified ECoW. Measures should include micro-siting, restriction of the working width, pre-construction surveys, demarcation of exclusion areas, pollution and sediment controls, sensitive lighting, covering or ramping open excavations, appropriate vegetation and soil handling, and reinstatement of temporarily disturbed habitat.
- 3.3.5.32 Ecological surveys should cover the full cable working corridor rather than only the nominal cable centreline. They should also include temporary compounds, access points, drilling pits, storage areas and any locations required for vegetation clearance or watercourse-crossing works.

- 3.3.5.33 IGCC Option 1 would create more new disturbance, require additional woodland removal, pass close to designated sites and require more watercourse crossings. It would also create greater potential for effects on PAWS, protected species and previously un-surveyed habitat.
- 3.3.5.34 IGCC Option 2 would make greater use of existing tracks, road verges and the access corridor assessed in the **2024 EIA Report**, thereby reducing the extent of new habitat disturbance associated with that option. However, this assessment is based on the understanding that the working area remains within the existing or previously assessed corridor. Further assessment of the common A85 road section, designated-site crossings, bridge and culvert structures, or any additional areas of woodland clearance would be undertaken in support of any application for the grid connection.

Ecology Summary

- 3.3.5.35 IGCC Option 2 is likely to result in less additional habitat loss, woodland disturbance and hydrological change. Taking account of detailed route design, appropriate surveys and the application of the mitigation measures established in the **2024 EIA Report**, as supplemented by the **2025 FEI Report**, neither option is predicted to result in significant ecological effects. The final construction footprint, watercourse and bridge-crossing methods, PAWS interaction and protected-species survey findings will determine how these measures are implemented at individual locations.
- 3.3.5.36 IGCC Option 1 would introduce a new construction corridor, require additional woodland clearance and watercourse crossings, and pass close to Loch Etive Woods SAC and Clais Dhearg SSSI. Its principal potential effects would relate to habitat loss or degradation, PAWS and ancient woodland soils, protected species, watercourses and hydrologically connected designated sites.
- 3.3.5.37 IGCC Option 2 would principally follow existing tracks, road verges and the previously assessed wind-farm access corridor. Its potential effects would therefore arise mainly from any extension beyond the assessed corridor, works at bridge and watercourse crossings, disturbance of retained woodland and PAWS features, and the shared section beside the A85.
- 3.3.5.38 Consistent with normal DNO practice and applicable environmental requirements, the detailed design would be expected to be informed by route-specific surveys and to incorporate a CEMP, SPPs, ecological supervision and the avoidance and mitigation measures identified in this assessment. With these measures incorporated, neither IGCC option is predicted to result in additional significant residual ecological effects in EIA terms over and above those identified for the Proposed Development.

Ornithology

Key Findings from 2024 EIA Report / 2025 FEI Report

- 3.3.5.39 **Chapter 11** of the **2024 EIA Report** assessed potential effects on birds using desk-study information and ornithological surveys undertaken between April 2020 and July 2024. The surveys identified an assemblage typical of the transitional lower-altitude moorland and coniferous plantation habitats of mid-Argyll.
- 3.3.5.40 Although several species of conservation concern were recorded, most occurred too infrequently, or in insufficient numbers, for the Site to represent an important resource or migration route. Three Valued Ornithological Receptors were taken forward for detailed assessment: Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) and Black Grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*).

