

Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) Proforma – February 2024

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

Assessment of the implications of the proposed Harris to Stornoway Overhead Line replacement development for the Lewis Peatlands Special Protection Area (“SPA”) in view of the conservation objectives of the SPA.

February 2024

The following assessment has been prepared by the Scottish Ministers as the Competent Authority for the above proposal.

	Description	
1	Brief description of the project	<p>On 9 November 2022, Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc made an application under section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 for consent for Harris to Stornoway Overhead Line Replacement within the planning authority area of Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar (“CnES”). The proposal comprises the installation and keep installed approximately 58 km single circuit of 132 kV Overhead Line (“OHL”) supported by low profile trident H poles replacing the existing 132 kV OHL.</p> <p>Ancillary works are included for the construction and maintenance of the OHL which includes vegetation clearance, upgrade existing or establishment of new junction bell mouths, establishment of temporary access tracks (for the construction of the OHL), measures to protect road and other crossings during construction and dismantling of the existing 132 kV OHL.</p>
2	Name of European site potentially affected	Lewis Peatlands SPA
3	European site qualifying interest(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black-throated diver (<i>Gavia arctica</i>), breeding • Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina schinzii</i>), breeding • Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>), breeding • Golden plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>), breeding • Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>), breeding • Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>), breeding • Red-throated diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>), breeding
4	Conservation objectives for qualifying interest(s)	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and to ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population of the species as a viable component of the site • Distribution of the species within the site • Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species • Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species • No significant disturbance of the species

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5	Is the proposal directly connected with, or necessary to, conservation management of the European site?	The proposal is not directly connected with, or necessary to, conservation management of the Lewis Peatlands SPA.
6	Is the plan or project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to have a significant effect on the site?	<p>Black-throated diver (<i>Gavia arctica</i>), breeding Disturbance – This species uses grounds immediately adjacent to water features and so will not be affected by new power lines in disturbance however there is a collision risk once the OHL is constructed. Likely significant effect. Habitat Loss – The proposed development replaces a pre-existing OHL and marginal new habitat will be developed. No likely significant effect.</p> <p>Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina schinzii</i>), breeding Disturbance – The species uses ground immediately adjacent to water features and so will not be affected by new power lines. Further low collision risk as the species spend most of their time in and around the water bodies. No likely significant effect. Habitat loss – The proposed development replaces a pre-existing OHL and marginal new habitat will be developed. No likely significant effect.</p> <p>Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>), breeding Disturbance – There is a slightly raised level of disturbance especially during the construction period for the species. Further, there is a collision risk associated with the development and golden eagle. Likely significant effect Habitat loss – The proposed development replaces a pre-existing OHL and marginal new habitat will be developed. Golden eagles nest in cliff areas therefore if is considered this species will not be affected by the replacement OHL. No likely significant effect.</p> <p>Golden plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>), breeding Disturbance – This species uses open moorland and so will not be affected by new power lines. Further low collision risk as the species spend most of their time in and around the moorland. No likely significant effect. Habitat loss – The proposed development replaces a pre-existing OHL and marginal new habitat will be developed. The species nest and feed on upland moorland habitat that are open, it is considered this species will not be found near the road and this site development. No likely significant effect.</p> <p>Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>), breeding Disturbance – This species uses grounds immediately adjacent to water features and so will not be affected by new power lines. Further low collision risk as this species spend most of their time in and around the water bodies. No likely significant effect.</p>

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		<p>Habitat loss – The proposed development replaces a pre-existing OHL and marginal new habitat will be developed. This species uses grounds immediately adjacent to water features and will not be affected by new OHL. No likely significant effect.</p> <p>Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>), breeding Disturbance – There is slightly raised levels of disturbance especially during the construction period for this species. There is a collision risk associated with the development and merlin. Likely significant effect.</p> <p>Habitat loss – The proposed development replaces a pre-existing OHL and marginal new habitat will be developed. Merlin use moorland areas and these will not be where the replacement line is placed. No likely significant effect.</p> <p>Red-throated diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>), breeding Disturbance – This species uses grounds immediately adjacent to water features and will not be affected by new OHL in disturbance however there is a collision risk once the OHL is constructed. Likely significant effect.</p> <p>Habitat loss – The proposed development replaces a pre-existing OHL and marginal new habitat will be developed. This species uses grounds immediately adjacent to water features and will not be affected by new OHL. No likely significant effect.</p>
7	Undertake an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of its conservation objectives.	<p>There shall be some short term affects for Golden eagle and merlin. This is due to an increase in noise levels, work vehicles and the presence of persons on site during the construction phase of the OHL and the removal of the existing OHL. If this was to impact on the species from nesting it could be possible to have a longer term impact. It is unlikely that the species will nest immediately adjacent to the OHL due to the close proximity of the nearby trunk road.</p> <p>There shall be a long term risk of collision to Golden eagle, merlin, black-throated diver and red-throated diver. OHL are currently present within the location with one being removed upon completion of the proposed development maintaining the same number. It anticipated some collisions shall occur.</p>
8	Modifications required to ensure adverse effects are avoided and reasons for these	<p>Scottish Ministers agree with NatureScot’s conclusion that if the proposal is undertaken strictly in accordance with the following mitigation, which will be secured by condition of any consent then the conservation objectives in respect of SPA would be met therefore will not adversely affect the integrity of the site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species Protection Plans (“SPP”) and • General Environmental Management Plan (“GEMP”) Bird deflectors are to be used in a number of high risk strike areas as proposed by the applicant in order to reduce this risk. • Timing restrictions to be implemented for works around sensitive areas near golden eagle nests, the

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		Loidse Shobhail area, NB347263 and south to NB346240. No works to take place within the vicinity of nests between 1 March and 31 July unless the applicant establishes that breeding attempts at the sites have been unsuccessful. In this event works could commence by May 31.
	Conclusion	
9	Can it be ascertained that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site?	There is a likely significant effect but by the implementation of appropriate mitigation it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.