
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: **REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING
APPLICATION**

Prepared by: **HILARY MACBEAN, PLANNING OFFICER
(DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT)**

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: **CONSTRUCTION OF PASSING PLACE AT
U220, 250M SOUTH EAST OF SPEY DAM,
LAGGAN, NEWTONMORE**

REFERENCE: **08/304/CP**

APPLICANT: **SCOTTISH HYDRO ELECTRIC
TRANSMISSION LTD**

DATE CALLED-IN: **22 AUGUST 2008**

RECOMMENDATION: **APPROVAL**

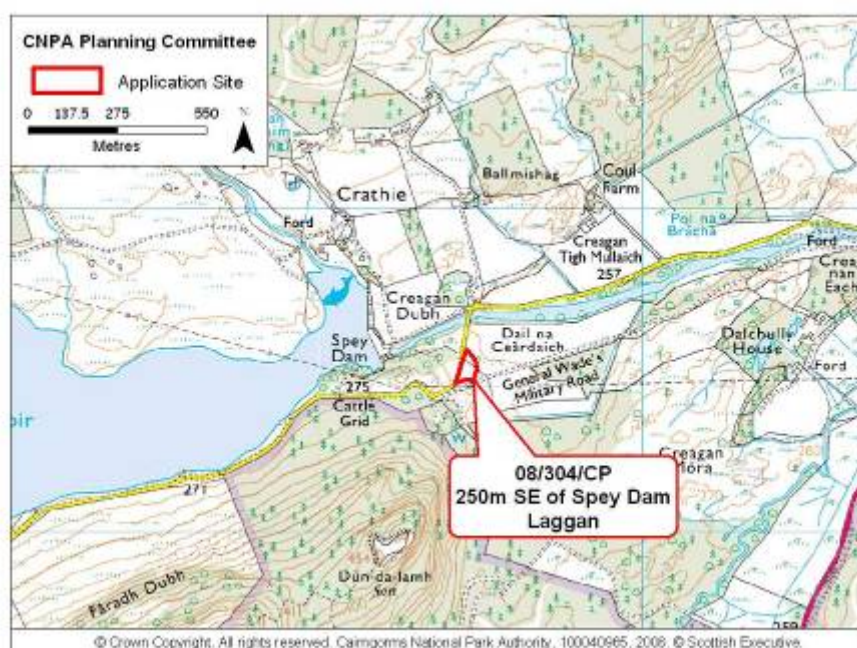


Fig. 1 - Location Plan
SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The site for this application lies on the outside curve of the U220 minor road that leads from Laggan to the Spey Dam and beyond (see fig 1). The site is approximately 250 metres south east of the dam on the south side of the road. The road at this point is already embanked on both sides as it rises up the hill. A small burn tracks down below the road within the area to be embanked to form the passing place. An existing high voltage transmission line passes overhead.
2. It is immediately east of the point where part of General Wade's Military Road joins the U220 from below. Further south west an access track leaves the public road and circles round the slopes of Dun da Lamh (an ancient fort). Other paths leave the road in the vicinity and parking and walking are promoted with signage. Both the main tracks are part of the draft Core Paths net work.
3. The site is located in an Highland Structure Plan Area of Great Landscape Value and immediately across the road is the edge of the River Spey SAC and SSSI. The area is characterised by open mixed woodland and heather muir.



Fig 2 Lay by between trees on right of road.



Fig 3 Lay-by on left of photo, Dun da Lamh in background



Fig 4 Lay-by on hillside at road level from route of General Wade's Road

4. The ground falls away quite sharply from the road edge where the passing place would be located. The ground cover is common willow scrub dropping into a wet burn area. The passing place proposed would be at its maximum 12.9 metres in width, including the embankment, with a length at roadside of

54 metres and just over 19 metres in length at the back (see fig. 2). It appears likely that significant materials would need to be imported to construct the passing place.

