

THE ELECTRICITY WORKS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

RESPONSE OF SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL TO A REQUEST FOR A SCREENING OPINION SUBMITTED UNDER THE ELECTRICITY WORKS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE IS LOCATED BETWEEN STRANOCH IN THE SOUTH OF THE AREA AND MARK HILL IN THE NORTH, NEAR BARHILL, SOUTH AYRSHIRE

The proposal is construction of a 132kV single circuit overhead line to connect both the consented Stranoch wind farm (Dumfries & Galloway Council area) and the consented Chirmorie wind farm to the national transmission grid at Mark Hill substation, located approximately 4km north of Barrhill. The OHL will have a total length of 16km and will be supported on wooden poles approximately 15m in height with span lengths of approximately 100m. A number of temporary access tracks will be constructed to provide access to the proposed pole locations. The development falls within Schedule 2 of the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 and requires to be screened in order to determine whether the proposal constitutes 'EIA development'.

This determination is referred to as a '**screening opinion**'. In each case, the basic question to be asked is: 'would this particular development be likely to have significant effects on the environment?'

For many types of development, perhaps the majority, it will be necessary to consider the characteristics of the development in combination with its proposed location in order to identify the potential for interactions between a development and its environment and therefore determine whether there are likely to be significant environmental effects. In determining whether a particular development is likely to have such effects, the Council has taken account of the selection criteria in Schedule 3 to the Regulations. Three categories of criteria are listed:-

- Characteristics of the development
- Location of the development
- Characteristics of the potential impact

Consideration of the third of these categories is designed to help in determining whether any interactions between the first two categories (i.e. between a development and its environment) are likely to be significant.

The content of this checklist meets the requirements of the Electricity Works (Environment Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended) – Schedule 3 selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development.

	Yes/No	Briefly describe	Is effect likely to be significant? Significance should be considered in terms of the extent, transboundary nature, magnitude and complexity, probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of any impact(s).
1. Characteristics of the Development			
(a) Scale of the development			
Will the development be out of scale with the existing environment?	No	The proposal comprises a 3 strand overhead powerline supported on a mix of single and double	It is not considered that the scale of proposed development would be significant in the context of the

	Yes/No	Briefly describe	Is effect likely to be significant? Significance should be considered in terms of the extent, transboundary nature, magnitude and complexity, probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of any impact(s).
		wooden poles. The surrounding landscape is characterised by expansive plateau moorland, commercial forestry and pastoral valley	surrounding landscape
Will it lead to further consequential development or works (e.g. new roads, extraction of aggregate, generation or transmission of power)?	No		
(b) Cumulation with other development			
Are there potential cumulative impacts with other existing development or for proposed development in the planning system?	Yes	At either terminus of the OHL route, the proposed powerline will be viewed alongside the existing Mark Hill wind farm and the consented Chirmorie wind farm and the consented Stranoch wind farm and the OHL will add additional built elements within an undeveloped upland area.	No. The OHL is a relatively small additional element and it is not considered that it will result in any significant cumulative impact that would merit analysis through an EIA. Impacts can be assessed at the application stage and the proposals modified, if necessary, to avoid localised impacts.
Should the application for this development be regarded as an integral part of a more substantial project? If so, can related developments which are subject to separate applications proceed independently?	No		
(c) Use of natural resources			
Will construction or operation of the development use natural resources i.e. land (especially undeveloped or agricultural land)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water or fisheries? • minerals or aggregates? • agriculture, forests and timber? • energy including electricity and fuels? • any other resources? 	Yes	Very small area of land will be used for siting the wooden poles. The existing land uses are agricultural (mainly grade 6) and forestry. The construction of the line will not prevent continued use of these areas.	No. The amount of land used is insignificant in terms of the EIA Regulations.
(d) Production of waste			
Will the development produce wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	No		
(e) Pollution and nuisances			
Will the development cause noise and vibration or release of leachates, light, heat energy or electromagnetic radiation during construction, operation or decommissioning?	No		
(f) Risk of accidents, having regard in particular to substances technologies used			

