



#### **ABOUT SSE**

SSE plc is a UK-listed energy company that operates throughout the UK and Ireland. It is involved principally in the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity, and in the supply of energy and related services to customers.

SSE's purpose is to provide energy needed today while building a better world of energy for tomorrow and its vision is to be a leading energy company in a net-zero world. In order to achieve this, SSE's strategy is to create value for shareholders and society in a sustainable way through the successful development, efficient operation and responsible ownership of energy infrastructure and businesses.

SSE has set four core business goals for 2030, directly aligned to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) most material to its business. Its 2030 Goals address the challenge of climate change at their core, ensuring SSE does this in a sustainable way that creates and shares value with shareholders and society.



#### **ABOUT THIS REPORT**

This report sets out SSE's approach to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and the steps it has taken in 2020 to support the 'Natural Environment' priority of its Environment Strategy. It is split into three core themes of focus for SSE – protecting, restoring and enhancing biodiversity; contributing to knowledge and research; and, connecting people to the natural world – and outlines how it contributes to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals 14 Life below water and 15 Life above land.

The scope of this report is focused on activities for the 2020 calendar year, however, some data presented covers the financial year 2019/20 in line with the SSE Group reporting calendar.

Feedback is encouraged and is very welcome. Please get in touch by emailing **sustainability@sse.com** if you have any comments or gueries relating to any of the initiatives mentioned within this report.

#### A PRINCIPLE PARTNER OF COP26

SSE is a principal partner to the UK Government for COP26 - the 26th United Nations Climate Change conference which incorporates the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). SSE is enthusiastically working with government and other stakeholders to support the delivery of a successful and impactful COP in Glasgow in November.

One of the key themes of conference will be 'Nature' and the key role that preserving biodiversity has to play in tackling climate change and vice versa. This report demonstrates the ways in which SSE works to protect and enhance biodiversity in the natural environments in which it operates.

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# A CHANCE FOR NATURE TO BOUNCE BACK BETTER

2020 was, of course, dominated by the coronavirus pandemic. While our lives were turned upside down there is some evidence that nature may have had some respite from the onward march of human impact. Now that we are starting to lift our sights to the reopening of the economy, there is much optimism that government and business can bring about a green recovery.

To create a chance for nature to bounce back better, while our communities and economies build back better.

SSE firmly believes that the opportunity to accelerate the transition to net zero in the UK and Ireland stimulates significant investment that is a win-win creating prosperity and helping to tackle climate change. Its development projects, creating new wind farms and low carbon electricity infrastructure are designed to achieve both

Each year, SSE publishes a biodiversity report to communicate with our stakeholders the policies, practice and performance of our efforts to protect nature and restore it. This year's report captures the most important activity that took place in 2020.

The first, is the start of a new Artificial Intelligence project, with partners Microsoft and Avanade to bring about the most sophisticated specifies monitoring we have ever undertaken. Because of the development of offshore wind farms in the North Sea, we must monitor any impacts on puffins carefully. Technology placed on the Isle of May in the Firth of Forth was designed to monitor the important puffin colony that breeds there every spring. This technology won't simply count the puffins, it will learn the identify of every puffin on the island, ensuring we don't count each puffin twice. While accurate puffin monitoring won't necessarily conserve the species, robust science is the first important step in conserving species for the future.

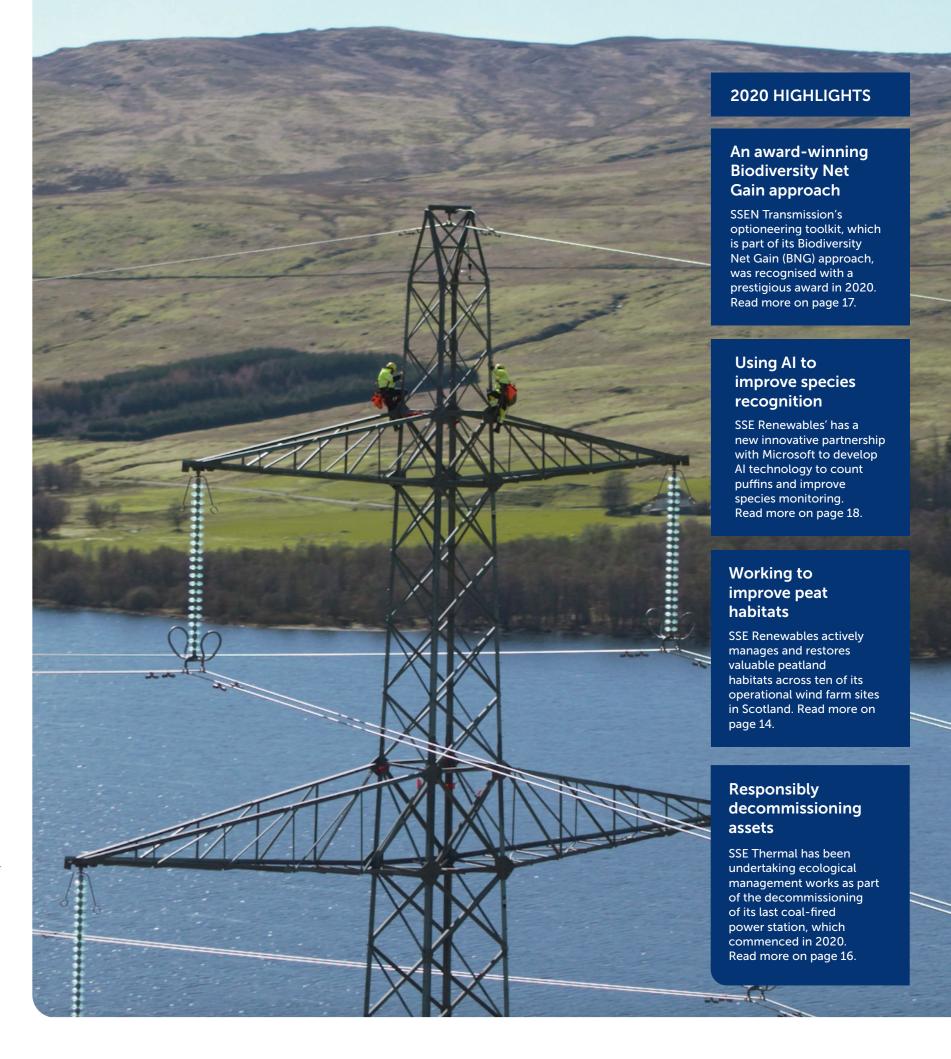
Secondly, peat impacts are an important consideration in the development process for electricity infrastructure. Avoiding any potential negative impact is the first consideration through site selection and design. With regards planning consents, we are now finding that planning conditions, increasingly contain conditions that require us to actively restore areas of degraded peat. This means that the onshore renewables industry is proving to be one of the most important contributors to peat restoration.

Thirdly, there is plenty of evidence that proves, the more connected people are to the natural environment, the more likely they are to respect is and take care of it. From encouraging access to some of our renewables sites, to funding community nature projects and undertaking outreach work with the public at our Pitlochry Dam Visitor Centre – we are determined to do what we can to support the connection between people and nature.

Finally, the purpose of a biodiversity report is to share the efforts of the company to protect and enhance the natural environment it operates within. Feedback, both on the content of the report and the quality of the interventions made is very welcome.



Rachel McEwen
Chief Sustainability Officer



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# AN INCREASING FOCUS ON THE NATURE EMERGENCY

#### 2020: A CHALLENGING YEAR

While 2020 was dominated by the coronavirus, in the years preceding the pandemic it had been becoming ever-more apparent that the emergency in the natural environment is as important as the climate crisis. 2020 saw the publication of a number of reports outlining the urgency of the nature crisis and the slow progress that has been made to date in addressing it. At the start of the year, the World Economic Forum published its annual Global Risks Report for 2020 in which, for the first time in its history, environmental concerns dominated the top long-term risks by likelihood.

In addition to this, significant reports were published outlining the catastrophic damage that has been done to nature, including a WWF report highlighting a decline of more than two-thirds in wildlife populations in less than 50 years.

