

Technical Clarification from Glen Earrach Energy

Electricity Act 1989

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

Glen Earrach Energy Pumped Storage Hydro (PSH) Project

Technical Clarification GUCC – September 2025

ECU Ref: ECU00005121

Dear Glen Urquhart Community Council,

We thank the Glen Urquhart Community Council (GUCC) for their submission on the Glen Earrach Pumped Storage Hydro (Glen Earrach PSH) Project. The document demonstrates the level of interest within the community and reflects the importance of this project to those living around Loch Ness.

In particular, we appreciate the effort to compile a clear summary of the issues raised in **Section 1** into the concise list presented in **Section 2**. This provides a constructive framework for engagement, and we have therefore structured our reply around those themes in Section 2, so that our responses are accessible, focused, and directly relevant to the Environmental Impact Assessment and consenting process.

We note the accompanying survey set up by members of the GUCC. We take seriously the concerns and anxieties the survey sought to capture. We do note that the survey enabled comments from a wider geographical audience, and did not appear to restrict multiple entries, so the quoted percentages are difficult to assess. Nevertheless, we recognise that important concerns have been raised and that it is important these concerns are addressed. We trust that our response to the Section 2 summary addresses the key issues raised.

Setting the scene

Understanding Community Concerns

We recognise the depth of concern this application has generated within the Glen Urquhart community. Many residents feel concerned by the scale and complexity of the project to construct and operate the Glen Earrach PSH. There is also a strong perception that large-scale infrastructure projects risk being imposed on the community, without sufficient regard for the distinctive character of this place or the voices of those who live here.

The landscape of Loch Ness is unique and iconic — known worldwide for its natural beauty, cultural significance and tranquil setting. Local people, whether they were born here, or chose to make this community their home, rightly see themselves as custodians of this landscape, with a duty to protect it for future generations. We respect this responsibility, and it shapes how we have approached the design of the Glen Earrach PSH. The project is being developed by the landowner, and while the Glen Earrach PSH team draws on international expertise, as

expected for a project of this type, key roles in project management and implementation are held by team members based in the Highlands and wider Scotland.

A Different Approach to Development

Glen Earrach PSH represents a fundamentally different approach to renewable energy development in the Highlands. This is not a “standard” project, but one specifically designed around the geology and topography of the Balmacaan Estate. The **480-metre hydraulic head** allows for exceptionally efficient energy storage — meaning far less water movement, and when combined with our underground powerhouse, significantly less visual infrastructure, per unit of energy stored. That efficiency is what makes it possible to commit to a **Community Wealth Fund**, with an anticipated contribution of £20 million per year for the entire lifetime of the project. Ensuring that the community sees real, tangible, long-lasting benefits alongside climate infrastructure of national importance for the anticipated asset life of around 125 years.

Living Landscape, Evolving Needs

Loch Ness has never been static or unchanging. From the man-made **creation of the only island in Loch Ness thousands of years ago, through castles, the military roads, the canal, forestry and the original electrification of the glens**, each generation has shaped this landscape to meet the needs of its time. It is not a static landscape, but a dynamic and lived-in environment, shaped by and for the people living there. The question today is not whether change will happen, but how essential climate infrastructure can be delivered in a way that strengthens, rather than diminishes, the community’s relationship with this extraordinary place.

Partnership, Not Imposition

We do not underestimate the anxiety that comes from feeling decisions are being made elsewhere and imposed on the community. That is why our approach is different. We are committed to being long-term, responsible partners as we look forward to delivering these obligations for the 125-year planned life of the project. Planning conditions/agreements, CAR licensing, and multi-agency oversight will ensure our commitments are **legally binding and enforceable**.

We recognise the only way to successfully deliver this project is with the community’s involvement. The proposed **Community Liaison Group** is designed to give residents structured and ongoing influence. We have already initiated a process of regular community liaison, with the three community councils surrounding the south end of the Loch Ness. This has been attended by the other two community councils but unfortunately not by Glen Urquhart. This meeting was kindly chaired by Angus MacDonald, MP for the area. The feedback from the other community councils is that this was an excellent forum for open and frank discussion and provides a means for engagement by the community. We are currently arranging the next meeting of the three community councils, again with Angus MacDonald’s assistance as chair, and it would be great to see GUCC attend the event this time. We also note that other direct requests to engage with GUCC on a one-to-one basis following its objection have been declined. While we respect this decision, we think that an open dialogue

is the best way to ensure responsible and sustainable development and we hope that GUCC will be open to such engagement in the future.

Actively managing water levels for future generations

The **Water Management Board** is proposed to give a broad range of stakeholders, under public scrutiny, the responsibility for managing water levels in Loch Ness. The Community Wealth Fund is not compensation, but recognition that the people of this area are key partners in stewarding the water of Loch Ness, making it right that they are beneficiaries of a resource that belongs here.

