# EIA Quality Mark Case Study

## Coire Glas Revised Pumped Storage Scheme

### Key Issues:

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

- **Protected and designated landscapes:** The site lies within a Highland Council Special Landscape Area, and close to an identified Wild Land Area;
- **Residential Amenity:** Parts of the works would be close to properties with potential for visual and noise effects.
- **Land Use and Recreational interests:** The site is set within an area popular with hill walkers and would potentially utilise part of the Caledonian Canal;
- **Protected Species:** A number of protected species including mammals, sensitive bird species and fish were known to be present within the vicinity;
- **Effects on hydrology and peat:** Large quantities of peat would need excavated for the works at the upper reservoir and sensitive Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) were present; and
- **Removal / reuse and transportation of rock:** A solution was required for the large quantities of rock which would be generated by tunnelling.

### Purpose of the project:

This project involved undertaking EIA for the revised design of a Pumped Storage Scheme, previously consented in 2013 but not yet constructed. An increase in scale of the consented project from 600 MW to 1500 MW was proposed and Screening determined that a new EIA would be required. Advice was also provided in terms of design and layout in order to assist the client in reaching the best environmental outcome for the project.

### Description of the project:

The project involves development of a hydro pumped storage scheme with output of up to 1500 MW. The project is located in the Great Glen, in the Highlands of Scotland and involves the creation of a new dam of up to 92 m in height forming an upper reservoir within a mountainous area to the west of the glen, and an operations building and intake / outfall on the shore of the existing Loch Lochy (the lower reservoir), on the floor of the glen. A network of tunnels would feed water between the two reservoirs via an underground power station. The project would also require the construction of a surge shaft on the hillside, and various tracks to enable access during construction and operation.

ASH’s EIA input included undertaking and commissioning survey work for terrestrial and aquatic habitats, protected species, ornithology, forestry, hydrology and peat, landscape, visual and recreation, socio-economics, traffic and transport, and noise.
EIA Learning Outcomes

Lessons learnt:

A number of lessons were learnt during the process of the project as follows:

- **A high standard of design that takes into account environmental considerations at EIA stage can lead to greater understanding and acceptance of a development by stakeholders and members of the public:** Particular consideration was given to the design of key elements of the scheme including finishes, colours and landscape treatments, detailed in a design statement. This included a thorough research of similar development types and the strong heritage of the local area for such development, and helped to positively present the scheme as part of this context.

- **Wider consultation can help provide innovative or previously unconsidered solutions:** Consultation with Statutory consultees such as SNH and SEPA helped to inform the scope of the EIA and potential solutions for design. However, consultation more widely with local groups also led to further options being considered for issues such as re-use of rock and design and mitigation proposals.

- **An understanding of how design requirements and survey and assessment requirements can change, even over a relatively short space of time:** Whilst the revised pumped storage scheme was bigger than the consented development, most of the changes were to underground elements. However, it was interesting to note how changes in the baseline (such as new nesting birds which had moved into the area, and an increase in use of tourism and recreation facilities) had occurred. Certain subject areas also required modified assessments due to changed emphasis on particular features (such as GWDTE) and different design requirements from the client (such as health and safety or emergency features). This emphasises the importance of taking a fresh approach and avoiding reliance on older baseline information or studies.

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Lessons learnt continued:

- **An understanding of how design requirements and survey and assessment requirements can change, even over a relatively short space of time:**

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