Failure to make progress on international targets was also outlined in the UN Convention on Biological Diversity's (UNCBD) Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 report, which represents that last progress update against the 20 global biodiversity targets that were agreed in 2010 with a 2020 deadline - the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. It outlined that none of the Aichi targets will be fully met.

#### 2021: A YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY

As society emerges from coronavirus and economies are rebuilt, there is a unique opportunity to improve the way things are done for the better. SSE has been playing a critical role in the response to coronavirus, without losing sight of the fact that the climate and natural environment emergencies remain and must be dealt with to safeguard wellbeing for the long term. It recognises that environmental degradation is bad for societies, bad for economies and bad for business.

2021 has the potential to be a turning point in the response to the nature emergency and there are calls for radical changes to how nature is valued. The landmark review sponsored by the UK Treasury, The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review, highlights that the failure of economic systems to account for the destruction and depletion of nature poses a global threat. It outlines that new measures of success are needed and introducing natural capital into national accounting systems would be a critical step.

In addition, significant UN conferences will be held in 2021 that offer hope for renewed ambitious action needed the address that nature crisis: the UN Biodiversity Conference in October 2021, at which it is expected countries will agree a global biodiversity framework and targets for the next ten years; and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP26, one of the campaigns of which is 'Nature' and will seek to raise ambition on tackling the drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss. SSE will monitor the outcomes both conferences and learnings that arise, in order to inform its own approach to managing environmental and biodiversity impacts.

#### **JAN 2020**

### Environmental concerns dominate global risks

The World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2020 ranks 'Failure of climate change mitigation and adaption' and 'Biodiversity loss' as the first and second risks by impact retrospectively. They are also ranked second and third most likely risks for the next decade retrospectively.

#### **SEP 2020**

### Poor progress on Aichi Targets

The UNCBD publishes its Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 report which finds that none of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets will be completely met. However, 89% of all national targets saw at least some progress.

#### JAN 2020

### Drastic decline in wildlife populations

WWF publishes its Living Planet Report 2020 which estimates that between 1970 and 2017 wildlife populations have declined by more than two-thirds. It outlines that this drastic trend doesn't appear to be slowing down and that humans are destroying nature faster than ever.

#### SEP 2020

### Global decline in nature is dangerous

A report by the IPBES found that decline in global nature is unprecedented and dangerous. It highlighted that it's not too late to act and there remain opportunities for innovative solutions to the nature and climate challenges.

#### FEB 2021

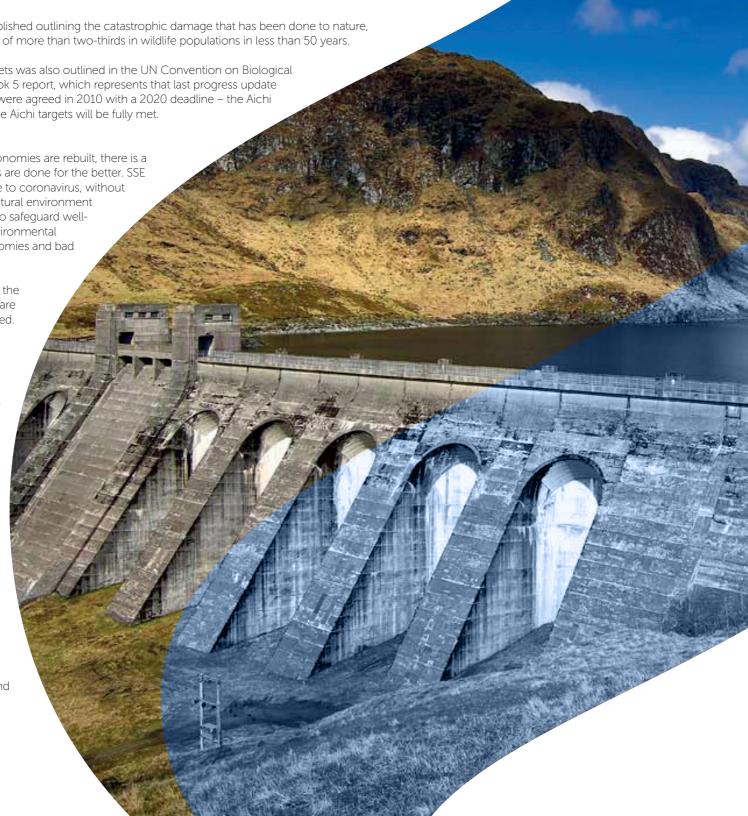
#### Economics fails to consider nature decline

The Dasgupta Review outlines a failure of economic systems to account for the destruction of nature and calls for radical new ways of valuing nature.

#### OCT 2021

### A new global biodiversity framework

The UN CBD will host the 2021 UN Biodiversity Conference in China, in October. The conference will review the achievement and delivery of the CBD's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. It is expected that the final decision on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework will be taken.



# SSE'S APPROACH TO BIODIVERSITY

SSE's approach to biodiversity is influenced by the high environmental standards in the countries in which it operates. It has robust governance and policies in place and works constructively with stakeholders to produce sustainable environmental outcomes.

#### UNDERSTANDING SSE'S IMPACT ON BIODIVERSITY

Core to SSE's business strategy is developing, operating and owning energy and related infrastructure. This means that, in delivering its strategy, SSE interacts with the environment and biodiversity in a number of ways and impacts on a wide range of issues, from global climate change down to local habitats.

SSE's various business units have different interactions with, and impacts on, the environment. Understanding the ways in which SSE interacts with the environment across its business units is crucial in informing SSE's approach to managing its impacts. As a result, each business has its own environment plan and goals that supports the Group Environment Strategy (see page 9).

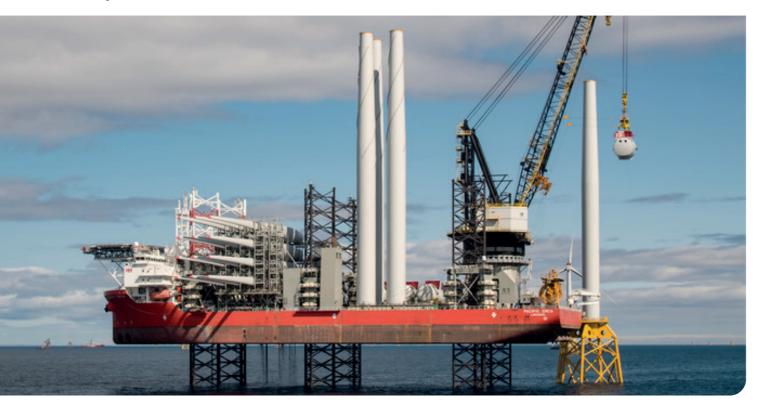
For more information on SSE's different business units and their activities, see SSE's Annual Report and Sustainability Report.

#### ADHERING TO HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS

Operating in the UK and Ireland, SSE is subject to some of the world's strictest environmental standards. Complying with government legislation in the countries in which it operates is paramount to SSE's operations. The standards to which SSE's operations must comply can be roughly split into three types:

- **Licenses:** dictate active management of its operations that SSE must undertake. These will dictate, for example, how many cubic meters of water pass through hydro-electric stations or screens to protect migrating salmon.
- Legislation: dictates what SSE's operations must not do, such as have a negative impact on protected species.
- Regulations: stipulate the processes which must be followed to inform decision making on a project and its potential environmental impact, such as Environmental Impact Assessments.

By adhering to these standards, and exceeding them where feasible, SSE works to mitigates the impacts of its operations on biodiversity.



#### **CONSIDERING BIODIVERSITY AT ALL STAGES**

SSE manages impacts from its activities by taking a strategic approach and adopting methods that take account of the environment at the point of project initiation and design, as well as during construction and operation of the asset. As some of SSE assets begin to come to the end of their lives, SSE also needs to consider environmental impacts during decommissioning.

Underpinning SSE's decisions are statutory obligations governing designated sites and protected species, but where possible and practical, it seeks to go beyond minimum requirements.

