

Strathnairn Community Council's Observations or Immediate Concerns as Stakeholder in representing the Local Community (from information presented to date/within the following Planning Application)

26/01739/FUL | Formation of temporary construction compound with site offices, welfare units, parking, and materials storage / Aberarder Wind Farm Connection (SSEN Transmission)

HC Case Officer: Keith Gibson

Strathnairn Community Council's Observations or Immediate Concerns >

1.0 Formation of 'Temporary' Compound

- The applicant is applying for the formation of a 'temporary' and secure compound for carparking, services and storage, as a base from which to carry out the consented SSEN Grid Connection Works.
 - The community supports this being on a brownfield site/existing area of hardstanding, rather than green field.
 - This is intended to minimise further erosion of natural habitats; and a plan for the reversal of this, nature restoration and enhancement of the site thereafter, forms part of the application.
 - SNCC looks to see these plans, at the earliest, and for them to be shared with the local community; in line with the Community's LLP, which supports increasing biodiversity and nature restoration works.
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- SNCC would also look for a plan to be shared by the applicant for the reuse of all perimeter fencing, site aggregate and other structures; ideally in close proximity to site to reduce transportation/waste and promote a circular economy.
 - However there is still a concern over the proximity of the compound to the road and although slightly elevated, and accessed off an existing track, it will still be highly visible on this scenic tourist route to Fort Augustus; particularly given that it is to be enclosed by secure and industrial fencing, and be hosted to several portacabins and other structures.
 - Whilst there is a level of screening, through woodlands, and shelterbelts of trees, restricting long views, this doesn't reduce the overall sightlines from the roadside when closer to the compound or passing.
 - It is generally sitting in an area of clearance, and this remains a concern; particularly as it is intended to be a carpark/secure store for vehicles and plant.
 - Finally, given the application - and intended use - SNCC wishes to make the applicant aware that there is a live application to DSI UK for South Loch Ness Communities Dark Skies (jointly from the communities of Strathnairn plus Stratherrick & Foyers).
 - Consequently it looks for the Applicant to understand the relevance of this, and ensure that operations intended here are not compromising the community's 'Dark Skies' i.e that any artificial lighting at night is sensitively introduced at low level, or timers etc, and no high level flood lighting etc is introduced.
 - SNCC are prepared to educate and work with the Applicant and guide them in full over this, should the project gain consent.
 - SNCC would look for this to be a condition.

2.0 Proposed traffic route & construction traffic along the B851:

- There is an assumption across the application that the use of the B851 as a route to site is a given, and secondly that in so doing there is little to no impact on the Community (or that this has been addressed).
- This is to be challenged on both counts.

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- SNCC continues to express concern over B851 being used as the main traffic route to site for this and ALL other identified/related major infrastructure construction projects impacting the community.
 - To realise these works there is a planned transporting - along the B851 - of large scale components, bulk materials, fuel, services and plant to first form and service a compound; deemed necessarily to give on-site access to staff, welfare and services, plus plant and materials store, whilst undertaking a phase of construction. This is for the construction or erection of 'pole' footings & structures, from which an overhead grid connection will be formed and the associated wind farm connected in.
 - Furthermore given the proposed nature of the Compound - for welfare and site co-ordination - there is also the burden of the removal of excess materials, debris and waste etc off site on a regular basis, over the construction phase.
 - Concern is raised by the community across all these individual but interconnected projects (all of which add to the cumulative impact and which could be masterplanned at the outset resulting in greater transparency) over the proposed use of the B851; a single track road, with infrequent passing places, and the main route to access settlements by the local community.
 - Cumulatively the existing and increasing volume of traffic (in general, and prior to any further consents, including this proposal) along with high and increasing numbers of HGVs on the B851, to erratic driver behaviour, is currently testing the community to the limit and affecting their personal safety as 'other' road users or local residents.
 - This is before any further traffic volume increase - through this application - is added into the mix.
 - Therefore SNCC attach a community-led Traffic Impact Assessment Report/Evidence; as reports/evidence prepared earlier by Strathnairn Community Council (earlier in 2026) to challenge the route selection (of the B851) and submitted to the Planning Enquiry for Loch Kemp/Loch Ness PSH (with Statera as Developer) / ECU00003398, but entirely applicable to any incoming developers and/or major infrastructure works proposed within the area.

