



Gala North Substation and ZA Overhead Line Diversion

FAQ Document

1 General FAQs

Who are SP Energy Networks?

SP Energy Networks is part of the Scottish Power Group. We are responsible for the transmission and distribution of electricity in Central and Southern Scotland (through Scottish Power Transmission), and, through SP Manweb, the distribution network in North Wales, Merseyside, Cheshire and North Shropshire. Our role is to maintain, operate and invest in our network to secure a safe, reliable, and economic service for current and future consumers.

What statutory obligations does SP Energy Networks have?

Our statutory obligations are set out in the Electricity Act 1989 and in our transmission licence. We must develop and maintain an efficient, coordinated, and economical transmission system in accordance with security and quality of supply standards. We must offer to connect new power generators to the system and make sure any work we do keeps disturbance to the natural and built environment and the people who live in it, work in it, or enjoy it, to a minimum.

Who regulates SP Energy Networks?

We are regulated by Ofgem (Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets), an independent national regulatory body. Further information about Ofgem is available at:

www.ofgem.gov.uk

Calling Ofgem's Consumer Affairs team on 020 7901 7295

Emailing consumeraffairs@ofgem.gov.uk

Who will pay for this project, and how much will it cost?

Ultimately, the cost of our investment in the electricity system is partly borne by consumers through electricity bills, so we are obliged to be economic and efficient. We recover our costs through transmission charges levied by NESO.

The amount we invest in our networks and the amount we are able to recover is agreed with Ofgem, which is committed to working with industry, governments and consumer groups to deliver a net zero economy at the lowest cost to consumers. [Find out more about Ofgem.](#)

The final cost of the route will be determined by the overhead line route and substation design that is adopted, so it is not possible to say at this stage what the total project cost will be.

2 Project Specific FAQs

What exactly are you proposing?

Gala North substation

The proposed Gala North substation will be built on a site, approximately 4km south of Lauder, near Blainslie in the Scottish Borders. The substation itself will have a footprint of 6 hectare (ha) with the remainder of the land utilised for earthworks, access, drainage infrastructure, landscaping and screening.

The site is considered suitable for a substation due to:

- Limited visibility from the surrounding area
- Distance from nearby residential dwellings
- Proximity to existing overhead line infrastructure

The Gala North substation will consist of:

A 400 kV gas insulated switchgear in which electrical components are enclosed in metal casings filled with insulating gas. This section will be housed indoors in a building (image below).

A 132 kV, air insulated switchgear in which electrical equipment is arranged in open air compartments with air as the primary insulating medium.

ZA overhead line diversion

SP Energy Networks is also looking to divert a section of the existing 400kV overhead line (ZA route) that runs between Cockenzie and Eccles into the proposed substation.

The Gala North ZA overhead line diversion would involve removing part of the existing route and constructing new overhead lines, towers and gantry 'turn-in' connections. The diversion would comprise approximately 1.25 km of new overhead line, six towers, and two gantries to reinforce this part of the wider electricity transmission network.

Access

A temporary haul road is also proposed which connects the A68 to the C77 Lauder-Galashiels road. This option was selected as it is approximately 4km shorter than the alternative options considered, meaning construction vehicles would use fewer public roads and far fewer upgrades, like widening or adding passing places, would be needed.

Why is the Gala North substation needed?

With the increasing level of renewable generation that is currently happening within Scotland, supporting those assets requires additional capacity within transmission systems, with a need for a greater power transfer capability and upgrades within the network.

A number of energy generation and storage projects are contracted to connect into the Gala North substation. Two strategic, network reinforcement, 400 kV overhead line projects will also be connecting into the substation.

As these projects are in the early stages of development, they are subject to separate consultations.

Why this site?

The proposed site avoids any nationally or locally designated landscapes and is not located in close proximity to existing residential properties. The site is relatively flat, enjoys access from the nearby road network, and is adjacent to the existing electricity network.

From a landscape and visual perspective, it is favourable as it occupies lower-lying terrain and offers potential for further mitigation and opportunities to minimise earthworks.

How would SP Energy Networks access the site?

An access study was completed, which helps identify the safest, least disruptive routes for local communities while ensuring vehicles can reach the site efficiently.

Why was a haul road considered?

A haul road significantly reduces the length of narrow public road that construction vehicles would use, reducing the number of required upgrades and reducing impacts on local communities.

What are the benefits of using a haul road?

- Reduces pressure on narrow rural roads
- Minimises need for widening and passing places
- Reduces construction traffic through settlements
- Provides a more direct route to the substation

3 Wider Energy FAQs

Why can't you underground the cables?

Section 9 of the Electricity Act 1989 places a duty on the license holder to 'develop and maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission/distribution'. In practice this means an overhead line will almost always be promoted ahead of an underground cable connection due to the higher costs of underground cabling for the relative voltages and the potential environmental impact.

Underground cables would only be considered by SP Energy Networks where there is a specific technical or environmental constraint that cannot be overcome and only after exhausting all viable overhead line options.

You can find out more about this in our [Approach to Routeing and Environmental Impact Assessment](#) document, which is available on our website.

If an underground cable section is required, then the approach is to minimise the length of underground cable necessary to overcome the constraint to routeing.

An underground cable has different technical requirements and environmental considerations than an overhead line. For example, an underground cable will have less visual impact than an overhead line but may have greater impact on ecological habitats, species and on archaeological remains, given the level of ground disturbance. For these reasons, the route for an underground cable may be different from that of an overhead line.

How will the project impact the value of my home? Will I be compensated for the loss of value?

Studies looking at the impact of building energy infrastructure near homes suggest that any impact is short-term and that house prices tend to bounce back following construction.