#### Project development

When developing new or existing projects, SSE begins by considering options such as reusing or extending existing assets and/or factoring in future growth requirements. Assessing different options for infrastructure sites and routes at this early stage can significantly reduce the impacts of a development. SSE meets planning obligations by undertaking detailed Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) for large projects and completing an environmental assessment for projects where an EIA is not a statutory requirement. The four stages of the mitigation hierarchy – avoid, minimize, restore and offset – are embedded into the principles of Environmental Impact Assessment. Where projects are expected to have significant impacts on biodiversity, SSE strives to offset these impacts through actions such as developing Habitat Management Plans for renewable developments in the EIA stage, or funding conservation activity conducted by other groups. SSE also provides mitigation measures as part of planning proposals for all construction projects.



#### Construction

During construction of major projects, SSE adopts detailed measures to mitigate adverse environmental impacts, often under the guidance of a professional ecologist. These include implementation of relevant Species Protection Plans and Habitat Management Plans, that allow SSE to progress construction while protecting sensitive species. This could involve only undertaking aspects of work during certain times of the year, to reduce disruption to species during mating season. SSE will undertake any monitoring of biodiversity during construction that has been committed to during the planning phase, with additional measures taken if required. See page 16 for an example of the ecological management and improvement works SSE is undertaking during the construction of its Keadby 2 CCGT power station.



#### Operation

SSE focuses on meeting permit conditions associated with the operation of its assets, and prioritises minimising any negative impact of operations in environmentally sensitive areas. Many of SSE's assets operate to an Environmental Management Systems (EMS) to manage environmental impacts and to drive continuous improvement in environmental performance. As with construction, during the operational phase of a project any monitoring commitments made in the planning stages are undertaken. This may be underpinned by an Habitat Management Plan for example. Detail of SSE's Habitat Management Plans can be found on page 22.



#### Decommissioning

SSE operates many long-term energy assets in the UK and Ireland. As these assets come to their end of life, SSE follows detailed guidelines on how to decommission these projects in a way that minimises and mitigates adverse environment impacts. Some actions undertaken when decommissioning can be site-specific as they depend on the habitats and species present in a given location. See page 16 for an example of environmental considerations SSE is taking during the decommissioning of its Fiddler's Ferry coal-fired power station.

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#### **WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

of stakeholder views and input. It therefore promotes an open and transparent approach to stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the perspectives, insights and opinions of stakeholders are understood and considered in both long-term plans and day-today decision making.

SSE seeks to realise environmental opportunities, such as enhancing or creating new habitats or harnessing natural resources for renewable energy generation, through working closely with stakeholders to ensure it does so in a sustainable way that creates value for all. The problems facing different species, habitats and ecosystems are often complex and require people and institutions to work together to find optimal solutions. The case studies outlined throughout this report seek to give practical evidence of the way in which SSE approaches its stakeholder relationships to protect biodiversity.

More information on SSE's approach to stakeholder engagement can be found in SSE's Annual Report and Sustainability Report.

#### **ROBUST ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**

SSE has a well-established approach to environmental management, supported by robust policies and procedures to guide its day-to-day operations and interactions with the environment.

#### **Environmental policy and governance**

SSE has a Group Environment Policy that guides decision making within the company and outlines its commitments around protecting the environment, preventing pollution and operating in a sustainable way. This policy is signed-off by SSE's Chief Executive and is available publicly for SSE's stakeholders at sse.com/sustainability.

SSE's Chief Executive has overall lead responsibility for environmental performance, including at Board-level. The Safety, Health and Environment Advisory Committee (SHEAC) advises the Board on matters relating to safety, health and environment (SHE). The work of the SHEAC is designed around SSE's eight SHE Enduring Goals, one of which is Environment: Protecting the environment and operating in a sustainable way. The SHEAC is responsible for setting SHE performance targets, which include environmental performance.

SSE's has an Environment Subgroup which advises the business on the Environment Enduring Goal. At business level, the heads of individual business units are accountable for environmental performance and for managing environmental impacts by applying SSE's SHE Management System.

#### SSE's Group Environment Strategy

SSE's Group Environment Strategy outlines Group-wide goals across three priority areas which represent the most material areas of environmental impact for SSE's activities. Like SSE's business strategy, the Environment Strategy is linked to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which focus SSE's efforts 1 The percentage of SSE's relevant business units that interact with for environmental improvement on the areas that have been identified as key for sustainable development. These are:

- Climate Action
- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Natural Environment

SSE recognises that a sustainable strategy is one which is reflective SSE's Group Environment Strategy provides enduring principles to guide SSE's individual business units when undertaking their daily activities, encouraging consideration of the environment and ensuring that SSE takes responsibility for any impacts it may have on biodiversity, whether negative or positive. As each of these businesses has different interactions and impacts on the environment, they all have their own detailed environment plan and goals specific to their activities that supplement the Group Environment Strategy. This means their efforts are focused on the areas in which their most material environment risks and opportunities arise, and they have greatest potential to influence.

> SSE's Group Environment Strategy is underpinned by an ethos of compliance. SSE is committed to complying with all relevant legal and regulatory obligations and seeks to go above and beyond this and meet additional relevant voluntary standards where possible and feasible.

More detail on SSE's Environment Strategy is available at sse.com/sustainability.

#### **Environmental Management**

To ensure effective environmental management, SSE implements an environmental management system (EMS) across all its business activities that interact with the environment: thermal and renewable generation; Enterprise Contracting and Distributed Energy; electricity transmission and distribution; and, gas storage. SSE is certified to ISO14001:2015 for all of these activities, except electricity distribution and SSE's Distributed Energy business which are covered by SSE's internal audit programme.

SSE is ISO14001 certified for around 49% of its business activities that interact with the environment by reported revenue (based on 2019/20 figures) 1.

ISO14001:2015 is an international standard designed to ensure that appropriate policies, processes, and outputs are in place to ensure a business recognises and effectively manages the most significant environmental issues and impacts and is based on the principles of continuous improvement. To be certified to ISO14001 businesses must have appropriate policies and procedures in place and this must be externally audited to achieve the standard. In addition to this, SSE undertakes regular internal safety, health and environment audits of sites to ensure standards are being met. For parts of the group not within ISO14001 there is an internal audit programme – this covers SSE's electricity distribution business and SSE's Distributed Energy business (see Environmental Auditing section).

SSE's ISO14001 certificates are available at sse.com/sustainability.

the environment that are certified to ISO14001, by reported revenue. The relevant business units are: SSEN Transmission, SSEN Distribution, SSE Renewables, SSE Thermal (generation and gas storage) and SSE Enterprise. See page 185 of SSE's Annual Report 2020 for more information



#### **Environmental auditing**

As part of implementing its EMS, SSE undertakes regular internal safety, health and environment audits of its activities to ensure standards are being met. SSE's internal audit process is guided by SSE's Audit Standard.

To be certified to ISO14001 standards businesses must have an environmental management system in place that meets these requirements and be externally audited to achieve the standard.

#### **Environmental training**

All relevant employees are provided training in environmental management. Determination of which employees are relevant is undertaken on a local-level basis and training is relevant to the nature of the business they are involved with. A quarterly forum consisting of relevant individuals from each relevant business unit has also been established to drive improvement and share best

#### **Environmental monitoring and reporting**

SSE monitors environmental incidents on a continuous basis

through its internal SEARS reporting. These incidents are published internally, split by business unit, on a monthly basis in order to monitor SSE's environmental performance and highlight any issues as they arise so that action can be taken. Annual key performance indicators (KPIs) are reported externally in SSE's Annual Report and, in more detail, in its Sustainability Report. The breadth of SSE's operations means that its activities are subject to a number of environmental regulations. Therefore, where necessary, SSE regularly reports environmental performance to the environmental regulators in the countries it operates in.

SSE's employees can report incidents of suspected environmental wrongdoing through both internal and external mechanisms with no recriminations, remaining anonymous if they choose. If employees are not comfortable raising incidents with their line managers, they can contact one of the five designated senior managers who have been trained to take calls for whistleblowing incidents. SSE also has an externally hosted 'Speak Up' phone line and email service, hosted by SafeCall, through which incidents can be reported anonymously.

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# SSE'S BIODIVERSITY **APPROACH IN ACTION**

The following section highlights examples of SSE's approach to managing its environmental and biodiversity impacts in action. It focuses on the 'Natural Environment' priority of SSE's Group Environment Strategy, which is aligned to SDG 14 Life Below Water and SDG 15 Life Above Land.