- 3.3.5.41 Golden Eagle activity was recorded occasionally over and around the Site. The Site lies within the peripheral part of an occupied Golden Eagle territory, but the survey and satellite-tag information indicated that the most frequently used and more suitable habitat was concentrated elsewhere within the wider territory. No Golden Eagle nests were identified within or immediately adjoining the Site. The Site was therefore assessed as being of local importance for Golden Eagle.
- 3.3.5.42 Hen Harrier was recorded regularly, with breeding confirmed during the baseline survey programme. The habitat within and surrounding the Site was considered capable of supporting breeding and foraging birds, and the population using the area was assessed as being of regional importance.
- 3.3.5.43 Black Grouse were recorded throughout the year, including at one regularly used core lek and several less regularly used peripheral locations. The population associated with the Site was also assessed as being of regional importance. No Black Grouse or other scarce breeding birds were recorded during the additional surveys undertaken in 2024 for the Proposed Development access track.
- 3.3.5.44 The Site does not overlap any designated site of ornithological interest. The nearest is Glen Etive and Glen Fyne Special Protection Area (SPA), designated for its breeding Golden Eagle population. The SPA was recorded as approximately 8.5km east of the Site and approximately 6.6km east of the access track. As these distances were beyond the recognised 6km core foraging range adopted in the assessment, the SPA was scoped out of the **2024 EIA**.
- 3.3.5.45 The **2024 EIA Report** concluded that construction could result in disturbance effects on Hen Harrier and Black Grouse. The identified effects were capable of being reduced to a non-significant level through the Bird Protection Plan (BPP), including pre-construction surveys, construction-phase monitoring, seasonal restrictions and works exclusion zones.
- 3.3.5.46 Potential operational effects associated with the turbines included displacement or habitat loss affecting Golden Eagle, Hen Harrier and Black Grouse, together with disturbance to Hen Harrier and Black Grouse. The only potentially significant operational effects before mitigation related to disturbance of nesting Hen Harrier and lekking Black Grouse. These effects were also concluded to be not significant following mitigation and monitoring.
- 3.3.5.47 The **2025 FEI Report** responded to NatureScot's concerns regarding potential significant effects on Schedule 1 birds and the regionally important Black Grouse population. It provided corrected and supplementary Golden Eagle home-range and displacement analysis, further interpretation of the Black Grouse lek records, additional Hen Harrier and Black Grouse mitigation and monitoring commitments, and an updated cumulative operational-displacement assessment at Natural Heritage Zone 14 level. These updates refined and, in places, superseded the supporting analysis in **Chapter 11** of the **2024 EIA Report**, but did not alter the conclusion that the identified residual effects would not be significant. The **2025 FEI Report** did not assess either Grid Connection route.

Potential for Additional Significant Effects

Relevance of the Proposed Development Assessment to the Grid Connection

- 3.3.5.48 The principal ornithological risks associated with an underground grid connection differ from those associated with wind turbines, with the exception of created access tracks. Once installed, the buried cable would not create a collision hazard or barrier to bird movement and would not be expected to cause the type of continuing displacement associated with operating turbines.

3.3.5.49 The relevant impact pathways would principally occur during construction and would comprise:

- temporary loss or alteration of nesting and foraging habitat;
- disturbance from people, vehicles, plant, noise, lighting and vegetation clearance;
- damage or destruction of active nests;
- disturbance of specially protected birds at nests, roosts or leks; and
- the combined effect of grid-connection works, wind farm construction and forestry operations where their programmes or affected areas overlap.

3.3.5.50 The existing survey information provides a valuable indication of the species likely to occur. However, parts of the grid corridors extend beyond the areas surveyed for the Proposed Development. Bird distribution and breeding locations can also change between years. Route-specific and up-to-date surveys would therefore be required before construction.

Golden Eagle

3.3.5.51 For Golden Eagle, the principal potential effect associated with either IGCC option would be construction disturbance close to an occupied nest, roost or other regularly used location, particularly around dawn or dusk. The original BPP includes pre-construction survey and monitoring provisions and restrictions on working close to active roosts during sensitive periods. Equivalent measures would be extended to the Grid Connection where current records or route-specific surveys identify a potential constraint.

3.3.5.52 Golden Eagle nest and roost information is sensitive and should continue to be handled through the confidential ornithological reporting process. Relevant constraints should be made available to the Project Ornithologist and Ecological Clerk of Works (ECow) without including precise locations in public-facing construction documents.

3.3.5.53 As Golden Eagle is a species principally of upland environments, increasingly so for occupied nests or roosts, the lower lying habitats of the IGCC areas would present as low suitability habitats for this species; therefore, there is a low likelihood of adverse effects.

Hen Harrier

3.3.5.54 Hen Harrier was confirmed breeding within the Site and immediately adjacent to the Site during the original surveys and was therefore considered and assessed as a receptor of regional importance. Construction could disturb displaying, nesting or foraging birds, potentially causing temporary displacement or abandonment of a breeding attempt.

