# EIA Quality Mark Case Study

## North East 400kV Reinforcement Works

### Key Issues:

Key environmental issues which were identified during the EIA process for the project included:

- **Visual impact:** as the majority of the line is being re-conducted, potential visual impact over the long term was limited to the reconfiguration of the overhead towers on the outskirts of Keith and views from properties, Core Paths and roads;
- **Habitats, protected species and birds:** potential for impacts on ecology and ornithology due to construction activities and disturbance. It is proposed that such matters are controlled through site specific Construction Environmental Management Plans and Species Protection Plans (SPPs). Outline SPPs were included in the EIA;
- **Electric and magnetic fields (EMF):** EMF will increase as the voltage of the line increases. An assessment was carried out to determine exposure levels, concluding these would be within current guidelines; and
- **Electromagnetic interference (EMI):** Conductors can produce interference for devices which use radio waves. The EIA considered potential effects of EMI.

### Purpose of the project:

This project involved undertaking EIA and submitting an EIA Report to accompany a section 37 application under the Electricity Act 1989 for the reinforcement of an existing 275kV steel lattice tower overhead line to 400kV. The reinforcement has been driven by a planned increase in generation capacity in the northeast of Scotland.

### Description of the project:

The project involves the reinforcement of approximately 106km of existing 275kV overhead line connecting substations at Blackhillock, Peterhead and Kintore. This requires replacement of conductors, insulators and fittings, and a reconfiguration of the tower arrangement on the outskirts of Keith to facilitate direct connection into Blackhillock substation. Associated works to facilitate the project include vegetation clearance, establishment of temporary access routes to towers, temporary site compounds, and temporary measures to protect road, rail and water crossings. Some works are required to reinforce the foundations or steelwork of existing steel lattice towers.
EIA Learning Outcomes

Lessons learnt:

The following lessons were learnt during the process of the project, as follows:

- **Pre-Scoping Consultation and Meeting proved effective in determining the scope of the EIA Report**: Engagement with the determining authorities and other key stakeholders was undertaken prior to a formal scoping opinion being sought to allow a full understanding of the likely significant effects of the project, and a more informed scoping opinion. This approach proved successful and allowed the EIA Report to focus on key issues;

- **Gate Check process confirmed key issues had been addressed**: The Energy Consents Unit’s (ECU) gate check process for Section 37 Applications was followed. This involved providing the ECU with a gate check report at least 1 month prior to submission of the application, which provides a summary of the key issues for the project, and a scoping matrix explaining how all of the issues raised within the scoping opinion had been addressed.

Lessons learnt continued:

- **Continued**: This allowed key stakeholders the opportunity to raise any concerns with how a particular issue raised at scoping had been addressed prior to an application being submitted.

- **Site Specific Environmental Management**: The commitment within the EIA Report to develop site specific Construction Environmental Management Plans, together with SPPS that have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders, provided reassurance and comfort from decision makers that key issues identified during the EIA process (such as habitat and species protection, noise and dust control during construction) will be appropriately managed for this project.

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