#### IT IS STRUCTURED AROUND THREE CORE THEMES:

Protecting, restoring and enhancing biodiversity Pages 13 to 16
SSE's actively manages its environmental footprint and takes careful consideration of biodiversity in its activities to ensure that it maximises

consideration of biodiversity in its activities to ensure that it maximises positive and minimises negative impacts.

#### Contributing to knowledge and research

Pages 17 to 18

Plans to manage biodiversity must be evidence-based to be effective and SSE actively contributes to knowledge and research to support informed decision-making and better environmental outcomes.

#### Connecting people to the natural world

Pages 19 to 20

SSE works to raise awareness and understanding of biodiversity and conservation, encouraging both employees and communities to connect with the natural environment around them.



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# PROTECTING, RESTORING AND ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

SSE's actively manages its environmental footprint and takes careful consideration of biodiversity in its activities to ensure that it maximises positive and minimises negative impacts.

#### PROTECTING SPECIES

#### Protecting swans from overhead cables

SSEN has recently taken steps to protect swans after being alerted to the potential danger of them striking the overhead cables near Caversham Lakes, near Reading. To address this, SSEN worked with The Swan Sanctuary who advised its engineers on the best locations for bird divertors to be installed on overhead cables near to the flight path of the swans living at the lakes; a programme of works that was completed at the start of the year ahead of the critical time for birds nesting and breeding in the area. The divertors are designed and placed so that they alert the birds with alarms, resulting in them avoiding flying near the live lines without driving them away from their original route.

#### Supporting common scoter populations

Since 2014 SSE Renewables has been a participant in 'Save our Scoters': a joint initiative involving the RSPB, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Forestry and Land Scotland and Nature Scot to protect one of the UK's rarest birds, the common scoter. The species has seen its number substantially decline in recent years to little more than 40 breeding pairs in the UK, and it has been designated a Red List species meaning urgent action is required.

The West Inverness-shire Lochs Special Protected Area (SPA), which is utilised by SSE Renewables for hydro generation, is the single most important site in the UK for the duck, but the population is under threat from several factors at the site. The joint initiative gathers biological information and investigates the decline of the duck's population as well as acting to stop and reverse the reduction in its numbers. Since 2017, the number of common scoters attempting to breed has increased at two of the most important managed locations in the loch system. In 2019, eight females and 11 males were recorded on Loch Loyne and seven females and eight males on Loch Garry. The number of eggs laid has risen from none in 2017 to a minimum of 14 on Loch Loyne and ten on Loch Garry in 2019 with two chicks eventually fledging.

In October 2020, SSE Renewables was chosen as a finalist for the RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards which recognises and celebrates businesses that can clearly demonstrate that they are taking a whole business approach to benefit nature in Scotland following its work to protect this species.

#### MANAGING AND ENHANCING HABITATS

Successful recreation of Great Yellow bumble bee habitat At SSEN Transmission's Thurso South substation, site of its award-winning bumblebee habitat creation scheme, further monitoring by the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust (BBCT) in the Summer of 2020 found the first recording of a Great Yellow bumble bee. According to the BBCT this is the first UK example of successful recreation of habitat for the Great Yellow bee. The species rich grassland is continuing to develop well, and minimal maintenance is expected to be required.

Incorporating biodiversity considerations into decision making SSEN Transmission began implementing its commitment to achieve No Net Loss (NNL) on capital projects gaining consent in April 2020. Biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessments were completed on five substations and one overhead line, with all but one achieving NNL as a minimum.

Success with the BNG approach could be seen at Rothienorman substation in Aberdeenshire, where landscaping around the substation included 11ha of wildflower-rich grassland, 4ha of new broadleaved planting and 3ha of scrub and ponds. This resulted in a designed gain of 60% of biodiversity. In addition, 680m of new native species rich hedgerow will be planted where none existed before the development. Other sites such as Alyth, with 92% biodiversity net gain, and Abernethy, with a 40% gain and 50% increase in hedgerows, have large biodiversity gains designed into the projects.

#### Enhancing eels habitat near Keadby power station

In 2020, SSE Thermal worked in conjunction with the Trent Rivers Trust to identify an eels habitat enhancement opportunity near to its Keadby power station in Nottinghamshire. The project aims to expand and improve on existing eel refuge habitat for juveniles in the Trent catchment and covers 6ha of wetland which is connected to the Trent by a narrow channel.

As part of the project, the existing channel on the site was regraded by extending and deepening the existing wetland areas, which involved removing 1,800m3 from site. The area was deepened with a series of shelves to provide water of varying depths to increase suitability for marginal plants to colonise, and to provide the perfect refuge habitat for eels. The new channel will help young eels reach the wetland in spring during high tides and the wetland will now hold water throughout the summer until the eels are large enough to return to the river. The work will also benefit many other species especially aquatic insects, small fish, amphibians, birds and mammals. A similar project will be delivered in 2021 in the Mersey catchment at SSE's Fiddler's Ferry power station.

#### Habitat management plans

For some planned renewable energy projects, as initially proposed, there can be potential impacts on biodiversity. In these cases, SSE Renewables strives to offset the potential

impacts by developing Habitat Management Plans (HMPs), or fund conservation activity conducted by other groups. As far as is practical, SSE Renewables' plans shall be long-term commitments to manage and monitor identified target species and habitats in order to ensure a positive environmental impact. These projects may also deliver net biodiversity enhancement

and through projects such as restoring degraded peatland or native broadleaf woodlands.

The innovative work SSE Renewables is doing around peat restoration is outlined in the case study below. Detail of SSE Renewables' HMPs can be found on page 22.

#### CASE STUDY

## Restoring valuable peatland habitat

In recent years there have been major declines in the extent of blanket bog habitat in the UK, principally due to afforestation, drainage, burning and overgrazing. Peat is the largest terrestrial carbon store in the UK and approximately 4.5 billion tonnes of carbon are stored in Scotland's peatlands. Blanket bog habitats need to be in good health to function as a net sink carbon store instead of as a source of atmospheric carbon which is what happens if the peat is degraded. As well as the biological benefits, healthy blanket bog provides food and shelter to a diverse range of wildlife and provides a pleasing environment for members of the public to enjoy.

#### SSE's management of peatland

SSE Renewables actively manages peatland across ten operational wind farm sites and their associated Habitat Management Plan (HMP) areas in Scotland. This is achieved through implementing a variety of peatland management techniques, which include: targeted peatland restoration; livestock reduction on sensitive peatland habitats; no burn policies; and forestry removal. The total hectarage of each management type is detailed in the table below.

Management Type	Complete/ Ongoing (ha)	Planned/in construction (ha)	Total (ha)
Targeted restoration	253	330	583
Livestock reduction	389.5	-	389.5
No burn policies	690	-	690
Forestry removal	354.5	-	345.5
Total	1,678	330	2,015

In Shetland, where SSE Renewables is currently constructing Viking Wind Farm, an ambitious peat enhancement plan has been agreed. The measures there propose the restoration of blanket bog across the wind farm, equating to 260 hectares or equivalent to 364 football pitches. When restoring peat and blanket bogs, SSE Renewables applies extensive efforts to establish clear peat restoration goals. On wind farm construction sites, this includes ensuring all handling and storage of excavated peat is managed as part of a wider plan for peat reuse and reinstatement to achieve these restoration goals.