3.3.5.55 IGCC Option 1 would create a new construction corridor through a combination of open ground, field boundaries and woodland-edge habitat. Some of this ground was not covered by the Proposed Development surveys and could provide nesting or foraging habitat. The absence of records in these areas from the original survey area would not establish the absence of Hen Harrier along this new corridor.

3.3.5.56 IGCC Option 2 would follow the Proposed Development access track for much of its length. The 2024 forest-access surveys did not identify scarce breeding birds along this corridor, which provided relevant baseline information for the assessment of potential effects. However, IGCC Option 2 also lies closer to parts of the Proposed Development survey area in which Hen Harrier activity was recorded. Its acceptability would therefore remain dependent on current surveys and the timing of construction.

3.3.5.57 The BPP requires pre-construction raptor and Hen Harrier surveys covering the works and an appropriate surrounding buffer, commencing during the early breeding season. Construction-phase monitoring would then be required where works extend into the breeding period.

- 3.3.5.58 Where an active nest or prospecting pair is identified, an appropriate protection zone should be established and works programmed to avoid disturbance. The original BPP identifies a precautionary 750m protection zone, subject to case-specific review by the Project Ornithologist and consultation with NatureScot. Factors such as topography, screening, the stage of the breeding attempt and the nature and duration of the works may inform any adjustment to that distance.
- 3.3.5.59 Where practicable, clearance and other potentially disturbing works should be undertaken outside the principal Hen Harrier breeding period. If this is not possible, monitoring and works controls should continue until the relevant nest is no longer active and any dependent young have dispersed sufficiently to avoid disturbance.

Black Grouse

- 3.3.5.60 Black Grouse use a mixture of open moorland, woodland edge, young forestry and structurally varied vegetation. Construction could affect the species through temporary loss of foraging or nesting habitat, disturbance of lekking birds and disturbance or destruction of nests.
- 3.3.5.61 IGCC Option 1 would cause greater new disturbance to field-edge and forest-edge habitats and could create a new break through currently less-disturbed ground. This may result in greater potential for habitat alteration and disturbance than installation within an existing track corridor.
- 3.3.5.62 IGCC Option 2 would make greater use of the proposed wind farm access track. No Black Grouse were recorded during the 2024 access-track surveys. Nevertheless, lek attendance and the use of peripheral display locations can change between years, and female black grouse may nest away from the principal lek. Updated surveys would therefore still be required.
- 3.3.5.63 Pre-construction Black Grouse surveys should cover suitable habitat along the selected route and an appropriate surrounding buffer. Surveys should be undertaken during the spring lekking period and repeated during construction where works could affect an active lek.
- 3.3.5.64 The BPP identifies a precautionary survey and protection distance of up to 750m for active leks. Where works fall within the potential disturbance zone during the core lekking period, construction may need to be restricted around dawn and dusk. The **2025 FEI Report** proposes that the BPP be updated so that, during the core lekking period from March to May inclusive, works in proximity to leks would not commence until at least two hours after sunrise. Any evening restriction or alternative route-specific working window should be confirmed through the updated BPP by the Project Ornithologist.
- 3.3.5.65 The operational turbine measures assessed in **Chapter 11** of the **2024 EIA Report**, including turbine-base painting and collision monitoring, would not be relevant to a buried grid cable. Once the route is reinstated, operational effects on Black Grouse should be limited to occasional disturbance associated with maintenance or repair.

Other Breeding Birds

- 3.3.5.66 All active wild-bird nests are legally protected, whether or not the species was identified as a Valued Ornithological Receptor in the **2024 EIA Report**. Vegetation clearance, tree felling, soil stripping and trench excavation could affect ground-nesting, scrub-nesting and tree-nesting birds throughout either working corridor.
- 3.3.5.67 Where practicable, vegetation clearance should be programmed outside the main bird-breeding season. Where works must proceed during this period, a suitably experienced ornithologist should carry out pre-works checks of all affected nesting habitat. Checks should

be undertaken sufficiently close to the start of the works to ensure that their findings remain current.