5. The passing place is proposed to accommodate passing traffic on an access route between the A86 at Achducil, near Wolftrax, using an existing estate track (a candidate Core Path) to link to the U220 and then North to Spey Dam and North West to the proposed pylons North of the River Spey. This route is necessary to avoid Laggan village and has already been considered by the Beauly Denny Inquiry. It would also provide limited access along the U220 for towers to the South of the Spey although helicopters will also be used.

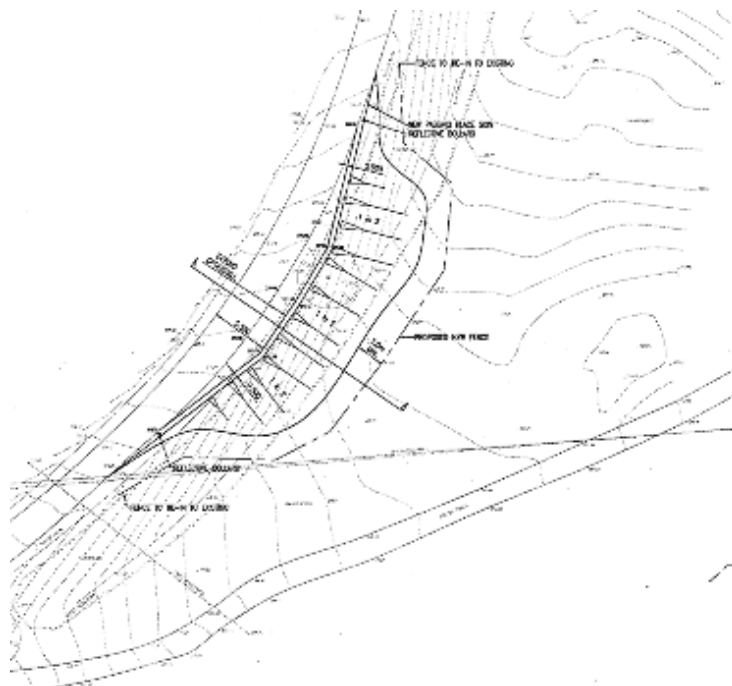


Fig. 5 Layout plan and section

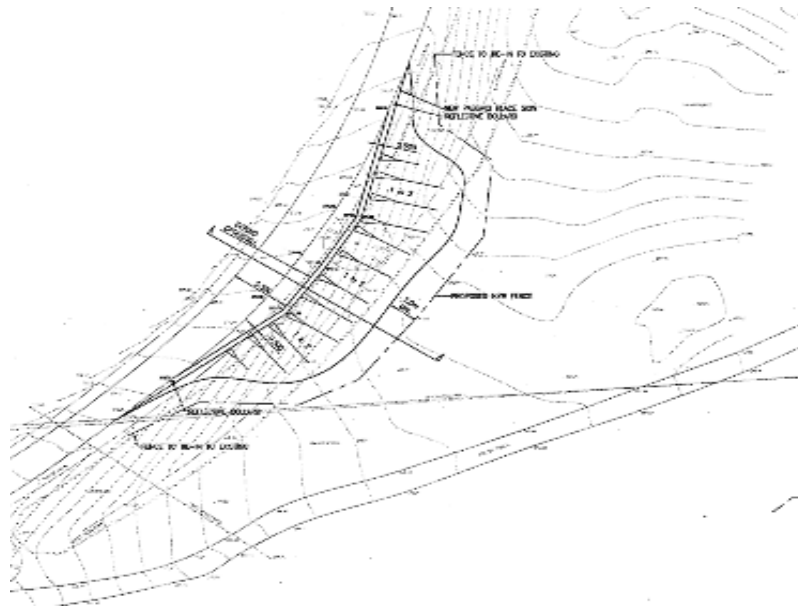


Fig. 6 : Proposed site section

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

Highland Structure Plan

Policy G2 Design for Sustainability

6. Considers that proposed developments will be assessed on the extent to which they are compatible with service provision; are affected by risks from significant hazards; impact on individual and community residential amenity; impact on non-renewable resources. Consideration is also given to how proposals impact upon habitats, species, landscape, scenery, freshwater systems and cultural heritage. Proposals must also demonstrate sensitive siting and high quality in-keeping with local character and historic and natural environment.