	Yes/No	Briefly describe	Is effect likely to be significant? Significance should be considered in terms of the extent, transboundary nature, magnitude and complexity, probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of any impact(s).
Will there be a risk of accidents during construction or operation of the development which could have effects on people or the environment?	No		
(g) Other characteristics: potential physical changes (topography, land use, changes in waterbodies etc) from construction, operation or decommissioning of the development			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> permanent or temporary change in land use, landcover or topography including increases in intensity of land use? 	No		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> peat land disturbance and/ or degradation leading to: carbon release, damage to habitats, affecting land stability or hydrology? 	Yes	Potential for disturbance of peat (blanket bog and wet modified bog) in the south of the proposed development. These habitats will be avoided where possible. CEMP will include measures to prevent or minimise damage to peat during construction.	No. The extent of peat land disturbance is insignificant and mitigation will be proposed to minimise adverse impacts as a consequence of access and construction.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pre-construction investigations e.g. boreholes, soil testing? 	No		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> construction, demolition, reclamation or excavation works? 	Yes	Some poles may have to be installed within peat resulting in disturbance of the habitat and potential damage arising from access.	No. The extent of peat land disturbance is insignificant and mitigation will be proposed to minimise adverse impacts as a consequence of access and construction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> underground works ? 	No		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> facilities for storage of goods or materials? 	No		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new road, rail, air or sea traffic or infrastructure during construction or operation or decommissioning? 	Yes	Minor access tracks required in various locations to facilitate access for construction	No. The effects of the access are not considered to be significant due to their small size.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new or diverted transmission lines or pipelines? 	Yes	The proposal is for a new transmission line	No. The effects of the OHL have been assessed as insignificant throughout the screening process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any works requiring an authorisation under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities)(Scotland) Regulations 2005 	No		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> long-term/ongoing activity during restoration or decommissioning which could have an impact on the environment? 	No		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> influx of people to an area either temporarily or permanently? 	No		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any other changes? 	No		

	Yes/No	Briefly describe	Is effect likely to be significant? Significance should be considered in terms of the extent, transboundary nature, magnitude and complexity, probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of any impact(s).
2. Location of the Development			
(a) Existing land use			
Are there existing land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the development, e.g. undeveloped land, greenfield land, homes, other private property, industry, commerce, tourism and recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, water catchments, functional floodplains, mining or quarrying?	Yes	The route passes through land used for forestry and agriculture and close to a limited number of residential properties. Where the line requires to cross watercourses, the poles are likely to be sited within the functional floodplain.	No. The OHL is a relatively small scale structure and it is not considered that the magnitude of impacts on the surrounding land uses would merit assessment through EIA.
(b) Relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area			
Are there any areas on or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the development?	No		
(c) Absorption capacity of the natural environment			
Are there any areas on or around the location which are protected under international or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape and visual, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the development? Particular attention should be paid to wetlands, watercourses or other water bodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, nature reserves and parks.	Yes	The northern part of the area lies within the South Ayrshire Scenic Area as designated through the South Ayrshire Local Development Plan. The OHL has potential to adversely impact on the landscape quality of this area, depending upon the precise route selection.	No. The nature of the proposal (three strand powerline supported by wooden poles) is unlikely to raise significant visual and landscape impact concerns which would merit assessment through EIA. Localised impacts can be assessed at the application stage and adjustments made if necessary to ensure impacts are minimised.
Are there any groundwater source protection zones or areas that contribute to the recharge of groundwater resources?	No		
Are there protected species in or around the location, for example European Protected Species, which could be affected?	Yes	Common Lizard, Water Vole, Palmate Newt, Otter and Scotch argus butterflies have been recorded within the study area. There is potential for disturbance of Hen Harrier associated with the Glen App and Galloway Moors SPA.	No. Impacts will be localised and temporary and can be controlled through careful construction management.
Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected?	Yes	The OHL will be visible from the Ayr to Stranraer railway and the minor road network which provide access for recreation and tourism.	No. The nature and scale of the proposal is not considered to be significant in terms of effect on public access.
Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location which could be affected?			

