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19 March 2019

Dear Ms Lui

## **CONSULTATION RESPONSE ON OFGEM ASSESSMENT ON SCOTTISH HYDRO ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION'S PROPOSAL FOR THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK MITIGATION PROJECT**

I am pleased to submit this response to your consultation of the 28<sup>th</sup> February on the above project. We greatly welcome this proposal for the very significant landscape and visual benefits it will bring to this area.

I have included below a detailed response following the format requested in your consultation documentation:

- I. **Based on the information in this consultation, do you agree with our assessment of SHE Transmission's approach in undertaking the Cairngorms National Park mitigation project? In particular, we are looking for feedback regarding our approach to assessing the following elements:**
  - a) Implementation of the VISTA policy:
    - We are content with your assessment. We would go further to say that we found the process clear and transparent and felt that we were able to engage with the decision making process at each stage. We appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the technical selection process and assessments of landscape and visual impacts.
  - b) Project benefits:
    - We agree with the benefits identified within the assessment. We might add that there are significant benefits for users of the Strathspey heritage railway, a major visitor attraction in the area that runs alongside and underneath the line. In addition; the River Spey is a 'core path' and has a national reputation for canoeing and is known internationally for fly fishing. The project will benefit the landscape experience from participants in these activities in its vicinity.
  - c) Technical scope:
    - We are not perhaps best placed to comment on the technical scope of the project however we can confirm that our own environmental specialists, landscape and

ecology, have considered the details of the project including the route selection and the planning application for the Sealing end structures and consider them to be acceptable and without issue or concern.

- d) Procurement process and delivery strategy:
- We are content with your assessment on this aspect.
- e) Risk management:
- We are content with your assessment on this aspect.

**2. Based on the information in this consultation do you agree with our assessment and proposed funding allowances for the Cairngorms National Park mitigation project?**

- We have considered the information and would confirm that we fully agree with your assessment and the funding allowance.

**3. Do you have any other comments or information relevant to our assessment?**

- We would like to highlight our complete support for the project. The National Park Authority has been part of the process from the outset and we greatly appreciate being able to input into its development. The process has allowed our professional staff to have a positive input to the scoping of the project and highlighting opportunities and constraints. We very much welcome the open response from SHET to our input.
- The project will help to conserve and enhance the special landscape qualities and character of the National Park and the benefits would be felt by very many local residents and visitors. It helps to deliver the vision and objectives of the National Park Partnership Plan and ultimately will help to deliver the 4 Park aims.
- The project will also enhance the experience of users to the Strathspey Heritage Railway, the river Spey and the area more widely. The project would in addition potentially allow for the rerouting of the Speyside Way long distance recreation route to support Capercaillie conservation measures. The removal of the towers will make the new route much more acceptable to the path users.
- Lastly the proposed project compliments the rationalisation of the transmission network undertaken as a condition of Beauly Denny. We consider this to be significant as it has removed all tower lines from the central area of the Badenoch and Strathspey; the area of highest visitor numbers in the Cairngorms National Park. This work will add significantly to the landscape experience of the National Park.

Yours Sincerely



**GRANT MOIR**  
Chief Executive