- 3.3.5.68 Any active nest should be protected by an exclusion zone appropriate to the species, nature of the works, screening and stage of the breeding attempt. Work within that zone should not recommence until the ornithologist has confirmed that the nest is no longer active and any dependent young are no longer at risk.
- 3.3.5.69 An active Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) nest was recorded during the 2021 breeding season within Fearnoch Forest. A single adult bird was observed on the nest in April and May 2021, although the number of chicks produced was not established. The nest site was found to be occupied again in 2022 with chicks being observed in the nest in the August of that year. Subsequently, surveys undertaken to inform the assessment of the proposed Forest Access Track in 2024 found this nest site to no longer exist, and it was confirmed that it had blown down during the winter storms of 2023/24.
- 3.3.5.70 Rolling checks would be required as construction progresses along the route because birds may establish new nests in areas not previously affected by works. Construction compounds, material-storage areas, access points and locations subject to temporary vegetation removal should be included, rather than limiting checks to the cable trench itself.
- 3.3.5.71 Existing bridges, culverts and other structures affected by cable installation should also be checked for nesting birds where the construction method could disturb the structure or the habitat beneath it. Any such check would be complementary to, rather than replaced by an assessment of potential bat-roost features.

Habitat Loss and Forestry Interaction

- 3.3.5.72 IGCC Option 1 would require more new vegetation and potentially woodland clearance. In addition to the ecological effects associated with PAWS, the resulting changes to forest edges and vegetation structure could affect bird nesting, shelter and foraging habitat. Forestry operations could also cause disturbance over a wider area than the cable trench itself because felling may need to extend to suitable management or wind-firm boundaries.
- 3.3.5.73 IGCC Option 2 should require less additional clearance if the grid-connection works remain within the Proposed Development access track corridor. This would reduce additional habitat loss and the extent of new construction disturbance. However, any widening beyond the assessed corridor or additional compounds and access routes should be included in the ornithological assessment.
- 3.3.5.74 The timing of grid-route clearance should be coordinated with the Proposed Development felling programme and wider Forestry and Land Scotland operations. Simultaneous or consecutive works in adjoining areas could extend the period over which birds are disturbed or remove alternative habitat into which temporarily displaced birds might otherwise move.

Construction Management and Monitoring

- 3.3.5.75 Consistent with normal DNO practice and applicable consenting and species-protection requirements, the DNO would be expected to update or supplement the Proposed Development BPP to include the final grid route, working corridor and associated construction areas It should define:
- the route-specific pre-construction survey requirements;
 - arrangements for updating confidential bird information;
 - responsibilities of the Project Ornithologist and ECoW;
 - sensitive periods and protection zones;

- procedures for approving, adjusting and removing exclusion zones;
- restrictions on lighting and works close to sensitive nesting, lekking or roosting locations;
- emergency procedures where previously undiscovered nesting birds are encountered; and
- coordination between grid, wind farm and forestry construction programmes.

3.3.5.76 The ECoW would be expected to have authority to stop or modify activities where they could affect an active nest, lek, roost or another sensitive ornithological feature. Site personnel should receive toolbox talks explaining the relevant legal protections and the procedure to follow if nesting or distressed birds are encountered.

Assessment and Mitigation of the IGCC Options

3.3.5.77 IGCC Option 1 would create more disturbance in previously less-affected habitat and is less comprehensively covered by the existing survey programme. It therefore has greater potential for currently unidentified nesting or foraging habitat to be affected, particularly along open-ground and woodland-edge sections.

3.3.5.78 IGCC Option 2 would principally use existing forestry tracks and the Proposed Development access route. This should reduce additional habitat loss. The absence of scarce breeding birds during the 2024 forest-access surveys provides relevant baseline evidence for assessing the potential effects associated with this option. However, IGCC Option 2 passes closer to parts of the Site used by Hen Harrier and Black Grouse. Current confidential records and route-specific surveys may therefore identify seasonal or localised constraints requiring micro-siting or changes to the construction programme.

3.3.5.79 The common A85 road section would principally occupy the existing road verge. Potential effects could nevertheless arise where scrub, trees, watercourse margins, bridges or culverts support nesting birds.