Policy U1 Electricity Distribution Network

7. Considers that the Council welcomes the refurbishment and strengthening of the electricity distribution network. Proposals for new and replacement lines will be assessed for environmental impact, and in sensitive locations by virtue of landscape character, visual intrusiveness or bird movements, the case for undergrounding should be strongly considered.

Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan 1997

8. General objectives of the Local Plan include continuing to upgrade and extend essential infrastructure networks and safeguarding all significant aspects of the natural and cultural heritage, including the outstanding landscape and conservation sites.

9. Under **Electricity the Badenoch and Strathspey Local Plan** considers at **2.4.15** that development within a 6.5 metre wide margin of major electricity transmission lines will not be approved. **2.4.16** considers that proposals to reinforce or route supplies through the Local Plan area will be subject to detailed assessment of their impact on the environment, including the scope for undergrounding. The Planning Authority will ensure loss of vegetation is limited to that necessary for essential installation or operational requirements.

Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007

10. Strategic Objectives for Landscape and the Built Environment include ensuring that distinctive landscapes across the Park are maintained and enhanced. Objective c) seeks to ensure that development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park. Objective e) seeks to understand and conserve the archaeological record, historic landscapes and historic built environment.

CONSULTATIONS

Highland Council Area Roads Manager

11. Requires that full engineering details of the works proposed must be agreed by Area Roads prior to the commencement of any works on site. He also advises that the passing place was previously discussed with HC Roads Service and is intended as a permanent, adopted passing place.

Scottish Natural Heritage

12. Has no objection to the proposed development.

SEPA

13. Has no objection but planning condition should be used to ensure that a detailed site construction method statement is agreed before any work commences on the site. This is to prevent water pollution. The statement should include: details of materials; surface water run-off measures; timing of works; methods of fuel/chemical storage; landscaping works to minimise temporary storage of soil etc; waste streams from all elements of works to be provided with details of handling

Forestry Commission Scotland

14. Has no objection to the proposal.

CNPA Heritage and Land Management (Landscape)

15. Has no objection to the proposal but notes that planting will be required to enhance the resulting embankment. In addition the kerb details should reflect the rural location; standard concrete blocks would not be acceptable. The application should be conditioned accordingly. A large tree adjacent to the works will require tree protection and this should also be conditioned.

CNPA Visitor Services and Recreation Group

16. Has no objection to the application but would make the following comments. Car parking for the hills on the other side of the bridge is particularly poor so it is worth noting that this site may become popular for informal parking. There are 2 candidate core paths close to this site UBS30 and UBS23 but they are unaffected by this development. Timing of the construction should take into account the timing of the Corrieyarack Challenge which is on 4 July 2009.

REPRESENTATIONS

17. No representations received.

APPRAISAL

18. The key issue regarding the proposal relates to its environmental acceptability. The development proposed is justified entirely on the presumption that the Beauly-Denny electricity transmission line receives consent and that the proposed access route for HGV's is the best option. Consideration should also be given to the desirability of a passing-place at this point on the U220, if the transmission line did not go ahead.

The Requirement for the Passing Place

- 19 The Roads Engineer would welcome the passing place but there is little general justification for it given the very low levels of traffic on the U220, even to service recreational movements and parking in the area. There is existing informal parking at the track end to the South and in the vicinity of Spey Dam to the North. The agent advises that the passing place is required as there is no intervisibility between the vehicular access points at the forest track to the South and the Spey Dam to the North. A temporary alternative such as traffic lights was considered but they raise problems of servicing and maintenance, prevention of theft,

noise from the generator and inconvenience to general road users on a quiet stretch of public road.