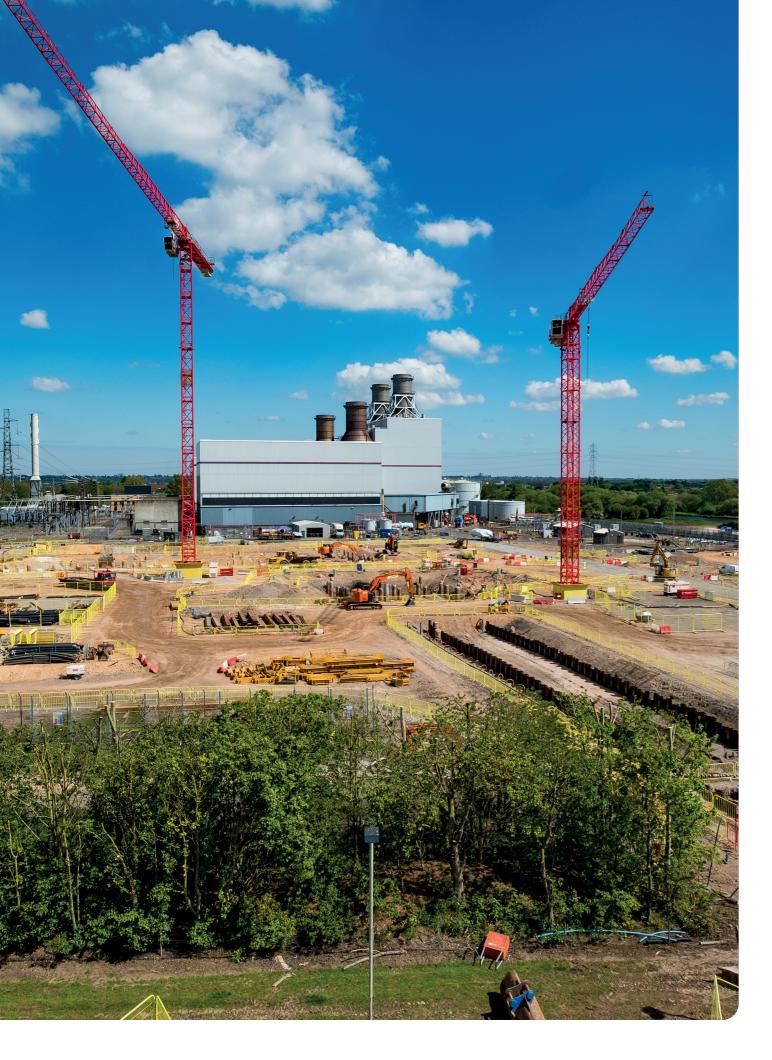
#### Recognition for peat restoration at wind farms

In October 2020 SSE Renewables was nominated for The Sustainable Development Award at the 2020 Scottish Green Energy Awards for its approach to peat restoration. The Sustainable Development Award is presented to a renewable energy project or initiative which demonstrates outstanding sustainability credentials, delivering significantly above and beyond good practice to make long-term enhancements to the environment and society.

SSE Renewables was nominated for its environmental work at wind farm sites Clyde East and Dunmaglass, where £80,000 has already been invested at both wind farms in peat restoration programmes. At Clyde East wind farm, annual payments are awarded to local farmers to encourage the removal of sheep in winter to reduce grazing pressure while the blanket bog recovers. Further investment totalling around £15,000 will be made at both sites in the near future.



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#### **CONSIDERING BIODIVERSITY IN SSE'S OPERATIONS**

#### Responsibly decommissioning assets

During 2020 decommissioning of SSE's last coal power station, Fiddler's Ferry, commenced. One of the significant ecological risks identified in the project's Environmental Management Plan was the fish life in the station's massive water systems including the river water settlement lagoon, wet ash lagoon and cooling water systems. Marine life has entered the site's systems through river water abstractions over the 50 years of operation and its own ecosystem was established.

Ahead of work to drain the north side cooling tower ponds in the autumn of 2020 a fish recovery exercise was completed. 1,300 fish were recovered through a controlled level reduction and netting exercise. As part of the process their species were identified and a health assessment completed. As there was a mixture of fresh and estuarine water species, two relocation sites were identified and used to release the fish back into their natural environment. Further fish recovery exercises will be required as the decommissioning and demolition project continues with other parts of the water systems.

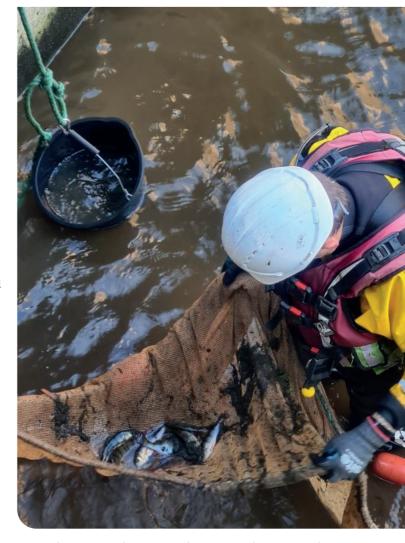
#### **Ecological management during construction of Keadby 2**

As part of the construction work for Keadby 2, SSE Thermal's new 840MW gas-powered Combined Cycle Gas Turbine in North Lincolnshire, the project identified several areas of ecological risk that required mitigation measures to be developed to safeguard protected species. Some of the key aspects of the Ecological management and improvement works included:

- To protect fish from entrainment at the new cooling water abstraction pumps, screens and a fish return have been installed to ensure fish are protected and safely returned into the canal when extracting water.
- Wild Orchid relocation orchids identified in construction areas were removed and replanted by a botanist from the Ecological contractor on other suitable land at the power station.
- Due to the potential impact on Water Vole habitats from the construction works, a new water vole habitat area was created as part of the project. Under licence by Natural England, the water voles were captured and relocated to the new habitat by competent ecologists and vegetation stripped in the previous habitat to discourage return to the area. Additionally, work exclusion zones around habitats have been established and a monitoring regime has been implemented for the water voles through the duration of the project.
- Installation of bat boxes to provide additional roosting opportunities on-site and encourage bats into areas.
- Detailed ecological briefings are included within the environmental induction training for all construction employees on the project covering the information on the protected species, exclusion zones and actions required if species are encountered.

#### Working responsibly in sensitive areas

During 2020, a number of detailed protected species surveys were undertaken by SSEN Distribution's in-house ecologist as part of the design stage of some key projects. The surveys observed a variety of species, including great crested newt (12)



projects), dormouse (two projects), water vole (four projects) and sand lizard (one project). Key examples of how SSEN has been working to take biodiversity into account include:

#### - Hunston to Rose Green 33kV circuit upgrade project:

Surveys undertaken by SSEN's ecologist for a new 4.7km long underground 33kV electricity cable confirmed the presence of water vole, great crested newt and reptiles within habitats to be affected by the proposals. The design of the project has been modified to avoid or reduce impacts to these species. For example, impacts to water vole would now be avoided by drilling below a watercourse as opposed to adopting an open cut technique, ensuring that all impacts to this endangered species are avoided.

#### - Longmoor Camp 11kV and 33kV circuit replacement

**project:** for this project SSEN is designing a new 1.7km long underground cable. The proposed route is within a heathland Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Protection Area that supports species of fauna and flora of national and international importance, including sand lizard, nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler. Ecological assessments were undertaken to inform the project's detailed design and impact assessment. Habitat enhancements will be delivered, including the creation of bare earth scrapes to benefit breeding sand lizard and heathland invertebrates.

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## **CONTRIBUTING TO KNOWLEDGE AND RESEARCH**

Plans to manage biodiversity must be evidence-based to be effective and SSE actively contributes to knowledge and research to support informed decision-making and better environmental outcomes.

#### Supporting vital research to save the Freshwater Pearl Mussel

SSE Renewables has been working with Nature Scotland, the Natural Environment Research Council and University of Glasgow to investigate how the Freshwater Pearl Mussel may be impacted by changing environmental conditions. Over the past 50 years there has been a severe decline in the number of populations across Scotland and those that are surviving are thought to be under threat. It is now illegal to fish for the mussels and it is even a criminal offence to touch them or to be in possession of its shells.

SSE has been supporting a funded PhD looking at the response of the mussels to changes in river flow and sediment. So far, this research has revealed some remarkable behaviour, that as water levels drop the mussels can move into deeper water – sometimes moving a number of metres to locate the right conditions. This work was originally observed in an artificial flume but has since been observed in the River Lvon where SSE's hydro assets can affect changes in river flows. The aim is that this research will enable SSE to further minimise the impact of its hydro operations on this iconic species.

#### Careers dedicated to environmental research and innovation

A leading biologist at SSE Renewables, Dr Alastair Stephens, was nominated for the prestigious RSPB Species Champion. As SSE's fisheries biologist for almost a quarter of a century, Alastair has played a key role in reducing the impacts of hydro developments on aquatic environments generally and for salmon in particular.

Alastair's legacy and current work for SSE Renewables is key to improving conditions, raising awareness and developing understanding and support for this iconic species at a time when it is under threat.

