

Glen Affric Hydro Scheme monthly newsletter – May 2016

Work kicks off on Glen Affric hydro schemes

Green Highland Renewables has now started work on two run-of-river hydro schemes in Glen Affric on land owned by Forest Enterprise Scotland, SSE and part of Wester Guisachan Estate.

The two projects, comprising a 2MW scheme on the Abhainn Gleann nam Fiadh (AGNF) and 1.5MW on the Allt Garbh, received full consent from The Highland Council in 2013.

The projects are scheduled to finish in summer 2017 and together the schemes will produce enough power to supply approximately 2,750 homes.



Information signs at start of the Abhainn Gleann nam Fiadh access track

The main civil works contracts for both schemes have been awarded to Sinclair Plant & Contracting, who are an experienced hydro contractor based in Connel near Oban.

April activities

April has been a busy first month with the majority of activity focussed on setting up the main compound site office and welfare facilities at the AGNF laydown just south of Chisholm Bridge: this will service both sites and building the access road from Chisholm Bridge to the powerhouse site which is 200 metres further upstream.

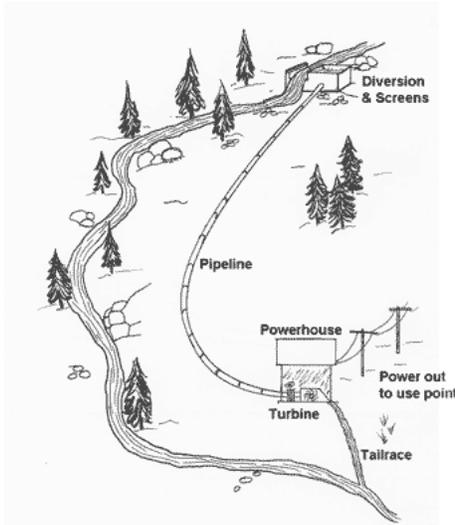
At Abhainn Gleann nam Fiadh we have erected tree protection fencing and stripped and stored the surface turf – which will be put back in place when the site is restored. We then started bulk earthworks which included widening the existing access road from Chisholm Bridge and clearing and levelling the ground where the powerhouse will be located.

In common with any construction scheme of this nature, health and safety is paramount and signage has been put in place at all appropriate points. The project's principal contractor, Sinclair Plant, has implemented a sign-in register and have developed a site induction for all workers and visitors to site.



The existing access track from Chisholm Bridge (public road) to the powerhouse has been widened for construction access

Penstock construction



A significant part of the earthworks for each scheme will relate to the installation of the penstock – or pipeline – which will channel water from the small intake dam at the head of the scheme to the powerhouse at the bottom (see diagram).

This involves constructing a track and working corridor alongside a trench which will ultimately hold the pipeline. This is a major part of the civil works, and although the works can appear disruptive, the trench and access track will be fully remediated once the scheme is complete.

At Abhainn Gleann nam Fiadh a track similar to the pre-construction path will be left up as far as the intake. Once the vegetation has grown back, usually after a year or so, the disturbed ground will no longer be visible.

We have already started work on clearing the working corridor for the Abhainn Gleann nam Fiadh penstock from the powerhouse heading uphill and constructing a temporary access road to the intake, following the route of an existing hill track.

Environmental management

Good environmental management is a critical part of any run or river hydro scheme and nowhere is this more important than in Glen Affric. Both Green Highland Renewables and Forestry Enterprise Scotland are committed to ensuring the construction and operation of both schemes are an exemplar of environmental good practice, in line with the approved project plan.

A number of environmental studies were carried out as part of the consenting process and in addition pre-start surveys have been completed with key issues identified and communicated to the project contractors.



Example of penstock access track – Loch Arkaig

The main points identified are:

- The removal of a number of specific trees has been agreed with Forestry Commission Scotland, and each has been checked and cleared for any nesting/roosting potential prior to felling. The position of tree protection fencing has been agreed and marked out on site.



Allt Garbh - bat survey of dead tree before it can be felled (none present)

- Sensitive habitats have been identified and marked on site to ensure appropriate measures to protect them are installed and maintained throughout the construction phase.

- No protected species have been identified as being present within the working area. However 'tool box talks' to contractors have included measures to ensure the protection of any species accessing the site overnight, including the provision of safe escape routes.

Public access

Throughout the construction phase Green Highland Renewables has committed to keeping all car parks clear, and there will be no path closures. As part of the Abhainn Gleann nam Fiadh project, work will start imminently on a new walkers' path at Chisholm Bridge, running approximately 1km uphill from the site compound and tying into a new Forest Enterprise Scotland car park, which will provide a new low level circular walk. This work is being carried out by Highland Conservation Ltd, an FCS approved hill path contractor.

The Cannich Community has been consulted throughout the development and in line with other developments on the National Forest Estate, the community will receive £5,000 per annum per MW, plus a five per cent royalty payment.



A completed Green Highland Renewables hydro scheme

Further information

In order to provide information surrounding each hydro scheme we have posted information notes at Dog Falls car park, Allt na h-Imrich car park, River Affric car park and at the foot of each scheme.

In addition to this monthly newsletter we will be providing up to date information to the local and wider community via the Forest Enterprise Scotland web site, Green Highland Renewables web site and a dedicated Twitter feed.

Web: www.greenhighland.co.uk/glen-affric-project

Twitter: @AffricHydro