Ornithology Summary

3.3.5.80 IGCC Option 1 would introduce construction activity into previously less-affected open-ground and woodland-edge habitats, with potential effects arising from habitat alteration and disturbance of nesting, foraging, roosting or lekking birds.

3.3.5.81 IGCC Option 2 would make greater use of the existing and previously surveyed Proposed Development access corridor, although seasonal or localised constraints may still arise where it passes closer to areas used by Hen Harrier and Black Grouse.

3.3.5.82 The shared A85 section could also affect nesting birds where works interact with trees, scrub, watercourse margins, bridges or culverts.

3.3.5.83 Neither option would give rise to the turbine-related collision, barrier or continuing displacement effects assessed in **Chapter 11** of the **2024 EIA Report**. The DNO would be expected to undertake route-specific surveys, update the BPP and implement the identified timing restrictions, protection zones and monitoring measures. With these measures incorporated, neither IGCC option is predicted to result in additional significant residual ornithological effects over and above those identified for the Proposed Development.

Overall Ecology and Ornithology Conclusions

3.3.5.84 The assessment has considered the ecological and ornithological effects of both IGCC options using the defined design envelope and the information currently available. Taking account of the route-specific surveys, detailed design and mitigation measures that the DNO would be expected to incorporate through the subsequent consenting and design process,

neither option is predicted to give rise to additional significant residual ecological or ornithological effects in EIA terms over and above those identified for the Proposed Development. This assessment does not identify a preferred route or constrain the DNO's final route selection.

3.3.6 Transport and Access

Key Findings from 2024 EIA Report

- 3.3.6.1 The **2024 EIA Report** found that the Proposed Development would lead to temporary increase in traffic volumes on roads in the Study Area during the construction phase, compared to the future baseline. Traffic volumes would fall considerably outside the peak period of construction.
- 3.3.6.2 The traffic associated with the Proposed Development, at the peak construction (month 9), would result in a total of an additional 84 vehicle movements, comprising 44 HGV movements (two-way) and 40 LGV movements (two-way) per day.
- 3.3.6.3 The greatest impact on the public road network would occur along the A85, to the west of the proposed Site access junction, with an increase in traffic of less than 0.9%. Users of the Forest Path network are considered to be those most affected by construction traffic.
- 3.3.6.4 With the implementation of appropriate mitigation, no significant residual effects were anticipated in respect of transport and access. The residual effects were all assessed to be Minor, would occur during the construction phase only and considered temporary and reversible.

Potential for Additional Significant Effects

- 3.3.6.5 Construction traffic associated with the proposed grid connection would principally comprise the transportation of plant and construction materials to the underground cable work areas. Such movements would be confined to the section of the A85 between Taynuilt Substation and Fearnoch, approximately 1km west of the proposed Site access.
- 3.3.6.6 It is anticipated that construction works along the public road network will lead to temporary, localised adverse effects, in the form of temporary lane closures along sections of the road where works are being undertaken. While these effects are temporary, it is expected that mitigation in the form of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will ensure disruption can be minimised. Methods such as the introduction of temporary traffic control signals are likely to be introduced to ensure minimal diversions.
- 3.3.6.7 Construction traffic itself would consist primarily of HGV movements, together with a smaller number of LGV trips associated with construction workers travelling to and from the proposed Site. This would represent a temporary increase in HGV traffic on the local road network.
- 3.3.6.8 Although the detailed programme of works has yet to be confirmed, the volume of traffic generated by construction of the proposed grid connection is anticipated to be marginal when compared with the worst-case assumptions assessed in the **2024 EIA Report** for construction of the Proposed Development. As that assessment concluded that the worst-case scenario, with standard mitigation measures in place, would result in minor, temporary and reversible effects, the proposed grid connection works are not anticipated to give rise to effects of a greater magnitude.

- 3.3.6.9 Owing to the short-term and localised nature of the grid connection works, any temporary disturbance during construction is expected to be minimal and confined to small areas at any given time as contractors progress along the cable route.
- 3.3.6.10 A site-specific CTMP would be prepared for the proposed grid connection as a good-practice measure and would identify measures to minimise construction vehicle movements and reduce or avoid associated effects through appropriate scheduling and routing.
- 3.3.6.11 In the instance the construction programme was to overlap with that of other nearby wind energy developments, coordinated delivery arrangements would be developed through the respective CTMPs to minimise the potential for significant cumulative effects.