Detailed Response

Turning to the specific issues raised in the GUCC response, the project team will use the remainder of this document to comment on these, to provide our response. This response is not seeking to challenge individual views, but offer a balanced response that may give comfort to how the issues are being addressed and taken into account as the project development evolves.

Landscape

GUCC 2.1 Significant visual impact

The development will cause major visual harm to the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Area (SLA) and surrounding viewpoints, including Meall Fuar-mhonaigh and Foyers. These are valued for their natural beauty and recreational use. The EIA admits that even after 15 years, some visual impacts will remain significant. This is not in line with NPF4's aim to protect Scotland's natural assets and scenic landscapes.

The visual assessment appears selective, with key viewpoints and community perspectives underrepresented. This selective presentation of residual effects undermines the transparency and integrity of the EIA process, as required under the EIA Regulations 2017.

Applicant Response:

The visual impact assessment undertaken for the Proposed Development is robust and realistic, and was prepared in consultation with The Highland Council and NatureScot, who agreed the viewpoints used for assessment. We recognise that visual change is an important concern, particularly given the designation of Loch Ness and Duntelchaig SLA.

The design has been guided by a principle of minimising visual impact wherever possible. The Lower Control Works will be located below the level of the A82 road and carefully designed and constructed using natural materials so that the structure blends into the shoreline. There will be no permanent buildings for equipment or personnel at the Lower Control Works, only the low-profile intake structures designed to sit close to the water level. Beyond this, no other permanent infrastructure will be present on the shore of Loch Ness. This is a design choice by us to preserve the natural environment of the estate and takes on board comments raised in the community events relating to having as much infrastructure underground as possible.

Coupled with the design of the Lower Control Works, the majority of the project's other operational infrastructure has been located underground where possible. Where embankments are required to expand the upper reservoir's capacity, they will be screened and landscaped to blend into the natural landform as far as possible. For these visible areas, we will use planting and regeneration to ensure that visual impact reduces progressively over time, not only in the first 15 years but throughout the lifetime of the project. The proposed program of woodland creation will be a lasting legacy of the project, which is a significant commitment for the project.

This approach is consistent with NPF4 Policy 6, which requires woodland and forestry interests to be protected and enhanced. It also aligns with NPF4 Policy 4, which accepts that nationally significant development may have landscape effects but these can be outweighed.

It is important to recognise that Loch Ness is a living and working landscape, not a static one. Each generation has shaped it to meet the needs of its time – from the Bronze Age crannog at Cherry Island, to General Wade's military roads in the 1700s, to Telford's 19th century Caledonian Canal, to the Forestry Commission plantations established in the early 20th century, and the hydroelectric projects built after the Second World War. Glen Earrach PSH continues in this tradition, but with a design philosophy rooted in efficiency and discretion, ensuring essential climate infrastructure can be delivered while respecting the qualities of this unique place.

Impacts on water and aquatic

GUCC 2.2 Adverse Impacts on Loch Ness

The proposal would significantly alter the natural hydrology of Loch Ness, a globally iconic and ecologically sensitive body of water. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) acknowledges potential impacts on water levels, aquatic habitats, and fish populations, including Atlantic salmon. However, the mitigation measures (particularly the proposed upgrades to Dochfour Weir) are not confirmed, and therefore cannot be relied upon to manage these risks effectively. Without this infrastructure in place, the project could cause irreversible harm to the loch's ecosystem and downstream water systems.

Applicant Response:

The Glen Earrach PSH's efficiency is a central feature. The 480-metre hydraulic head makes Glen Earrach PSH exceptionally efficient, meaning that significantly less water movement is required per unit of electricity stored compared to other PSH projects on Loch Ness. This reduces environmental interaction while maximising the energy and climate benefits of the project.

The Glen Earrach PSH will operate within an agreed set of limits with SEPA, who regulate this. These are known as the "hands-off" levels that prevent operation of the Glen Earrach PSH outside a safe range: generation will stop before the loch reaches 17.44 mAOD, and pumping will stop before it reaches 15.42 mAOD, which are within the current maximum and minimum levels of the loch.. These safeguards ensure that the natural water balance of the loch is protected. Importantly, the project does not consume water — it temporarily borrows

water from Loch Ness during pumping and returns the same volume during generation. This is usually done in blocks of up to a few hours – an entire reservoir filling or discharging would be very rare. It is also important to recognise that PSH projects also provide essential grid balancing services that can be delivered without water movement through the turbines.

The operational parameters of the Glen Earrach PSH project have been developed to ensure that impacts on Loch Ness are carefully controlled and remain within strict limits. At full generation, the water level in the loch would rise by under 3 cm per hour; at maximum pumping, the drawdown would be around 2.6 cm per hour. These changes are modest relative to the natural fluctuations of the loch.

