Lochluichart East BESS
Design & Access Statement

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Prepared for **Boralex**

DAVID BELL PLANNING
CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

1. Introduction

1.1 This Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been prepared to support a planning application by Boralex Limited ('the Applicant'). The Applicant seeks planning permission under Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) to construct and operate a Battery Energy Storage System ('BESS') and associated electrical equipment, drainage, access, underground cable, fencing and other ancillary infrastructure, hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development'.

1.2 A DAS is required to support the submission of a major planning application as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013. A DAS has a role in conveying design principles which have determined the design and layout of the development proposed, taking account of specific site and locational circumstances.

2. The Site and Site Selection

Site Location and Context

2.1 The Site is located north of the A832 at Lochluichart, approximately 5 kilometres ('km') northwest of Garve in the Highlands. The overall Site area extends approximately 19.5 hectares ('ha') of both planted forestry and semi-natural woodland. The Site is located on a pronounced hill, with the topography falling from north to south, resulting in an elevation change of approximately 67 m down towards the A832. The BESS compound is situated on a relatively level section of the Site at approximately 167 m Above Ordnance Datum ('AOD').

2.2 The Site includes an existing forestry track which runs adjacent to the western Site boundary. This track will be used for access from the A832. A short stretch of new track (circa 400 m length) is proposed to connect the existing forestry track to the proposed BESS platform.

2.3 The Site is rural in nature with a small number of neighbouring residential properties surrounding. The nearest dwellings are located along the A832 approximately 0.7 km to the southeast and 0.9 km to the west of the Proposed Development.

2.4 A number of warehouse buildings and, a target practice area, are located close to the Site access and are utilised by the local Estate.

2.5 Lochluichart Wind Farm and Corriemoillie Wind Farm are situated approximately 2 km north of the Site.

2.6 There are no International, European or National designated sites for nature conservation within the vicinity of the Site.

2.7 The closest landscape designation to the Site is the Fannichs, Beinn Dearg and Glen Calvie Special Landscape Area ('SLA') which lies circa 5 km to the west at its closest point. The Ben Wyvis SLA is over 7 km to the east.

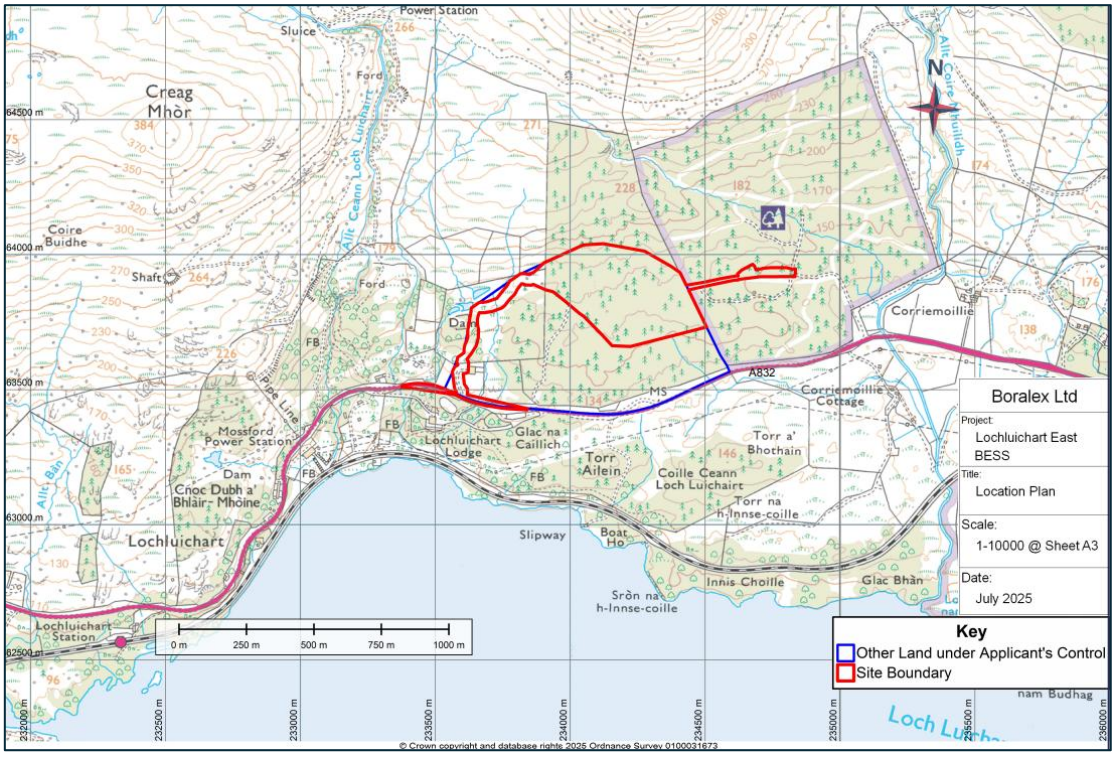
2.8 The Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area ('SPA'), which is designated for its breeding population of golden eagle, is located circa 1.7 km to the south of the Site at its closest point.