#### A tooklit for biodiversity net gain

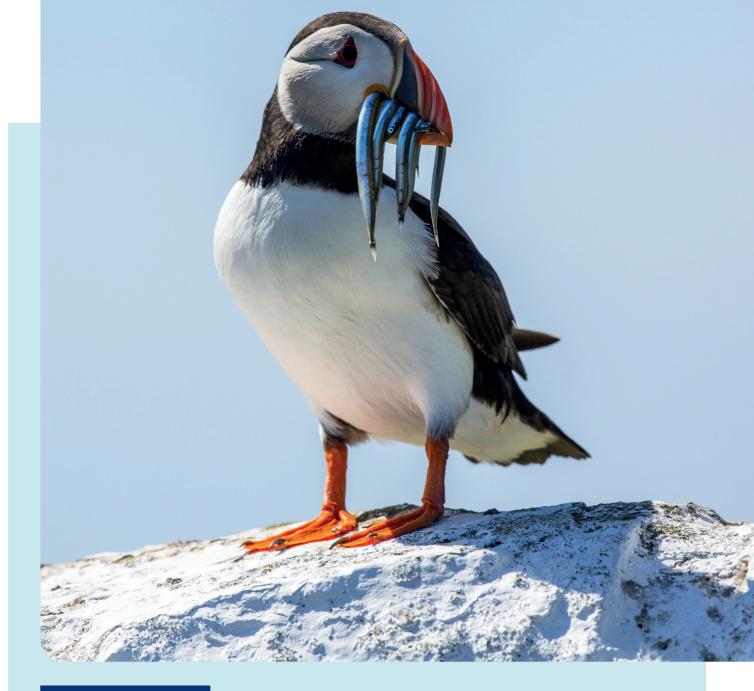
SSEN Transmission has developed a site optioneering toolkit as part of its biodiversity net gain approach, which allows a rapid assessment of the baseline biodiversity of different site or route options. SSEN assessed its first overhead lines during 2020 at both the routing stage and the alignment stage. At the route stage this has allowed projects to identify areas of potentially irreplaceable habitat and will reduce the potential impacts of our developments.

The toolkit allows consideration of biodiversity at the earliest stages of development and has won was recognised by a number of external stakeholders in 2020:

- Winner of the 'Biodiversity and Environmental Net Gain' category at the IEMA Sustainability Impact Awards;
- Highly commended at the RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards in the 'Business Award' category;
- Highly commended at the Utility Week Network Awards in the 'The Gamechanger Award – Networks' category; and
- Highly commended at the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence in the 'Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment' category for work on the Caithness-Moray project.



SSEN Transmission created new habitat for the rare Great yellow bumblebee at Thurso Substation as part of work for the Caithness-Moray project, which was commended by RPTI Awards for Planning Excellence.



#### CASE STUDY

## Using AI to improve species monitoring

A partnership between SSE and Microsoft designed to bring about digital and technological innovation, has implemented a ground-breaking species monitoring technique on the Isle of May in the Firth of Forth. As part of a planning condition for its Beatrice offshore wind farm, exercise on the Isle of May will support consideration SSE is required to monitor puffin colonies in Caithness and chose the Isle of May for its field trial because of its accessibility.

Working with environmental and natural heritage stakeholders and Microsoft a method has been devised using artificial intelligence (AI) technology to measure the health of the puffin colony. The special feature of AI, is that the technology 'learns' not to count the same puffin twice in the field of view, which means the method is highly accurate.

Accurate and comprehensive scientific data is the most important initial stage of any attempt to conserve species. This approach should deliver a more reliable and accurate way to carry out puffin counts. The of the approach to take in Caithness. It may be one step forward for puffin counting, but there are great hopes it will result in many steps forward for the accurate monitoring of other species that are important to SSE in its operations.

SSE started working with Microsoft at the end of 2019 on digital solutions and kicked off the first collaboration on puffin monitoring from May 2020. Many stakeholders are taking a keen interest in the results, which should be available at the end of the 2021 summer season.

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# CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE NATURAL WORLD

SSE works to raise awareness and understanding of biodiversity and conservation, encouraging both employees and communities to connect with the natural environment around them.

#### CONNECTING TO NATURE DURING CORONAVIRUS

#### The importance of access to nature

The ability to connect to nature and have access to outdoor spaces during the coronavirus pandemic has been essential for people's physical and mental wellbeing. SSE has a number of well-established ways in which it supports employees and communities to connect with nature, however the pandemic has, understandably, disrupted its efforts in this area. SSE's employee volunteering scheme that allows every employee to take one paid working day per year to volunteer for initiatives that are important to them has been temporarily suspended, and the community investment funds that support communities near to SSE's renewable assets were refocused to support local communities in their responses to coronavirus. Despite the disruption, many of SSE's assets have been able to continue to provide the recreational amenity for communities in the local vicinity.

#### The Galway Wind Way

The Galway Wind Way is a series of recreational trails at 169MW Galway Wind Park, in Ireland. Designed by working closely with community stakeholders, special interest groups, trail design and interpretive experts, it consists of six routes along 48km with three key strands to the interpretative signage: environment, turbine technology and cultural heritage. While The Galway Wind Way could no longer host schools, universities and community events during the coronavirus pandemic, the trails remained open for access by the local community providing a valuable resource for physical and mental wellbeing.



Pitlochry Dam Visitor Centre enhances biodiversity offering SSE's £4m Pitlochry Dam Visitor Centre (PDVC) promotes the heritage of hydro-electricity, as well as the present and future story of renewable energy. During 2020 when PDVC was unable to open to visitors, the team spent their time focused on developing their environmental efforts further and achieved a Gold award



from Green Tourism, a certification programme which recognises the commitment of tourism businesses which are actively working to become more sustainable. The introduction of swift and bat boxes, bug hotels and a wild garden for bees were just some of the measures put in place. When open, visitors are encouraged to explore biodiversity through exhibits including 'Managing Habitats' and 'The Salmon Lifecycle'. For more information about Pitlochry Dam Visitor Centre and its green credentials, visit pitlochrydam.com.

#### Supporting communities to increase access to nature

SSE Renewables operates a leading community investment programme, delivering financial support to a diverse range of community projects near to its renewable developments in the UK and Ireland. With the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, SSE Renewables' flexible grant funding approach enabled it to make £1m immediately available to support communities, ensuring the funds could be easily accessed by the organisations best placed to deliver a front-line emergency response. Despite the refocusing of the funds, communities still supported projects that connected people to nature, and during 2020 decisions were taken on awards, including:

- Nearly £13,000 awarded through the Drumderg community fund to develop a path network around Bamff Estate, an eco-estate on the edge of the Scottish Highlands. The work will include the installation of new self-closing gates and waymarkers along the routes as well as the development of an illustrated map and leaflet of the new path network. The project will be managed by Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust (PKCT), working in partnership with Bamff Estate and Alyth Development Trust, and will tie in with biodiversity and climate change mitigating projects and ambitions on the Estate.
- An award of £200,000 to Trees for Life (TfL) towards building the £2.3m Dundreggan Rewilding Centre, through the Highland Sustainable Development Fund. TfL is rewilding the Highlands by saving and restoring the globally unique Caledonian Forest, and the new centre will be located at the

10,000 acre Dundreggan estate that TfL purchased in 2008 to serve as a base for rewilding practice. The centre will be a world-class, environmentally sustainable facility that serves as a gateway to the wider landscape, encourages interaction with the environment, and delivers deeper understanding of the work being done to protect and restore the unique natural and cultural heritage of the Highlands.

You can find out more about the community investment funds at **sserenewables.com/communities.** 

### PROVIDING EDUCATION RESOURCES ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

#### **Delivering EcoEd4All**

EcoEd4All is a voluntary organisation formed by a group of individuals including SSE Renewables employees and environmental professionals, which aims to help mobilise and empower the next generation with the knowledge needed to create a more sustainable future. The organisation has developed free environmental education course material for second-level students in Ireland covering the key sustainability themes of Climate Change, Biodiversity, Pollution and the Circular Economy.