As an added protection, it is proposed by us that the Glen Earrach PSH project will not proceed without the modernisation of the Dochfour Weir and the establishment of a Water Management Board. This Water Management Board will bring all relevant stakeholders together to manage loch levels and flows under binding operational rules. The Dochfour Weir upgrade will improve fish passage and flow control, benefitting not only Glen Earrach PSH but the wider river system and all species that depend on it. We have proposed these controls as planning conditions within our application, enabling the Scottish Government to secure them through the determination — a step we strongly welcome.

The cumulative position

GUCC 2.3 Cumulative Impacts Not Fully Considered

Loch Ness already hosts the Foyers PSH scheme and has other consented or proposed developments, including Red John and Loch Kemp. The cumulative impact of multiple PSH schemes on the loch's thermocline, surface currents, and salmon migration patterns is not fully understood or addressed in the Glen Earrach application. This omission is inconsistent with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, which mandate a thorough assessment of cumulative effects.

Applicant Response:

We recognise the specific concerns raised about thermocline behaviour, surface currents, and salmon migration patterns. These are issues that have informed our assessment work. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIAR) and the Additional Information submitted in two tranches assess cumulative effects across relevant topics, including hydrology, water quality, ecology, ornithology and traffic. Foyers PSH is treated as baseline; Red John PSH (now known as Loch na Cathrach PSH) is included as a consented project; Loch Kemp PSH is treated as a potential project (noting that it has been objected to by The Highland Council, and is now at Public Local Inquiry), alongside the Glen Earrach PSH proposal. All of our assessments have included for both our project, and scenarios with the other PSH projects where there could be any cumulative impact. This is good practice under the EIA regulations.

The operation of Glen Earrach PSH will be governed by a **SEPA CAR licence**, and as mentioned above we are proposing a **Water Management Board** to co-ordinate loch levels and the operation of the Dochfour Weir. The Board would operate under **binding operational rules** for all PSH projects on Loch Ness, providing a transparent, catchment-wide mechanism

for joint management. The proposed Water Management Board would bring together SEPA and other relevant stakeholders to provide coordinated, transparent management of Loch Ness water levels, replacing the current arrangement where water level management rests with a single private operator.

A core feature of Glen Earrach PSH is efficiency. As mentioned earlier, the **480-metre head** means the Glen Earrach PSH delivers substantially more system value for a given volume of water moved. Our modelling indicates Glen Earrach PSH provides **around 2.5× more grid system benefit than the next largest project** for the same water use. This efficiency translates directly into reduced environmental impact whilst maximising Scotland's energy storage capacity—delivering the grid resilience Scotland requires with demonstrably less ecological disruption than alternative approaches.

Salmon and fish

GUCC 2.4 Potential Harm to Wild Salmon

The Ness District Salmon Fishery Board (NDSFB) and other stakeholders have raised serious concerns about the impact of PSH schemes on wild Atlantic salmon populations. Changes in water temperature, flow, and migration routes—particularly during smolt migration—could have long-term consequences for this protected species. The Glen Earrach proposal does not provide sufficient evidence of mitigation or monitoring commitments to ensure salmon populations will be safeguarded.

Applicant Response:

We share the concern for Atlantic salmon. **Current evidence indicates over 80% smolt mortality** within the Ness catchment, demonstrating that the baseline condition of the salmon is already far from ideal. From the outset, we have engaged closely with the NDSFB and statutory consultees to understand existing pressures, potential impacts and to design proportionate, monitorable mitigation and enhancement. Statutory consultees, NatureScot and SEPA, helped scope the **smolt tracking study** — the only one of its kind undertaken by a project on Loch Ness to date — and its findings along with further studies will directly inform an evolving **Fisheries Management Plan**, including **curtailment during sensitive migration windows** if required. The NDSFB were also involved in the study to provide comments on the scope and then help undertake the trapping, tagging and release survey works.

Design measures include a **smolt screen at the lower intake** to remove entrainment risk, and set out far enough to avoid impingement. In parallel, the **Dochfour Weir upgrade** will improve **fish passage**, dealing with a **fundamental impediment to smolt migration**, while also providing naturalised flow for the downstream River Ness, delivering a system-wide benefit for salmon rather than a project-specific fix. This package — screening, operational protocols, monitoring and catchment improvements — will be secured through conditions and CAR licensing, with adaptive management built in.

We also stand ready to cooperate with those who have the interest of the salmon at heart to identify and are committed to the delivery of further surveys and opportunities to strengthen salmon populations across the wider catchment.