2.9 The nearest designated cultural heritage assets are four Listed Buildings associated with the Kinlochluichart Church of Scotland and Burial Ground over 1.8 km to the west of the Site.

2.10 The surrounding landscape consists of various grassland areas, both planted forestry and semi-natural woodland, in addition to the remote upland landscape typical of the Highlands. The Site is located on a pronounced slope, where elevation ranges from 123 m AOD at the Site entrance in the south, to 190 m AOD in the north.

2.11 Corriemoillie Substation, which will serve as the grid connection point, is located approximately 250 m to the east at an elevation of 142 m AOD and Loch Luichart lies approximately 300 m to the south at a lower AOD of 87 m. A number of overhead lines ('OHL') that feed into the Corriemoillie substation are present within the existing landscape. To the south of the substation a further 132 kV OHL runs directly south before heading eastwards parallel to the A832.

Figure 2.1 Site Location Plan



Site Selection

2.12 The location of the Proposed Development has been driven by several factors, including connectivity to the grid; the availability of land; and environmental constraints.

2.13 The need for the Proposed Development was identified in response to grid network needs and current and future renewable generation. BESS are required to be located as near to a grid substation as possible to reduce electrical losses and avoid the need for additional impacts through long and intrusive grid connection works.

2.14 The location of the Proposed Development is driven by the need for proximity to an agreed grid connection point with Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks ('SSEN') Transmission at Corriemoillie Substation.

2.15 On that basis a site identification exercise was undertaken and the proposed Site identified in agreement with the landowner, the Site is available, is free from any statutory designations and significant development constraints and is non-prime agricultural land.

2.16 The Site has been carefully identified in order to minimise potential adverse landscape and visual (and other environmental) effects by positioning it within existing woodland and on a tangible step plateau on the hill side (the siting of which reflects the nearby Corriemoillie Substation). This has had the beneficial effect of choosing a site which benefits from a high level of screening when viewed from outside the confines of the Forest and in providing a logical rationale for the siting and design of the Proposed Development.

2.17 The design of the Site has also been influenced by avoiding native woodland where practically possible.

2.18 In addition, early Peat surveys were undertaken to avoid areas of deep peat and minimise environmental impact. Further information can be found within Chapter 9 Geology and Peat within the Environmental Report.

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

2.19 The Applicant undertook initial public consultation on the project, as well as direct engagement with consultees, community councils, elected representatives, and other stakeholders.

2.20 The purpose of the consultation period was for the Applicant to gather feedback from the relevant stakeholders regarding the Site as well as any other potential considerations.

2.21 A Pre-Application Consultation request was submitted to THC in December 2024 and a response received from THC officers on 8th April 2025. Feedback from THC was used to inform the design development and emerging proposals for the Site.

2.22 The Applicant submitted an Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') Screening Request to The Highland Council ('THC') on 25th March 2025. A negative response was received from THC on 8th April 2025 confirming that no EIA would be required.

2.23 The Environmental Report sets out the feedback received from consultees with respect to individual topic areas and how the application has addressed any of the comments raised.