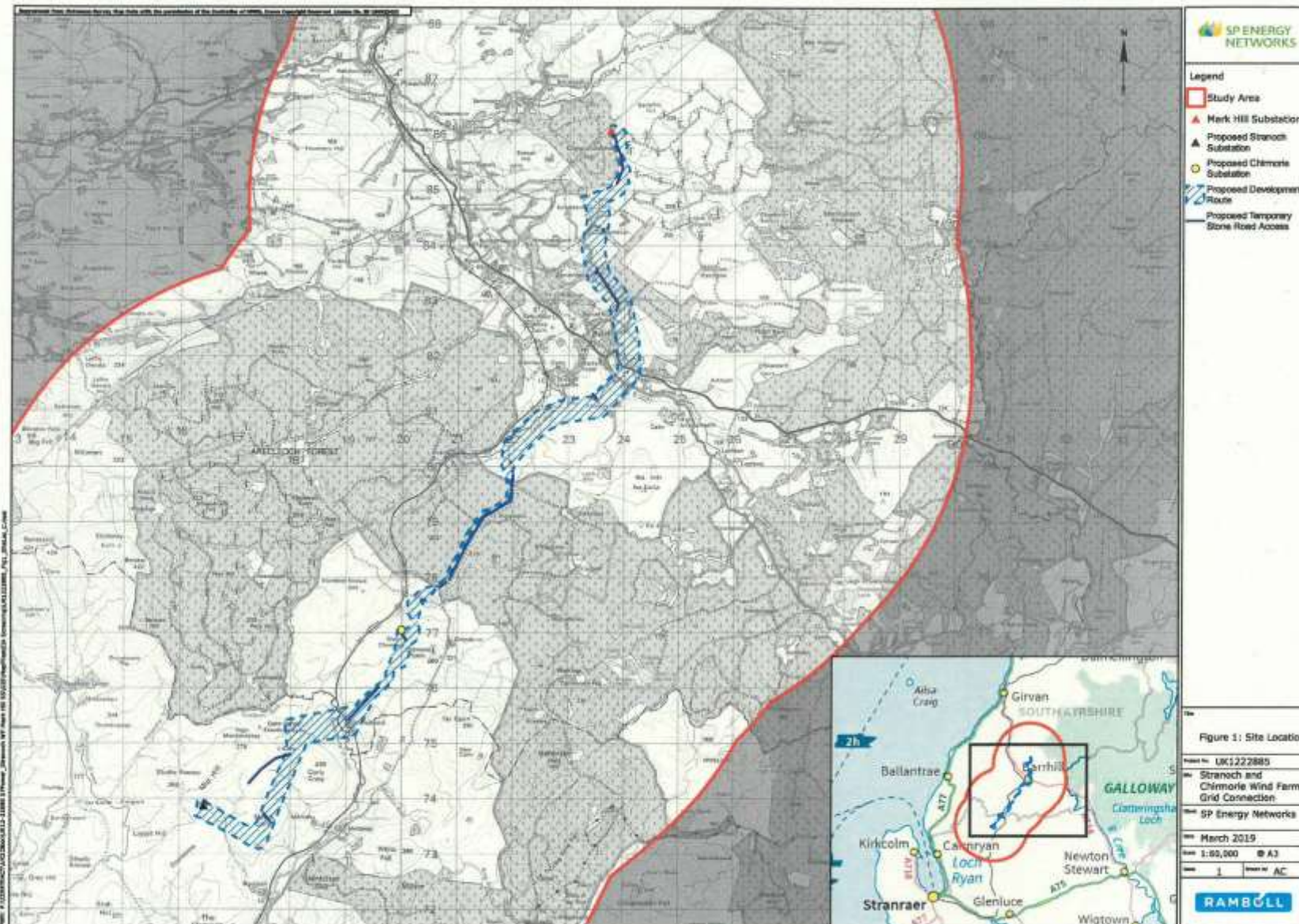
	Yes/No	Briefly describe	Is effect likely to be significant? Significance should be considered in terms of the extent, transboundary nature, magnitude and complexity, probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of any impact(s).
Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected?	No		
Is the development in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	No		
Is the location of the development susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions which could cause the development to present environmental problems?	No		

Conclusions

The checklist is a useful tool for the purposes of identifying the wide range of environmental receptors which could be affected by proposed development. The main issues which have emerged from the checklist are:

- Minor loss of low quality agricultural land and non-native forestry land

From the assessment undertaken in accordance with the Regulations and taking into account the submitted screening report, the Council concludes that the proposed development at Stranoch/Chirmorie to Mark Hill, Barrhill, South Ayrshire, as shown on the map attached to this document, is **not** likely to result in effects on the environment which are sufficiently significant to require the submission of an environmental statement.



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