Traffic and Access

GUCC 2.5 Traffic and Access Impacts

The construction phase would generate up to 178 HGV trips per day, placing significant strain on rural roads such as the A831 and A82. These roads are already busy with local and tourist traffic. The proposed Construction Traffic Management Plan lacks enforceable detail and does not guarantee protection for local communities or road safety. This is contrary to the principles of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), which emphasises sustainable infrastructure and community wellbeing.

Applicant Response:

We recognise traffic and road safety — particularly for school children — as key local concerns, this has been consistently and clearly expressed across all of our local engagement meetings. Our transport strategy is designed to **minimise movements at source** through internal circulation contained within the project site, the principle of keeping materials extracted within the red line boundary; rather than using local public roads. Also important is on-site material sourcing and efficient logistics.

These traffic figures are precautionary figures for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment and are listed as:

- **Peak construction month:** 178 HGV movements/day (89 in, 89 out);
- **Average across the 8-year construction period:** 54 HGV movements/day (27 in, 27 out); and
- **Average outside the busiest 12 months:** 38 HGV movements/day (19 in, 19 out).

To help manage the traffic flows to the Glen Earrach PSH, during the construction phase, we plan to co-ordinate this with a plan. The Construction Traffic Management Plan will be secured by condition and prepared with THC, Transport Scotland and the community. It is proposed to include such measures as:

- School safety: surfaced lay-bys for school bus pick-up/drop-off along the A831, funded by the project and delivered in co-ordination with THC before main works traffic;
- Timing controls: delivery scheduling to avoid school drop-off/pick-up and significant local events;
- Temporary reduction in speed limits where appropriate (we would also support the community if there was a local desire to extend existing reduced permanent speed limits beyond the current limits, as this could be proposed to THC);
- Cumulative coordination: joint scheduling of abnormal indivisible loads with other projects;
- Monitoring and transparency: traffic counters at site accesses with six-monthly public reporting, including cumulative totals, and a community feedback mechanism with written responses;
- Debris control: wheel-washing and road-sweeping operations at site exits, with surfaced access tie-ins extending 20 m from the public road;
- Convoying: prohibition of HGV convoys, as requested by THC; and
- Contractor input: final traffic forecasts and methodologies will be validated by the appointed contractor before commencement. This will include the likely reduction in

traffic numbers as the final detailed design is completed. An example of this could include the crushing of rock to sand on site.

We will also be complying with the THC's requirement for a **'Wear and Tear' Agreement under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984**, including provision of a bond or security to protect the Council from extraordinary repair costs.

The selection of the **A831 Coiltie access point** — rather than a direct A82 access — was a deliberate design decision informed by community feedback and detailed appraisal. It allows major construction traffic to stay off public roads and circulate within the site boundary (material coming out of the tunnels can go directly to the dam areas), avoids additional HGVs through Drumnadrochit and over the River Enrick bridge, and keeps only genuine imports on the public road network. The A831 between Drumnadrochit and Balnain is already designated as an "Agreed Route" for timber transport, which indicates its suitability for HGV traffic.

The **Lower Control Works** will be delivered as a marine project via the Caledonian Canal and Loch Ness, meaning that for these works we are not adding pressure on the A82 corridor.

We also acknowledge the need for a **detailed Abnormal Load Assessment**, to be submitted and approved prior to commencement, and for design approval of the upgraded A831/Coiltie access junction. The Applicant is also supportive of discussions with THC on extending the 30 mph or lower (as agreed with THC and/or Transport Scotland) speed limit to cover the site access.

Ecology and protected habitats

GUCC 2.6 Ecological Damage and Loss of Protected Habitats

The development would result in the permanent loss of ancient woodland, blanket bog, and sensitive habitats, including areas important for protected species such as golden eagle, otter, and water vole. The EIA admits that some of these losses are significant, and while some mitigation is proposed, much of it is vague, long-term, or dependent on future plans and cannot guarantee full ecological recovery. This does not meet the standards of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy or the precautionary principle embedded in Scottish planning law under the EIA Regulations.

Applicant Response:

We have worked to avoid sensitive habitats through design, and where effects remain, to set out high-ratio compensation secured by condition. We address the status of irreplaceable habitats directly, specifically for the small area of Ancient Woodland that cannot be replaced. Therefore, our approach is twofold — avoidance and minimisation in siting and design, combined with extensive, landscape-scale native woodland creation across the wider estate to more than compensate for residual effects and to strengthen ecological networks.

The total area of Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) affected by the project is **less than 6 hectares**, the majority of which (around **4.8 ha**) is commercial forestry. **Less than 1 ha** of

native AWI is affected. These impacts are modest in extent and will be addressed through compensatory measures that exceed current policy requirements.