PAN and Pre-application Consultation (PAC)

2.24 A Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) was submitted to THC on 7th March 2025, triggering the beginning of the statutory consultation period. The PAN provided the Council with an outline of the application details, dates of public events, publicity arrangements, and confirmation of the site location. Copies of the PAN were provided as required by legislation to the local community council - Garve and District Community Council as well as ward counsellors.

2.25 A project website was also set up https://www.lochluicharteastbess.co.uk/

2.26 Two rounds of in-person Community Open Days (CODs) to present the draft proposal and subsequently the revised proposal. The first COD was held on 3rd April 2025 in Garve Village Hall; and the follow up COD was held on 1st May 2025 in Garve Village Hall, both between 1.00pm and 7.00pm.

2.27 The Applicant has addressed the matters raised during the consultation period in formulating and finalising the Proposed Development.

2.28 Full details of the PAC process and how the project has responded to the feedback received are set out in the accompanying Pre Application Consultation ('PAC') Report.

3. The Proposed Development

3.1 The Proposed Development principally comprises the construction and operation of a BESS of indicatively 36 MW, substation and associated electrical equipment, with associated access, landscaping and ancillary works. The Proposed Development components are illustrated on Figures 'Site Plan' and 'Indicative BESS Platform Layout', submitted with the application and will comprise of:

- Up to 55 battery storage containers approximately 6 m long, 2.5 m wide and 3 m high;
- Power Conversion Units (PCS's) service each group of battery units, typically 6.1 m long, 2.5 m wide and 2.9 m high;
- Control and switchgear building;
- MV / LV auxiliary transformer;
- Underground cable connection to Corriemoillie 132 kV Substation;
- Spare parts containers;
- Office / welfare facilities;
- Fire suppression systems / water storage tanks comprising 2 x 230,000 litre tanks and one additional empty tank to serve as containment for any water runoff from bunded areas;
- Back-up Generator;
- Palisade fencing typically 3 m high;
- CCTV cameras, motion activated lighting and fencing;
- Site access and internal access tracks;
- Biodiversity mitigation and enhancement;
- Drainage (including Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS));
- Access track approximately 400 m in length and watercourse crossing;
- Temporary construction compound; and
- Maintenance vehicle parking.

3.2 The BESS would be located within a compound measuring approximately 115 m x 70 m which would be formed of crushed rock laid on permeable membranes. This area includes a potential future augmentation area which will be formed from crushed rock measuring 50 m by 30 m.

3.3 The compound would be enclosed by a 3 m high palisade fence. The CCTV cameras would be installed on the palisade security fencing at each corner and at strategic intervals around the compound perimeter.

3.4 The maximum height of any structure within the facility would be approximately 4 m.

3.5 Lighting would be restricted to motion sensor activated lighting on the units. Fire detection and suppression systems would be installed within the facility.

3.6 A more detailed description of the Proposed Development key elements is provided at Section 3.4 of the Environmental Report.

Access

3.7 The Site will be accessed from an existing forestry track which runs adjacent to the western Site boundary. This track will be used for access from the A832. A short stretch of new track (circa 400 m) is proposed to connect the existing forestry track to the proposed BESS platform. The utilisation of the existing track ensures no new access from the A832 is required and minimises environmental effects of creating new track on undisturbed ground.

3.8 The new section of track will be constructed of crushed rock and have an approximate width of 5 m. The track passes across undulating land and has been designed to avoid areas of deep peat.

3.9 A micro-siting allowance for the new section of access track of 25 m from the centre line is proposed.

3.10 A watercourse crossing culvert is proposed along the access track which will be designed to accommodate a 1-in-200-year flood event plus climate change event, ensuring no increase in off-site flood risk.

3.11 Minor improvement works are required at the Site access junction to wider the track to enable the access to safely accommodate the passing of two HGVs entering and existing the Site

Tree Felling

3.12 Tree felling is required for the proposed new track and BESS compound. This would include small areas of native pinewood or native birch woodland. The Site layout has been carefully designed to minimise tree loss as far as possible. A small amount of felling is required along the A832 near the Site entrance to achieve the necessary eastern and western visibility splays for road safety. Compensatory planting is proposed as required in accordance with national policy.