The educational course is different in the fact that it is taught primarily through powerful and memorable images that aim to engage students emotionally and leave a lasting impression. The image-based content provides great flexibility for teachers and can easily be tweaked to suit different educational purposes and jurisdictions. Teacher training is provided by the EcoEd4All team



following which teachers are provided with presentation materials which they can either present themselves or through a pre-record video, making it accessible to all teachers irrespective of their subject expertise.

In response to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, EcoEd4All was forced to take its education programme online. This shift to online delivery has allowed the team to reach more teachers than before, and teacher training has now been completed at 18 Education Centres right across Ireland.

SSE Renewables has supported its employees to develop this initiative and is one of the main sponsors of EcoEd4All. You can find out more at **ecoed4all.com**.

#### SSE Airtricity Eco Explorers Club in association with Dublin Zoo

Dublin Zoo is Ireland's favourite family attraction, attracting more than 1 million visitors every year. SSE Airtricity, SSE's energy supply business on the island of Ireland, has been Proud Sustainability Partner of Dublin Zoo since 2017. In April 2020, as Ireland was in its first lockdown in response to the coronavirus pandemic, SSE Airtricity took the decision



xplorers

to transform the Eco Explorers Trail, which was established in association with Dublin Zoo, into the Eco Explorers Club.

The Eco Explorers club is an online educational programme to support primary school children and their parents, which allowed them to continue their sustainability education from their own homes. It features multiple lessons across the subject areas of biodiversity, pollution, conservation, energy, and climate, delivered in a range of engaging formats such as animated video assets, virtual tours of Dublin Zoo and Instagram TV. The Eco Explorers Club was created to solve a problem faced by customers, their children and SSE Airtricity's charity partner during extraordinary times and has made a valuable impact, demonstrated by the 27,500 visits to the website and video content viewed 1.9 million times across SSE Airtricity social platforms. More information is available at **sseairtricity.com**.

#### CASE STUDY

## Slough's digital urban forest

In 2020, Slough Borough Council became the first UK authority to pilot SSE Enterprise's new Mayflower Smart Cities and Places, as part of a project to build an 'urban forest' in Slough. Mayflower Smart Cities and Places has been developed by SSE Enterprise to provide bespoke people and place data to help build the city of the future. The success of the urban forest will depend on data from environmental sensors. This includes soil moisture, root nutrition, sap flow, tree girth and air quality – all of which is analysed by Mayflower Smart Cities and Places.

By reporting data into Mayflower's Smart Environment, the Slough Urban Forest project will be able to project five, 10, 20-year canopy growth patterns and determine how the planting of additional trees can benefit the quality of life for Slough residents. Other objectives for the Urban Forest include: flood water attenuation in potential risk areas; increasing biodiversity for both flora and fauna in the borough; reducing air pollution levels in both residential and busy vehicle routes; and, reducing Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect in residential areas.

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# ENVIRONMENTAL **DISCLOSURE**

Disclosure of SSE's environmental impacts is an important way to increase transparency to its stakeholders and to ensure the company is accountable for its actions and decisions.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL INCIDENTS**

SSE has adopted an internal classification of environment related incidents, which reflects their scale and impact and are aligned with those used by SSE's principal regulators.

	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Number of major environmental incidents	0	1	0
Number of serious environmental incidents	12	9	11
Number of minor environmental incidents	41	22	44
Number of environmental prosecutions	0	0	0

#### **ELECTRICITY NETWORK ASSETS IN PROTECTED AREAS**

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) forms part of the SSE Group. SSEN's electricity distribution and transmission networks carry electricity to over 3.8 million homes and businesses across the north of Scotland and central southern England. This essential infrastructure covers a vast geography so will naturally cross protected areas. Much of the network has been in place since before protected designations were established. SSEN's focus is to maintain and operate these assets with minimal impact on biodiversity



ASSI	Areas of Special Scientific Interest
MCZ	Marine conservation zone
MPA	Marine Protected Areas
NHA	National Heritage Areas
NNR	National Nature Reserves
RAMSAR	Wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Areas
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Wild Land Areas	Areas considered to represent the most extensive areas of high wildness and given national importance in Scottish Planning Policy

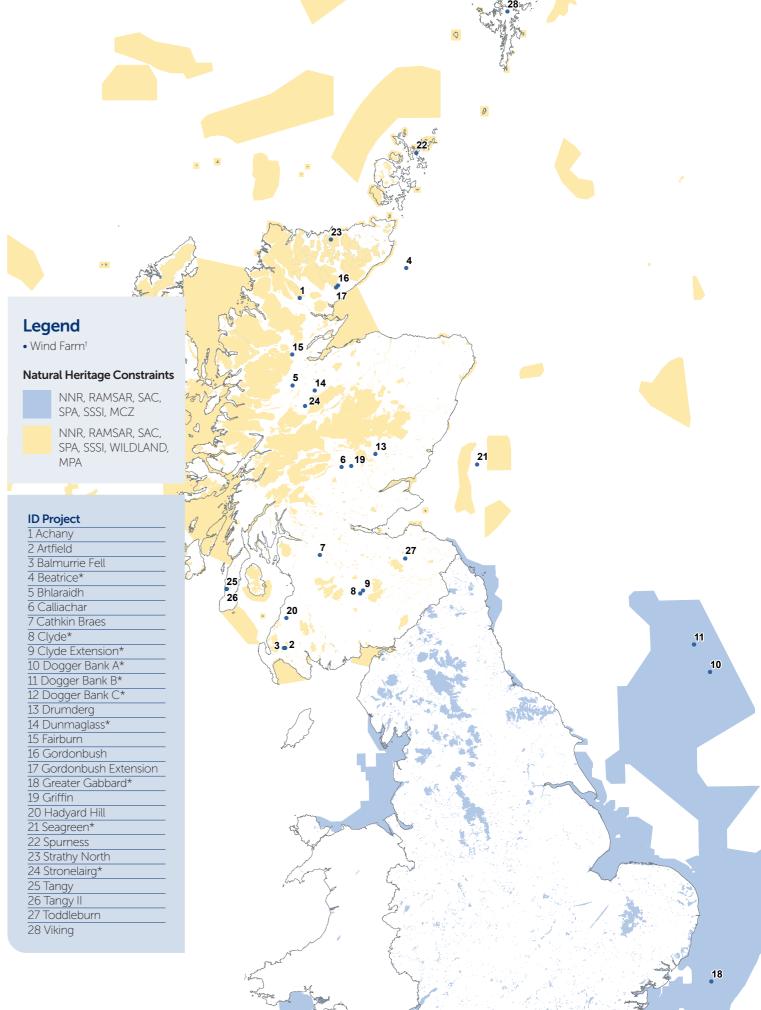
^Protected areas: National Nature Reserves (NNR), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), RAMSAR, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), National Parks.