For replaceable habitats, the project delivers around **22% Biodiversity Net Gain** (calculated under current industry methodology, which deals with specific ancient woodland and peatland habitats separately). For peat, we commit to **compensatory peatland restoration**, noting NatureScot's current guidance requires a 1:10 ratio (1 ha of peatland loss requiring 10 ha of peatland restoration). Additionally, for Biodiversity Net Gain enhancement, we commit to restoring an additional 10% of the baseline extent of priority peatland habitat affected, backed by monitoring and long-term management plans.

Taken together, this means that while localised losses occur, the project delivers ecological enhancement at a landscape scale: over **650 ha of new native woodland creation, peatland restoration offsite of over 10 km², and targeted improvements to fish passage**. These measures will be secured through legally enforceable conditions, ensuring that mitigation is delivered in practice.

Enforceable mitigation

GUCC 2.7 Lack of binding mitigation oversight or community safeguards

Many of the proposed mitigation measures are described only in outline form (e.g. CEMP, LEMP, CTMP) with no binding commitments timelines or enforcement measures. There is also no clear framework for independent oversight or community involvement in monitoring environment impacts or ensuring compliance. This makes it difficult to assess whether the environmental harms will truly be avoided or reduced. The EIA Regulations require that mitigation be clearly defined and enforceable, which is not the case here.

Applicant Response:

We recognise the concern that mitigation must be clear, enforceable and subject to independent oversight. At the consent application stage it is established practice to submit outline versions of documents (e.g. oCEMP, oLEMP, outline Peat Management Plan), with detailed versions prepared by the appointed contractor (who is not usually in place at the point of application) and submitted for approval post-application consent and before works commence.

These documents formulate a fundamental component of the project and without them being in place the project would not proceed. Once approved, these documents are binding under planning conditions, with enforceability through The Highland Council as the relevant planning authority.

Mitigation will therefore be subject to:

- **Planning conditions and/or Agreements** overseen by The Highland Council;
- **SEPA regulation**, noting that they additionally have oversight via a separate CAR licence process with legal powers of enforcement;
- **NatureScot oversight**, particularly on protected habitats and species; and

- **Scottish Ministers**, as the decision-makers on Section 36 consent.

The project will also have an Ecological Clerk of Works who will oversee that all mitigation measures are put in place during the construction process and is there to dynamically adjust these mitigations should the conditions on the site require them to do so. They are an independent party, chosen by The Highland Council in consultation with NatureScot. They have the powers to stop works if required.

In addition to statutory regulation, we are committed to mechanisms that give the community a direct and structured role in oversight:

- A **Community Liaison Group (CLG)** will be established before early works commence, with representation invited from local residents, community councils, ward councillors and statutory bodies such as SEPA, NatureScot and local services. Meetings will be chaired by an independent or neutral figure to ensure balance, with professional facilitation to support orderly dialogue as required. The CLG will:
 - Review the performance of mitigation measures (traffic, ecology, noise, water);
 - Receive and escalate community concerns through defined routes to the planning authority;
 - Publish minutes and actions, ensuring transparency; and
 - Hold regular meetings (initially monthly), with the ability to adjust frequency as needed.
- A **Water Management Board for Loch Ness**, bringing regulators, stakeholders and community representatives together under binding operational rules.
- **Publication of monitoring results** at agreed intervals, providing accessible information on compliance and performance.

By combining **legal enforceability** with **structured community oversight**, the Glen Earrach PSH project ensures it is delivered, monitored and independently scrutinised, in line with the requirements of the EIA Regulations and any consent that is granted.

Environmental Authorisations

GUCC 2.8 Inconsistencies with the Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2025

The project involves activities (e.g. water abstraction, waste, emissions) that fall under the integrated authorisation framework regulated by SEPA. The EIA does not clearly demonstrate how the project will comply with the new regulatory standards introduced in the 2025 Regulations.

Applicant Response:

We note the reference to the **Environmental Authorisations (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2025** and would welcome clarification on **which specific provision** is of concern. In all cases, the project will **secure and comply** with the relevant authorisations and regulations— most notably a **CAR licence** under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations — within SEPA's **integrated regulatory framework**. If required by the planning authority, conditions can require confirmation of compliance with any updated 2025

standards **prior to commencement** of the affected works. The Glen Earrach PSH has applied for a Water Rights Order and a CAR licence, which are currently being considered by Scottish Ministers and SEPA, respectively.

Socio-Economic Benefits

GUCC 2.9 Overstatement of Socioeconomic Benefits Without Secured Mitigation

The EIA claims “Significant Beneficial” effects from job creation and local economic activity. However, these benefits are speculative and not secured through planning conditions or legal agreements. There is no binding commitment to local hiring, training, or procurement. The EIA also acknowledges a “Minor Adverse” effect on housing, health services, and community cohesion due to the influx of construction workers - impacts that are not adequately mitigated. This is inconsistent with experiences from other energy projects, where local housing stock has been absorbed by developers, displacing residents. Without safeguards, this development risks harming rather than helping the local community.