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- Impact of traffic on B851 and emerging issues are the same - as projects (WFs, PSH, Transmission or Grid Connections) gain consent - so this resource is being openly shared; and SNCC ask that this is consulted as part of this application.
 - In addition cumulative (traffic) impacts are intensified when these projects are consented & the construction program is delivered together; or prolonged if they are consented but delivered separately or programs elapse.
 - Equally there are alternatives to accessing this site, which radically shortens the distance travelled on the predominantly single track B851 - for example transporting materials and components on the B862 - but this seems to have been overlooked or ruled out entirely.
 - If the B851 is determined to be the final route selection - SNCC have requested that any improvements are carried out in advance of the project gaining consent (should this be the case) and not after the planned delivery period; and in contrast with the proposed assessment of the road prior to and again after the construction period, with reinstatement at the tail end.
 - This is intended to ease the community's pain, at the outset, with the community requesting that it is consulted on this aspect and any agreements with HC.

3.0 Elapsed timetable:

- The Applicant alludes to a construction timetable that can not be met.
- The construction start & program has elapsed ahead of point of application (cited as May 26, under the Applicants Traffic Management Plan Section 2.1).
- SNCC requests that an updated timetable is issued and the community is given advance sight of this, ahead of any consent; intended to keep the community informed.
- Slippage of the construction program planned from May 26 to September 27, and a loss of two summers which bookended this will, in all likelihood, prolong the project and the resultant impact on the local community.
- SNCC therefore requires clarity on the revised timing and duration of the program of works.

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- With this an assessment can be made locally of the impact on the community, with regards to overlapping nature or otherwise, of several major construction projects.

4.0 Cumulative Impacts:

- From the *Traffic Management Plan Section 7* the *Public Access Management* details considered under *7.1 Rural Environments & 7.2 Urban Environments* are considered insufficient.
- Whilst it is acknowledged under 7.2 that there is not a disruption to - or a negligible impact on - Urban Environments, and therefore this is disregarded by the Applicant, there is inadequate consideration given to (or a separate provision made for) the equivalent Rural Settlements/Villages of which there are multiple enroute to site; nor is this considered to be adequately picked up in 7.1.
- A proposed 10/11 days on and 3/4 days off working pattern/shift means whilst the contractors gain a 'work efficiency' by contrast established, sizeable, local and roadside villages and linear settlements like Inverarnie, Farr and Croachy, will be made to 'live' with (additional) construction traffic for an 18 month period (or longer) for this project alone; daily and over the weekends (with only the assurance of no HGV movements - rather than no construction traffic movements - on a Sunday).
- Cumulative impacts individually and across these projects are having a direct (and negative) bearing on landscape & environment, traffic levels, roads & services, noise, quality of life, wildlife & biodiversity within the host community of Strathnairn.

5.0 Co-ordinated Community Liaison

- SNCC have expressed their concern over the demand placed on the community, volunteers and volunteer time to address numerous applications coming through the consenting process.

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- As per the suggestion of Stratherrick & Foyers Community Council, SNCC is requesting that all developers are part of a co-ordinated and transparent community liaison effort, with key project information - and timelines - brought to the table and openly discussed.
 - The applicant alludes to this being part of the process, but without any input from the affected community.
 - SNCC seek a more transparent system.

Additional Observations

RELEVANCE OF SSEN's LANDSCAPE & VISUAL CONTENT

SNCC does not understand the relevance of *SSEN's Chapter 4; Landscape and Visual* to this particular application, as it is referring to - as the Applicant states - the already consented Grid Connection, resultant positioning of the poles in the landscape, associated tracks within the site to access this, resultant LVIA and ZTV, and does not readily inform part of this live application (for a temporary site compound on an existing area of hardstanding).

If SNCC are mistaken over this, please advise at the earliest and we will revisit this content.

LOCAL ESTATES

SNCC have not received any specific objections - regarding operations or impact on tourism etc - from the local and host Estates, but assume in accepting the infrastructure host Estates have waived a right to objection to aspects of this; and may differ from the community's view over this.

Strathnairn Community Council (SNCC) 07.08.2026