Summary

- 3.3.6.12 The Grid Connection (via either of the routes considered) would not give rise to any additional significant effects which would not notably alter effects as set out in **Chapter 12** of the **2024 EIA Report**.

3.3.7 Forestry

Key Findings from 2024 EIA Report

- 3.3.7.1 The conclusions of **Chapter 13** of the **2024 EIA Report** stated that the Forestry Study Area (FSA) extended to 18.1ha, excluding existing open ground. Felling would be advanced on 18.1ha for construction of the Proposed Development and 6.8ha of woodland would be restocked in line with the aims of the Taynuilt Land Management Plan. There would be a loss of woodland totalling 11.3ha due to the access track.
- 3.3.7.2 In order to comply with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy, compensation planting would be required to mitigate the loss of woodland area. The Applicant is required to commit to providing appropriate compensatory planting. The extent, location and composition of such planting is to be agreed with Scottish Forestry, taking into account any revision to the felling and restocking plans prior to the commencement of construction.
- 3.3.7.3 Forestry is not generally regarded as a receptor for EIA purposes.

Potential for Additional Significant Effects

- 3.3.7.4 IGCC Option 1 would require additional forestry removal where it passes through Fearnoch Forest. This woodland would be restocked and/or compensatory planting would be undertaken in line with Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal policy. As such, there would be no net loss of forestry.
- 3.3.7.5 IGCC Option 2 would not incur any additional forestry removal to that outlined in the **2024 EIA Report**. As such, these conclusions remain valid.

Summary

- 3.3.7.6 In summary, it would remain that there would be no net forestry loss as a result of the Proposed Development and Grid Connection. Any forestry removal would be restocked and/or compensated in line with Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal policy.

3.3.8 Climate Change and Carbon Balance

Key Findings from 2024 EIA Report / 2025 FEI Report

- 3.3.8.1 The **2024 EIA Report** assessed that the Proposed Development, over its proposed 50-year lifetime, is expected to result in a CO₂ saving of ~1,471,000 tonnes compared to a grid-mix emissions counterfactual and the Proposed Development is expected to provide enough electricity to power an additional ~48,733 homes per year.
- 3.3.8.2 As such, the Proposed Development would make a positive contribution to Argyll and Bute's Decarbonisation Plan, meanwhile, contributing to the wider national target of achieving net zero by 2050. The Proposed Development would also contribute towards the Scottish Government's renewable energy targets.
- 3.3.8.3 The **2025 FEI Report** did not change these conclusions.

Potential for Additional Significant Effects

- 3.3.8.4 As discussed in **Section 2**, the IGCCs are indicative and the detailed route design is unknown at this stage. **Chapter 17 – Climate Change and Carbon Balance** of the **2024 EIA Report** utilised the Scottish Government Carbon Calculator which is intended to assess the overall carbon balance of a renewable energy development. As the direct route has not yet been confirmed, engineering details such as excavation volumes are currently unknown and therefore cannot be incorporated into the carbon balance calculation. However, given the likely scale of the works, it is considered unlikely that the inclusion of the IGCC works within the Scottish Government Carbon Calculator would materially influence the overall carbon balance of the Proposed Development or alter the conclusion of the original assessment that the Proposed Development would deliver a positive contribution to reduction in carbon dioxide emissions over its operational lifetime.

Summary

- 3.3.8.5 As such, either grid connection option would not notably alter effects as set out in **Chapter 17** of the **2024 EIA Report** and the conclusions remain valid.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1.1 On the basis of the information currently available, the assessment has identified that IGCC Option 2 would result in no additional likely significant environmental effects in EIA terms that would materially alter the conclusions of the **2024 EIA Report** or the **2025 FEI Report**. IGCC Route Option 1 has the potential to give rise to significant residual effects in relation to Designated Sites, even when best practice construction methods are employed throughout. As such, the best management method the DNO could adopt is through design, ensuring avoidance where possible.
- 4.1.1.2 The assessment demonstrates that the environmental implications of the grid connection have been considered proportionately based on the currently available information. Detailed route design, construction methodology and any further environmental assessment required will be undertaken through the relevant consenting process by the DNO, as applicable.