This approach fails to meet the requirements of NPF4 Policy 11 (Energy) and Policy 25 (Community Wealth Building), which demand demonstrable and secured local benefits.

Applicant Response:

Local benefit is central to Glen Earrach PSH’s proposition. We are committed to **using local workers and businesses where possible**, supported by early engagement with the regional supply chain.

As it stands, the **project is already enabling the employment** of high skilled jobs in both the Highlands and wider Scotland. It is projects like Glen Earrach PSH that are allowing fresh talent and experienced practitioners to gain access to high quality jobs to help further or develop a career in the energy transition. This includes roles in project management, planning, ecology, hydrology, forestry, land management, landscape, economists and water-related roles. **These are happening today.**

Furthermore, we see the development of a skills centre and local courses to act as a facilitator for local people to be able to access high quality jobs in both the Highlands and wider Scotland. This project has the ability to help deliver these aspirations. While the project has already been in touch with local suppliers, to further these links, the Glen Earrach PSH will use local supply chain events in the run-up to construction to reach out to local businesses and see how best they can support the project both through the construction and operations period. Several businesses based in the community have already expressed interest in supporting the project. Once operational, the project will require ongoing high-quality roles in operations, management, maintenance and administration. These positions will be based locally to the project, and we are committed to prioritising local recruitment for these long-term career opportunities, which will provide stable employment throughout the 125-year operational life of the project.

Separately, to avoid pressure on local housing and services, the **workers’ village** will be **on-site and self-contained**, with **accommodation, medical, catering and recreational**

services provided within the project footprint. There are opportunities for local businesses to help this village operate and again that will be factored into the supply chain events.

The **Community Wealth Fund** — projected at **around £20 million per year** — will be governed transparently with community involvement and reporting. This fund aligns with **NPF4 Policy 25 (Community Wealth Building)** through direct investment in housing, skills, infrastructure and projects determined by residents. The Community Wealth Fund commitments can be secured via a planning agreement.

Additionally, we are keen to explore opportunities for appropriate development of additional housing (in the region of 15-20 houses) in the local area. There is, however, an awareness of sensitivities arising from recent housing developments in the Drumnadrochit village area. As such, careful consideration would be given to the community's appetite for this, including identifying the most suitable location. For avoidance of doubt, the temporary accommodation planned for on-site workers up on the site will not be left at the end of the project and does not form part of the Community Wealth Fund. It should be noted that a local company has also been in touch to discuss how they could help to supply these units.

Climate and Net Zero

GUCC 2.10 Inadequate Consideration of Climate Risks and Net Zero Compliance

The EIA claims a "Significant Beneficial" climate impact due to long-term emissions savings, this is misleading. It fails to:

- *Offset the over 1 million tonnes of CO₂e generated during construction, including emissions from peatland loss.*
- *Address the "High Adverse" climate risks identified in its own Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA), such as flooding and storm damage, which remain significant even after mitigation.*
- *Provide a binding carbon management or adaptation plan, as required under NPF4 Policy 2 and the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.*
- *These omissions undermine the credibility of the project's alignment with Scotland's 2045 net zero target*

Applicant Response:

The Glen Earrach PSH is designed to be strongly carbon-negative in operation. Although it is a major project involving several years of construction and significant large-scale engineering, conservative assessments indicate a carbon payback within the second year of full operation. Thereafter, the scheme delivers sustained emissions reductions by storing renewable electricity that would otherwise be curtailed and then correspondingly reducing reliance on fossil fuel peaking plant. We will achieve lifetime savings of a substantial volume of CO₂e, lowering the UK grid's carbon intensity by around 10% while enabling more renewable generation to reach the grid through reduced curtailment.

Adaptation is embedded: design allowances reflect updated SEPA guidance; operating rules include **loch levels**; and science-driven monitoring with **adaptive management** ensures resilience to future climate conditions.

Community Safeguards

GUCC 2.11 Inadequate Community Safeguards and Oversight

*The proposal lacks a **Community Benefit Agreement** or a **Community Liaison Committee** with statutory powers to oversee construction and operational impacts.*

Given the scale and duration of the project (8 years of construction, 125 years of operation), this is a critical omission.

*The Highland Council's Local Development Plan and the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) both emphasise the importance of **community engagement, environmental justice, and local benefit**. These principles are not sufficiently embedded in the current scheme.*

Applicant Response:

We recognise the scale and duration of the Glen Earrach PSH project demands clear, lasting, and enforceable safeguards for the host communities. The Glen Earrach PSH project will not proceed without a framework that ensures residents have both visibility of impacts and genuine influence over how they are managed.

At a statutory level, oversight is secured through planning conditions, the CAR licence process, and regulation by SEPA, Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot, The Highland Council and Scottish Ministers. These provide the legal enforcement framework for all mitigation measures.