The Landscape and Heritage Impact

20. The road already has man made embankments on both sides, both of which have matured and naturalised over time, with no real impact on the landscape today. The proposed works will cause a considerable scar in the short term but suitable planting of the embankment will encourage naturalisation, reducing its impact in views from the East and General Wades Road. A temporary permission would lead to further environmental damage should the passing place have to be removed and would run counter to encouraging long term naturalisation of the banks. The historic road will not be directly affected and is not part of the proposed HGV access route.

The Impact on Access and Recreation

21. The proposed construction access route may have considerable impacts on local access and recreation around Dun da Lamh to the South but this is not relevant to the current application and will require to be managed separately. The passing place is not intended to supply additional recreational parking or storage space for materials.

Drainage

22. The sloping nature of the site means that a design to deal with surface water drainage and the small burn at the foot of the slope will require to be worked up in detail. SEPA requires submission of a detailed site construction method statement.

Conclusion

23. The passing place is essential to service the access route to pylons on the Beauldy Denny line but appears to be unnecessary for any general purpose. Its implementation should therefore be premised only on the line going ahead. Local environmental and landscape impacts can be mitigated and no cultural heritage or recreational impacts have been identified. The application is therefore recommended for permanent approval but with implementation controlled by a Grampian condition that the Beauldy Denny line commences first.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

24. The landscape impact is likely to be considerable in the local area until vegetation around the works and on the embankment matures. Whilst the proposal will not conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area, it is unlikely to be detrimental in the longer term.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

25. The only link is to the perceived contribution to renewable energy enabled by the Beaulieu Denny line.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment

26. No implications identified

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development

27. The passing place supports a construction access route that avoids disturbance to the amenity and economic functioning of Laggan village.

RECOMMENDATION

That Members of the Committee agree to a recommendation to:

Grant Full Planning Permission for construction of passing place at U220,250m South East of Spey Dam, Laggan, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.
2. That no works in relation to the planning permission hereby granted shall commence until works on the related part of the Beaulieu Denny electricity transmission line (Tower Nos. FT47A – FT74, North of the River Spey.) has been fully consented and a contract for those works formally let.
3. Prior to the commencement of the development a landscaping scheme for the embankments and verges shall be submitted for the approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority in consultation with the Highland Council Area Roads Manager. The details shall include measures to prevent any incursion into the root plate area of or damage to the large conifer to the

South of the site. For the avoidance of doubt, only native species similar to those in the immediate vicinity shall be used. The development shall be landscaped and maintained in accordance with the approved scheme as follows:-

- (a) Completion of the scheme during the first planting season following the completion of the development, or such other date as may be approved in writing with the Cairngorms National Park Authority.
 - (b) The maintenance of the landscaped areas in perpetuity in accordance with the detailed maintenance schedule/table. Any trees or shrubs removed, or which in the opinion of the Planning Authority, are dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within five years of planting, shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.
4. Prior to the commencement of the development a site construction method statement shall be submitted for the approval of the Cairngorms National Park Authority in consultation with SEPA. The approved statement shall be implemented in full during the construction phase. The statement shall include: details for the culverting or diversion of the small burn at the base of the embankment, details of materials; surface water run-off measures; timing of works; methods of fuel/chemical storage; landscaping works to minimise temporary storage of soil etc; waste streams from all elements of works to be provided with details of handling.
 5. The passing place surfaced area shall be marked only by soft edges or flush kerbs, to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highland Council Area Roads Manager.

ADVICE NOTE

Roads Authority

Full engineering details of the works proposed shall be agreed in writing with the Area Roads and Community Works Manager prior to the commencement of any works on site.

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16 December 2008

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CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Planning Paper 6 January 9 2009

The map on the first page of this report has been produced to aid in the statutory process of dealing with planning applications. The map is to help identify the site and its surroundings and to aid Planning Officers, Committee Members and the Public in the determination of the proposal. Maps shown in the Planning Committee Report can only be used for the purposes of the Planning Committee. Any other use risks infringing Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Maps produced within this Planning Committee Report can only be reproduced with the express permission of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and other Copyright holders. This permission must be granted in advance.