APPENDIX A – APPLICANT’S RESPONSE TO RAESHAW

APPENDIX B – HERITAGE ASSETS

TABLE B.1 – HERITAGE ASSETS WITHIN THE IGCC OPTION 1 AND IGCC OPTION 2 AND THE ASSOCIATED WORKING CORRIDOR (EXCERPT AND ADDED TO FROM APPENDIX 7.1: GAZETTEER OF HERITAGE ASSETS AND EVENTS SUBMITTED AS PART OF THE 2024 EIA REPORT)

ASSET/ EVENT NUMBER	ASSET/EVENT NAME	TYPE OF ASSET/EVENT	NRHE NUMBER	HER NUMBER	STATUS	EASTING	NORTHING	DESCRIPTION
LB107	Taynuilt Hotel, Taynuilt	Listed Building	LB107	N/A	Listed Building- Category B	200330	731014	18th cent. Trad. 2 storeys and garret. Harled. Slated roof. 7 gabled dormers. Tetrastyle portico. Bay window (later). "Buttresses" at E. end. Additions, offices, and stables at rear.
147	Fearnoch	Building; Enclosure	N/A	WoSAS Pin: 68808	Non-designated Heritage Asset	196450	732320	The site was assessed as part of a reconnaissance survey conducted by CFA Archaeology in April 2011 (WoSAS Event ID 6308). However, it lies outside the development area and as such was not visited. The site was recorded in the Cultural Heritage Assessment
148	Lethbhaile	Farmstead	84611	WoSAS Pin: 14778	Non-designated Heritage Asset	199725	731380	A farmstead, which comprises a roofless, two-compartment building lying on the E side of an enclosure, is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Argyllshire 1875, sheet c) next to the farmstead at Lathbhaile.

ASSET/ EVENT NUMBER	ASSET/EVENT NAME	TYPE OF ASSET/EVENT	NRHE NUMBER	HER NUMBER	STATUS	EASTING	NORTHING	DESCRIPTION
149	Taynuilt, War Memorial	War Memorial	194764	WoSAS Pin: 75436	Non-designated Heritage Asset	200360	731020	Taynuilt War Memorial NN 00334 31050 1914 - 1919 TAYNUILT MEMORIAL OF THE GREAT WAR --- "DILEAS GU BAS" --- JOHN BLACK, BROCHROY, 8TH A. & S. H. ARCHD. CAMPBELL, SHORE COTT., SCOTTISH HRSE. DUNCAN CAMPBELL, AIRDS, 8TH A. & S. H. PETER CAMPBELL, CLACHADOW,
150	Archaeological Watching Brief: Land east of Oakview, Taynuilt, Argyll	Watching Brief	N/A	7459	Event	200765	730712	Argyll Archaeology Ltd 2024 The watching brief uncovered a series of pits, postholes and a hearth. No artefacts were recovered from any of the archaeological features although a single struck flint was recovered from a small tree bole
151	Cable Route Historic Environment Desk Study and Walkover Survey: Taynuilt - Tullich Refurbishment Project	Historic Environment Desk Study		7087	Event	201104	730709	Mott MacDonald The walkover survey visited nearly all of the heritage assets identified within the study area by through assessment of heritage databases. In addition, 186 previously unrecorded heritage assets were recorded

ASSET/ EVENT NUMBER	ASSET/EVENT NAME	TYPE OF ASSET/EVENT	NRHE NUMBER	HER NUMBER	STATUS	EASTING	NORTHING	DESCRIPTION
152	Ichrachan Bridge	Bridge		WoSAS Pin: 68766	Non-designated Heritage Asset	200993	730655	The pre-20th C bridge over the River Nant at Ichrachan has been superseded by a modern road-bridge for the A85 which has been built c. 10m downstream. The pre-modern bridge is shown on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map of the area, but a bridge