In addition, we have committed to establishing mechanisms that go beyond statutory minimums:

- **Community Liaison Group (CLG):**
 - To be constituted before construction commences, with representation invited from local residents, community councils, ward councillors, statutory bodies and the appointed contractor once in place.
 - Chaired by an independent or neutral figure to ensure balance, with professional facilitation and published minutes.
 - Functions will include reviewing mitigation performance (traffic, ecology, noise, water), receiving and escalating complaints, and maintaining structured dialogue for the lifetime of the project.
 - Meetings will be monthly in the first instance, with frequency reviewed by members after three months.
- **Transparency and accountability:**
 - Regular publication of monitoring results (traffic counts, ecological surveys, water quality, noise) in accessible form.
 - Defined routes for escalation of unresolved concerns from the CLG to The Highland Council as planning authority.

- **Water Management Board for Loch Ness:**
 - Bringing together regulators, statutory consultees, community representatives and operators.
 - Operating under binding rules to manage water levels and flows, ensuring representative coordination for all users of the loch.
- **Community Wealth Fund:**
 - **Expected to deliver around £20 million annually** for the life of the project.
 - Independent governance structure ensuring decisions on funding are made transparently and with strong community representation.
 - Intended not as compensation, but as recognition of the value coming from the landscape, providing long-term investment in local priorities whether these are housing, skills, infrastructure or other initiatives determined by the community itself.

Together, these measures provide **independent oversight, enforceable regulation, structured community involvement, and guaranteed community benefit** throughout its 125-year lifetime. This approach aligns with NPF4 principles of environmental justice and community wealth building, ensuring the people of the surrounding area remain at the centre of how the project is delivered.

Oversight of commitments

GUCC 2.12 Request for Conditions and oversight mechanisms

Should the project be approved, it is essential that a robust and enforceable framework of conditions is established to ensure environmental protection, community benefit, and accountability.

This must include:

- *A legally binding Community Benefit Agreement, developed in consultation with local residents, to ensure long-term investment in local services, infrastructure, and environmental stewardship.*
- *The formation of an independent Community Liaison Committee, with representation from local residents, community councils, and statutory bodies, to oversee construction and operational impacts, and to provide a formal mechanism for raising concerns and ensuring transparency.*
- *A Mitigation and Monitoring Plan with clearly defined, enforceable targets and timelines for ecological restoration, noise and traffic management, and water quality protection, including independent auditing and public reporting.*
- *A Compensatory Planting Scheme to fully offset the loss of ancient and semi-natural woodland, with native species and long-term management commitments in line with the Scottish Government's Control of Woodland Removal Policy.*
- *Road and infrastructure improvements to mitigate the impact of construction traffic, including upgrades to the A831 and A82, safe crossing points, and traffic calming measures in affected communities.*

- *Recreational path improvements, including permanent upgrades and diversions to the Affric Kintail Way, Meall Fuar-mhonaidh summit route, and other core paths, to ensure continued public access and enjoyment during and after construction.*
- *Confirmed and completed upgrades to Dochfour Weir, including fish passage improvements and seasonal flow controls, must be in place and operational before the Glen Earrach scheme becomes active. These upgrades are critical to managing water levels in Loch Ness and the River Ness and to safeguard migratory fish.*

These measures must be secured through planning conditions or legal agreements under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and monitored by the relevant authorities to ensure compliance throughout the lifespan of the development.

Applicant Response:

Building on the commitments set out above, we welcome GUCC's recognition that planning conditions provide an appropriate framework for securing commitments. Most requests reflect our existing proposals and standard practice under the **Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, Section 36** of the **Electricity Act 1989**, and **SEPA's CAR** licensing.

Specific responses to GUCC requests

- ✓ **Community Benefit Agreement (FULLY COMMITTED)**
Committed: Community Wealth Fund at **~£20m/year**. For the operational life of the project, guaranteed and proportionate to the scale of the project.

Mechanism: **Planning agreement** that will enable transparent governance and reporting.
- ✓ **Independent Community Liaison Committee (ALREADY PROPOSED)**
Proposed: **CLG** with representation from residents, community councils and statutory bodies.
Powers: Feedback mechanisms, transparent reporting, regular dialogue and escalation routes.

Mechanism: Planning condition defining remit, membership and publication schedule.
- ✓ **Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (STANDARD PRACTICE)**
Committed: Outline plans (CEMP, LEMP, Peat, Fisheries, CTMP, Access) to be **developed in full** and **legally secured** via conditions prior to relevant works.

