**Q.1 Which consultation event did you attend? (Select all that apply)**

Online

**Q2. Is there a specific section of the overhead line route or a new substation/HVDC converter station that you are interested in? (Select all that apply)**

All

**Q3. Have we adequately explained the need for this project?**

Yes.

**Q4. Do you feel sufficient information has been provided to enable you to understand what is being proposed and why?**

No. We understand the need to increase the capacity of the national grid to cope with increasing renewable energy generation in the North of Scotland. However, no detail is provided on:

1. why the proposed onshore OHL from Spittal to Beauly, via Loch Buidhe, is necessary in addition to the proposed subsea cable from Spittal to Peterhead. If it is solely a question of capacity, has an additional subsea cable been considered in place of the onshore OHL proposed;
2. why the existing transmission line can’t be upgraded; or
3. whether the existing line will be dismantled if the proposed OHL line goes ahead.

**Q5. Are you satisfied that our approach taken to select our preferred overhead line routes and/or substation locations has been adequately explained?**

Yes.

**Q6. Do you agree with our overhead line route and/or substation locations, if not, why?**

Yes. We welcome that the preferred routes avoid Wild Land Areas. Although we are aware of the limitations of the Wild Land Areas, in that there is no clear boundary of wildness that can be drawn on a map, WLAs are important in identifying the most extensive areas of high wildness in Scotland (they are also vital to the future recovery of nature at landscape scale) and we welcome that SSEN have recognised their importance by avoiding them in the preferred routes.

**Q7. Are there any factors, or environmental features, that you consider may have been overlooked during the preferred overhead line route and/or substation location selection process?**

Yes. As the proposed line is selected and finalised, we hope that peat will be avoided as far as possible (both for the OHL infrastructure and the access tracks) to protect the important ecosystem services this habitat provides.

We have been contacted by members of the public who are concerned about the impact the proposed development is likely to have on many areas loved by local communities because of their high scenic and recreational importance, in particular around Golspie and Strath Fleet; Strath Rusdale and Glen Glass; Ben Wyvis, Loch Kinellan and Knock Farrel near Strathpeffer; and Loch nam Bonnach near Beauly. As such, the views of the communities impacted should be taken into careful consideration when finalising the route of the transmission line and when considering options for mitigating visual impacts. We note the consultation activities that SSEN have already undertaken to engage with the community. From previous experience, we are aware that communities want to engage with consultations but need sufficient time to consider proposals and discuss the variety of views within the community before coming to an agreed position. As such, sufficient time must be given, with consideration of the large-scale of the proposed project, to ensure communities have time to properly engage.

Another important consideration at every stage of planning the project is SSEN Transmission’s commitment, as stated in your Biodiversity Action Plan, to *‘Achieve biodiversity 'No Net Loss' on new projects gaining consent in 2020 onwards’* and *‘Achieve biodiversity 'Net Gain' on projects gaining consent in 2025 onwards’*. As this project is expected to gain consent in 2025, we would expect it to be accompanied with a plan for ensuring there is a net gain in biodiversity as a result of the project.

**Q8. Do you have any other comments or concerns in relation to the transmission infrastructure requirements or about the preferred overhead line route/substation locations?**

Yes. We would be grateful to know whether undergrounding sections of the cable has been considered for particularly sensitive landscape areas. Possible areas may include:

* areas near to Wild Land Areas (such as the section from Lybster to Brora);
* nearby or within Special Landscape Areas (such as The Flow Country and Berriedale Coast and Loch Fleet, Loch Brora and Glen Loth Special Landscape Areas around Golspie); and
* other areas where the visual impact of the development is likely to significantly impact the local community.

The landscape and visual benefits of undergrounding sections of cable should be balanced against the potential carbon emissions impact where the cable would pass through peatland.