Landscape Proposals

3.13 A mix of native woodland and shrubs, in keeping with the surrounding habitat, is proposed to enhance the biodiversity value of the Site.

3.14 As part of compensation measures given tree felling noted above a minimum of 2.72 ha of woodland would be planted on site.

4. Design

4.1 The Proposed Development has been developed and designed in accordance with industry best practice and relevant health and safety regulations including Construction Design and Management ('CDM') Regulations 2015.

4.2 The layout and design of the Proposed Development has been strongly influenced by the potential impacts on sensitive receptors and features within the surrounding environment. This information has been embedded into the iterative design process to minimise the potential for permanent effects. Potential sensitive receptors within the study area are those where physical or perceptual effects may result as a consequence of the Proposed Development.

4.3 The proposed design has been consulted upon and driven by relevant assessments and technical advice. The Proposed Development is considered to represent a satisfactory design and siting for the development.

4.4 The design responds to the specific environmental, physical and contextual nature of the Site. The Proposed Development comprises a maximised storage capacity, accommodating the battery compound and proposed future augmentation area. The compounds are linked via a continuous access road connecting to the public highway.

4.5 Design principles have been adopted to ensure the Proposed Development is sited and designed as sensitively as possible. The design process has been iterative responding to technical and environmental studies and consultation to ensure an optimum approach.

4.6 Landscape and visual mitigation measures have been a central consideration in the iterative design process alongside the consideration of cumulative effects arising from existing and proposed development in the surrounding area.

4.7 The key design considerations are summarised as:

- Containment of development footprint and restriction to a maximum height of 4 m;
- Reflecting the adjacent Corriemoillie Substation design and layout in locating the BESS compound and new access track on a plateau of relatively flat ground on a tangible 'step' within the wider fall of slope from the summit of Beinn a Bhric, to the norther shoreline of Loch Luichart, thereby reducing the requirement for extensive earthworks to achieve ground levels and visually pulling back the development from views form the majority of receptors along the Strath;
- Siting the Proposed Development within the Loch Luichart Forest North-Forest Plan area to secure embedded mitigation to further filter views to the development – a precedent set by both the Corriemoillie Substation and the pending Corriemoillie BESS project;
- Utilisation of an existing entrance and forest access track off the A832, including an upgrade to the access junction to ensure road safety and amenity using adjacent disturbed ground. Where possible, existing infrastructure will be used to limit impact on unused ground.

4.8 The design as proposed reflects the topography and character of the Site and optimises the use of natural screening positioning within woodland and on a tangible step plateau on the hillside, reflecting the nearby Corriemoillie Substation to which it will connect. The platform arrangement and location of key infrastructure across the Site seeks to minimise visual impact and fit the development into the landscape wherever possible. Additional planting is proposed within the OHMP which will provide additional screening to further integrate the Proposed Development successfully into the surrounding landscape context.

5. Access

5.1 A DAS is a single document combining the Design Statement which addresses the design of the development and an Access Statement which demonstrates observance of the equal opportunities' requirements. The Statement should explain and justify the accessibility of the Proposed Development.

5.2 Accessibility to major infrastructure is fundamentally different by virtue of health and safety and operational regulations, than to that of a public or commercial building. The Site has been designed to facilitate access for maintenance and operation only, and to ensure that the Site is secure from intruders.

5.3 Given the nature of the Proposed Development, once operational the Proposed Development, would be limited to authorised persons only and access by members of the public would not be permitted.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The Applicant has given careful consideration to the siting, design, layout and access of the Proposed Development to ensure it is designed sensitively for the surroundings. The Proposed Development seeks to fit a functional development which avoids significant impacts on nearby receptors. The design has been progressed to fit sustainably into the environment in which it sits whilst satisfying technical requirements and functionality. Existing infrastructure has been utilised insofar as possible limiting the need for new access tracks.

The Proposed Development will support the delivery of sustainable development and reaching net zero targets and increased transmission of renewable energy.