

## Environmental and Social Data Sheet

### Overview

Project Name:	SSE TRANSMISSION UPGRADE - RENEWABLES
Project Number:	2010-0003
Country:	United Kingdom
Project Description:	This is an investment programme aimed at reinforcing and extending the transmission network of the promoter in Scotland, the main purpose being to facilitate the connection and transmission of renewable generation and maintain security of supply. The programme comprises 3 transmission line schemes (approximate aggregate length 520km) and associated substation components comprising new switchgear and additional transformer capacity.
EIA required:	Yes (on some schemes)
Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise <sup>1</sup> :	No

### Summary of Environmental and Social Assessment, including key issues and overall conclusion and recommendation

The rationale for this project is to increase the transmission capacity of the Scottish electricity network to facilitate the connection of renewable generation, which in turn will support the UK and Scottish national policies with regard to meeting renewable energy targets. One of the schemes, Beaully-Denny 400kV overhead transmission line with 5 associated substations, falls under Annex-I of the EIA directive requiring a mandatory EIA. The other scheme, Beaully-Blackhilltock-Kintore (BBK) 275kV reconductoring, falls under Annex-II and was required by the competent authority to undergo an environmental impact assessment as well. The EIA has been completed for Beaully - Denny, and the EIA for BBK has yet to commence. Beaully-Denny has been the subject of extensive environmental assessment due to its sensitive nature. It involves the construction of approximately 220 kilometres of new 400kV double circuit overhead line that will replace the existing single circuit 132kV overhead transmission line. The upgraded line will comprise approximately 600 towers, a quarter fewer than with the existing 132kV line. The average tower height will be 53 metres, compared to the current 815 towers of an average height of 33 metres. The spacing between towers on the upgraded line will average 360 metres, compared to a current average spacing of 250 metres. Most of the new overhead line will be within one kilometre of the existing line. Approximately 28km of the line and 76 towers are located in the Cairngorms National Park, however this new line will replace approximately 36km and 128 towers of the 132kV line, already existing in the park, which will be dismantled. The line also runs through a number of sites designated Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) - 9 in total – for which appropriate assessments have been carried out by the Scottish Government. There was a large number of objections to the scheme, including from 5 local planning authorities and some 17,000 from the public, consequently it was referred to public enquiry by the Scottish ministers. This inquiry ran from February 2007 to December 2007, and concluded that it was satisfied that the important interests had been fully taken into account in the design and routing of the proposal, and that the applicants had complied with their duty to mitigate any

<sup>1</sup> Only projects that meet the scope of the Pilot Exercise, as defined in the EIB draft Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: above 100,000 tons CO<sub>2</sub>e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tons CO<sub>2</sub>e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

effect which the proposal would have on the natural beauty of the countryside or on any such flora, fauna, features, sites, buildings or objects.

Overall the environmental impacts of the project are expected to range from modest to significant. They include noise, vibrations, dust, and traffic disruption and loss of amenity during the construction phases and EMF and noise nuisance during operation. In relation to the Beaulieu-Denny line, significant impacts on landscape character and visual amenity particularly in the Cairngorms National Park as well as on ecology and nature conservation are expected, however based on advice from Scottish National Heritage it was concluded that there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of the sites concerned, subject to the safeguards detailed in the consent conditions being implemented. The environmental capacity of the promoter was reviewed by the Bank and is considered good. The promoter is therefore considered capable to manage the environmental aspects of the project and ensure that the mitigation measures and consent conditions are appropriately implemented. In addition an environmental liaison group has been established to provide advice on mitigation and habitat management. Considering the comprehensive assessment process and public inquiry undertaken for this project, as well as the mitigation measures and consent conditionality to be implemented, the project is acceptable to the Bank.

The Finance Contract shall include a condition making the completion and approval of the EIA and biodiversity assessment for the BBK component a pre-requisit for disbursement of funds on this component.

## **Environmental and Social Assessment**

### **Environmental Assessment**

Inevitably, given the scale, length and location of the project, there are always going to be substantial impacts on the environment. However the process undertaken was both extensive and comprehensive, and involved all key stakeholders in the decision making process, including Scottish Natural Heritage. In supporting the environmental integrity of the project strict conditions on the development have been imposed by Ministers. These are listed in full in the consent letters issued to the promoter, and include the following key items:

- Five wirescape rationalisation schemes involving the removing or undergrounding 86 kilometres of existing ancillary power lines, pylons and poles;
- Three visual impact mitigation schemes to further mitigate and protect the impact of the line - in the Stirling area, at Glenside farm near Plean and at Auchilhanzie House near Crieff;
- The formation of a Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Community Liaison Group to ensure the impact of the development on tourism and historic and cultural heritage sites are considered and mitigated as any development progresses;
- The formation of an environmental liaison group to provide advice on mitigation, restoration and habitat management. The five relevant planning authorities, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Historic Scotland and the Forestry Commission form part of the group;
- Appointment of an independent environmental contractor to enforce compliance with a Construction Policy Handbook, a legal document agreed with Ministers on how the development is to be sensitively constructed and managed;
- Development of a community liaison scheme requiring the promoter and its contractors to maintain close liaison with community representatives, landowners and statutory consultees throughout construction;
- Conditions to limit the environmental effects of construction including noise limitation, maintaining air quality, appropriate traffic management and protecting the water environment;
- A range of conditions relating to the protection of sensitive ecological areas and species, including mitigation to protect the integrity of European protected sites; avoiding work in bird breeding seasons; a post construction bird monitoring

programme in sensitive areas; and conditions relating to the protection of otters, bats, wildcats, pine martins, red squirrels, water voles and reptiles.

### **Public Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement, where required**

Extensive consultations and stakeholder engagement was undertaken as part of the environmental assessment process and appropriate assessment process of the habitats directive. Information about the public consultation process was advertised in the press and some 50 meetings were held with representatives of Local Planning Authorities, statutory agencies, other organisations, members of community councils, councillors, MSPs, MPs and nature conservation NGOs. Public consultation exhibitions were also organised in the concerned localities. On-going meetings and engagement will continue as part of the community liaison scheme and Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Community Liaison Group activity. The outcome of the public enquiry and the decision making process has been notified to the stakeholders and public through various media channels.