Mechanism: Pre-commencement condition for each plan with approval by the relevant authority.
- ✓ **Compensatory Planting Project (ALREADY COMMITTED)**
Committed: **~650+ ha** of compensatory planting and landscape-scale native woodland creation; montane scrub restoration. Peatland restoration in line with NatureScot's requirement. (1:10 + 10%)

Mechanism: Planning condition securing mapped areas, specifications and a **20-year management/monitoring plan** consistent with the Control of Woodland Removal Policy.

✓ **Road and Infrastructure Improvements (KEEN TO DELIVER)**
Committed: Measures shaped with community input, including **surfaced lay-bys on the A831** for school buses, safety enhancements, coordinated **AIL** routing, and other potential improvements (such as pedestrian crossing facility over the Enrick adjacent to A82) where these would address identified safety concerns can all be included in the CTMP as it develops.

Mechanism: CTMP condition with detailed designs agreed by THC and Transport Scotland; wear-and-tear arrangements or could use an agreement under Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

- ✓ **Recreational Path Improvements (COMMITTED WITH CLARIFICATION)**
Committed: **Access Management Plan** detailing temporary diversions and permanent upgrades (paths/tracks/signage/maintenance) for routes such as the **Affric Kintail Way**; **Meall Fuar-mhonaidh access will not be affected by the project.**

Mechanism: Planning condition requiring detailed plan approval prior to works affecting access.

- ✓ **Dochfour Weir Completion (ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT)**
Committed: **No full operation** of Glen Earrach PSH until the **Dochfour Weir upgrade** (including fish passage and seasonal flow controls) is completed and operational; establishment of the **Water Management Board**.

Mechanism: A **Grampian-style condition** tying commissioning to completion of the weir works and Board establishment.

Standard planning mechanisms referenced:

- **Section 36** consent conditions (Electricity Act 1989).
- **Planning agreements** (such as Section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 or Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 or Section 96 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984).
- **CAR** licensing (Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011).
- **Multi-agency oversight** by Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Ministers, SEPA, NatureScot and Highland Council.

Clarification on process

Progressing from **outline** frameworks at application to **detailed**, enforceable plans prior to works is **standard practice using planning conditions and other legal agreements**. It recognises that contractor methodologies are finalised post-consent while ensuring legal enforceability, statutory scrutiny and **regular monitoring/reporting** throughout delivery.

All requested oversight mechanisms are either already committed to or are reasonable additions that align with our collaborative approach. The condition framework provides strong legal enforceability with embedded community input, independent monitoring and adaptive management across the project lifecycle. This means that every substantive issue raised — from traffic to ecology, from woodland to water — will be locked into legally binding commitments, overseen by regulators.

Conclusion

Commitment to Accountability

We have structured our commitments above so that the community has a reference point for the project's obligations. Section 36 Consent under the Electricity Act 1989 (including planning conditions), CAR licence, Water Rights Order and multi-agency oversight by Scottish Ministers, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot and The Highland Council ensure that mitigation, monitoring and enforcement are legally binding. Beyond statutory oversight, mechanisms such as the Community Liaison Group, Water Management Board and public reporting embed independent scrutiny into the project's governance.

The Climate Imperative

Scotland faces a climate emergency that requires bold infrastructure, but it does not require communities to shoulder the burden without benefit. We will achieve lifetime savings of a substantial volume of CO₂e, with carbon payback achieved soon after operation commences for a project that will run for 125 years. Thus, lowering the UK grid's carbon intensity by around 10% while enabling more renewable generation to reach the grid through reduced curtailment. In doing so, the Glen Earrach PSH reduces long-term ecological pressures on habitats already sensitive to climate change. Under NPF4, this is National Development 2 – essential strategic infrastructure where national climate benefit outweighs unavoidable local effects. While some effects are unavoidable, we have worked to avoid impacts where possible, minimise those that remain, and provide meaningful mitigation. Our commitment extends beyond compliance to active stewardship.

Invitation to Partnership

We want to deliver this project with the community, not merely in the community. That is why we propose a Community Liaison Group with access to monitoring data, a Water Management Board with statutory authority, and clear feedback loops on traffic, noise, paths and workforce impacts. These mechanisms give residents a direct and lasting role in how the project is managed.

Shared Legacy

Alongside rigorous safeguards, Glen Earrach PSH offers one of the most significant community wealth packages of any renewable project in the UK. With approximately £20 million committed annually to an independent Community Wealth Fund for spending on local priorities - housing, skills, infrastructure or other projects chosen by communities - plus extensive woodland creation, peatland restoration and environmental compensation as a Net



Benefit. The Glen Earrach PSH project leaves a positive legacy and these benefits are guaranteed for the 125-year life of the project, creating intergenerational investment in the very communities most closely connected to the project.

Opportunity

Glen Earrach PSH is an opportunity to demonstrate that Scotland can deliver world-leading climate infrastructure through genuine partnership between developers and communities – ensuring that the transition to net zero enhances the places and people most closely connected to it.