### Key Issues:
The key environmental issues which were identified during the EIA process for this development included:

- **Protected and designated landscapes:** The site lies close to the boundary of the Cairngorm National Park and two areas identified by SNH as Wild Land Areas;

- **Recreational interests:** The site is set within an area popular with walkers and cyclists;

- **Cultural heritage interests:** The site lies close to a part of General Wade’s Military Road;

- **Effects on hydrology and peat soils:** As a generally upland area there was potential for moorland vegetation types, the potential for sensitive habitats and peat soils;

- **Interactions with protected bird and mammal species:** The surrounding area is used by a variety of protected species including water vole and raptors.

### Purpose of the project:
This project involved the provision of environmental advice and assessment in order to achieve the best environmental outcome for a substation which was required to connect the Stronelairg Wind Farm to the overhead transmission network.

### Description of the project:
This project comprised development of a 400 / 132 kV substation located on an area of upland moorland and felled forestry.

ASH were commissioned to advise on site selection, carry out EIA Screening and co-ordinate the environmental surveys and reporting for the project, as well as undertaking landscape and visual assessment and a wild land assessment.

The screening process established that the project did not require full EIA but an Environmental Appraisal process was undertaken to support the Planning Application.
Lessons learnt:

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

- **A strong body of work undertaken pre-screening can pay off in terms of smoothing the way through the planning process:** This project involved a notable amount of work prior to screening including detailed option and site appraisal work and pre-application consultation. This gave enough confidence to the planning authority that full EIA would not be required and targeted environmental surveys would be sufficient to support the application.

- **Appropriate site selection can be key to minimising environmental effects:** The time and care taken in identifying the site for this development achieved a preferred location whereby the potential for environmental effects was minimised from the outset. The chosen site had few ecological sensitivities, relatively shallow peat coverage and was predominantly screened from sensitive visual and cultural heritage receptors. The location adjacent to an existing forest plantation also gave excellent scope for the development of a landscape mitigation plan.

- **Liaison between consultants can lead to an improved design outcome:** Early discussion between the design engineers and ASH allowed environmental issues to be flagged up and taken into account in the design, leading to an improved outcome – for example the ability to include an integrated mitigation planting scheme with SuDS proposals.

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