#### RENEWABLES ASSETS IN RELATION TO PROTECTED AREAS

Site	HMP Details	HMP Area (ha)
Scotland		
Achany	Black grouse and water vole habitat enhancement, peatland habitat enhancement (with focus on foraging ground for upland waders), maintain populations of dwarf birch and mountain bearberry.	c. 2
Balmurrie Fell	Peatland habitat enhancement.	2.6
Bhlaraidh	Native woodland replanting, grouse habitat enhancement.	18
Calliachar	Management of wetlands, scrub, water margins, habitat mosaics, moorland management, bracken control, wild bird cover, late-mown grassland, open grazed grassland, woodland creation and extended hedge management.	223
Clyde <sup>1</sup>	Native woodland replanting, blanket bog and heathland restoration, grazing reduction, experimental Molinia control/heather seeding.	c. 2,880
Clyde Extension*	Native woodland replanting, blanket bog restoration, predator control.	2,411
Dunmaglass*	Habitat management, ditch blocking for blanket bog creation, deer management, heather cutting rather than muirburn, predator control.	1,899
Fairburn	Habitat management for hen harrier, merlin and golden eagle, heather management, bracken control and broad-leaved planting, ditch blocking.	4,711
Gordonbush	Forestry removal, moorland restoration, heather management, drain blocking, native woodland restoration, small scale agricultural activities, deer management.	5,350
Griffin	Native woodland planting, black grouse habitat enhancement, enhance habitat for mammal species.	892
Strathy North	Hen harrier enhancement, peat restoration, riparian native woodland, short sward.	1,020
Stronelairg*	Management for eagles.	481
Toddleburn	Enhancement of existing woodland SSSI, native woodland planting in other areas, create mix of wetland areas and tussocky grassland.	c. 70
Northern Ireland		
Slieve Divena 2	Habitat and bird surveys, red grouse, peat and snipe management.	17
Slieve Kirk Wind Park - Ardmore	Peatland and bird monitoring, grazing management, invasive species removal, aquatic habitat creation, watercourse protection.	580
Slieve Kirk Wind Park - Glenconway	Peatland management, drain blocking, invasive species removal, habitat and bird monitoring, bat monitoring.	21.6
Tievenameenta	Habitat and bird surveys, habitat restoration, ditch blocking, peat management.	42
Ireland		
Athea	Extensive habitat, bird and amphibian monitoring, habitat restoration and invasive species management.	250
Coomatalin	Breeding bird monitoring and waterbird monitoring of the nearby lakes.	N/A
Curragh	Peatland restoration, heather and grassland management, hen harrier and hydrological monitoring.	24
Dromada	Forestry removal, peatland restoration, drain blocking and hen harrier monitoring.	3.3
Galway Wind Park* - Cloosh	Conifer felling, replanting offsite, drainage blocking, bog reinstatement and monitoring.	59
Galway Wind Park* - Lettercraffroe	Conifer felling, fencing, drainage blocking, blanket bog reinstatement, enhancement of riparian corridors and monitoring.	2
Galway Wind Park* - Seecon	Conifer felling, replanting offsite, drainage blocking, bog reinstatement and monitoring.	174
Galway Wind Park* - Uggool	Fencing, grazing management and quadrat vegetation monitoring.	16

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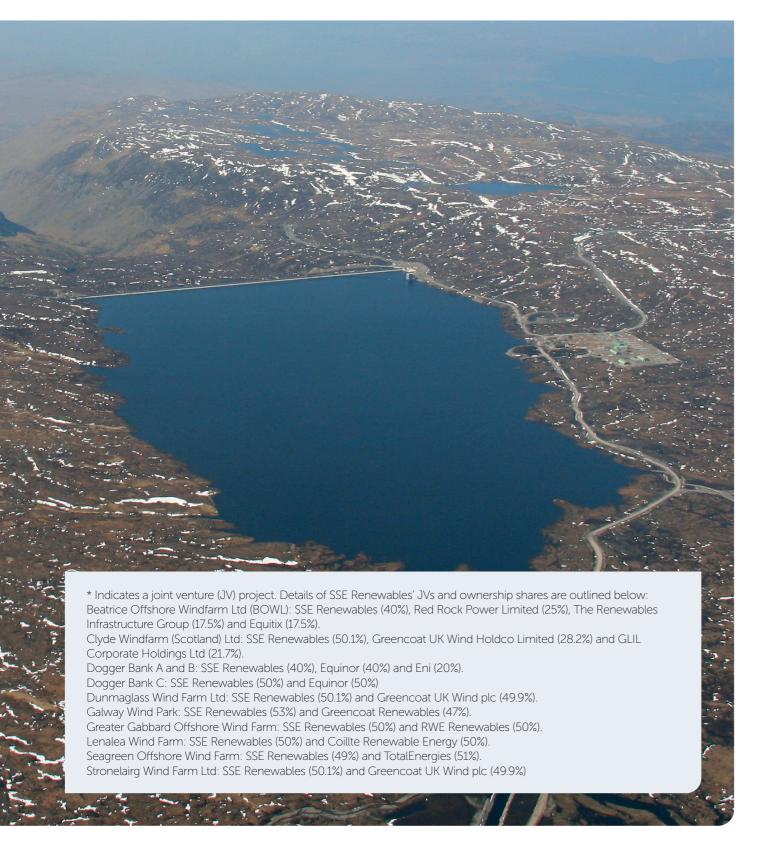
Wind generation assets During the project planning stages, as a responsible developer, SSE ensures sites are sensitively chosen when locating assets, to avoid legally protected areas. The following maps show SSE's wind farm projects, including joint ventures, in relation to protected areas. The maps focus on Scotland and the island of Ireland, where the vast majority of SSE's wind assets are located. Some designations and data available differ between countries. It should be noted that areas may be protected for certain species or habitats which SSE's assets will have minimal, or no, impact on. Due to the scale of the maps, project locations are approximate Legend • Wind Farm<sup>†</sup> Natural Heritage Constraints ASSI, NNR, RAMSAR, SAC, SPA ASSI, NNR, RAMSAR, SAC, SPA **ID Project** 1 Tievenameenta 2 Slieve Divena 2 3 BessyBell 4 BessyBell2 5 Glenconway 6 Slieve Divena 7 Slieve Kirk 8 Galway Wind Park\* 9 Mullananalt 10 Athea 11 Bindoo 12 Coomacheo 13 Coomatalin 14 Corneen 15 Curragh 16 Dromada 17 Dunneill 18 Gartinaneane 19 Kingsmountain 20 Knockastanna 21 Meentycat Wind Park 22 Rathcahill 23 Richfield 24 Tournafulla 1 25 Tournafulla 2 26 Leanamore 27 Lenalea\* 28 Arklow I 29 Shine

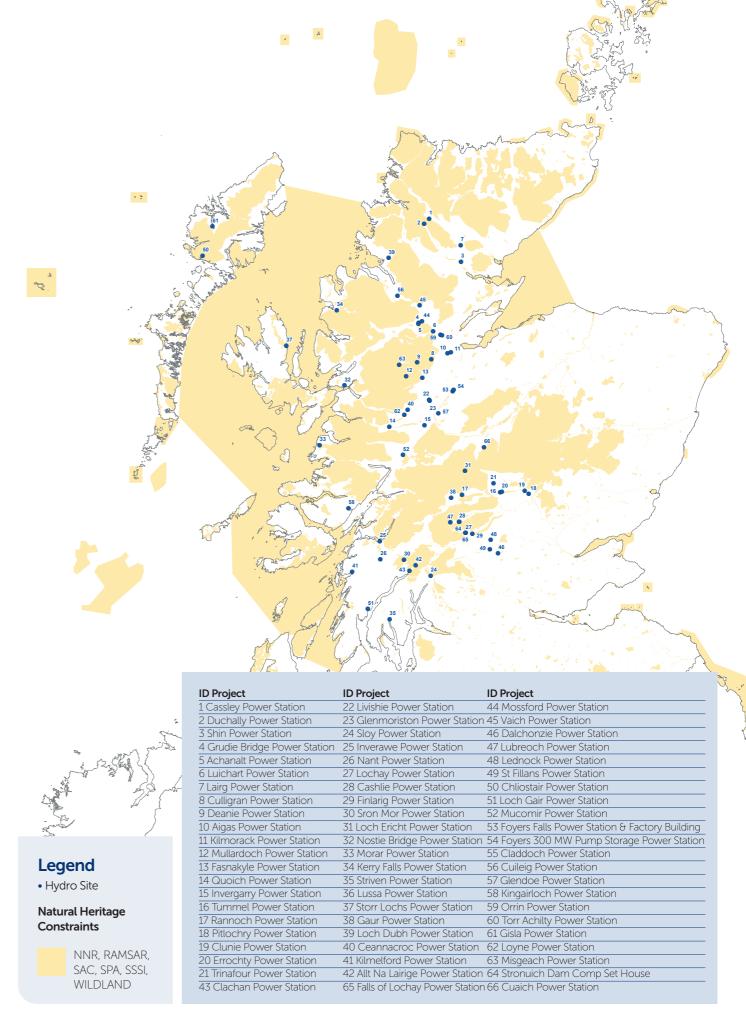


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#### **Hydro assets**

SSE's heritage has its foundations in the large scale development of hydro-electricity in the north of Scotland in the 1940s and 1950s, bringing power to people in the north for the first time with dams, tunnels and power stations which serve customers across the UK to this day. The vast majority of SSE's hydro-electricity assets have been in place since before protected designations were established. SSE works very closely with regulators, environmental organisations and local communities to ensure its hydro-electricity operations have minimal impacts on these stakeholders and the environment. The following maps show SSE's hydro assets in relation to protected areas. Due to the scale of the maps, project locations are approximate





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