

proposed development it is possible to span certain habitats of conservation interest and therefore avoid direct impacts. In the following paragraphs habitat loss and disturbance is assessed in relation to tower locations, along the alignment beneath conductors, and at stringing areas (where machinery used during stringing process will be stationed).

- 243 No impacts are expected to any protected flora species as none were recorded and potential habitats are avoided.

6.5.2.1.1 Habitat Loss and Disturbance - Tower Locations

- 244 In following the precautionary principle, all towers have been carefully positioned to ensure that there will be no direct impacts on habitats of high ecological value. No towers are located in higher value habitats or sites that are identified as Key Ecological Receptors. Due to the nature of the proposed development, with careful design it has been possible to span or oversail the key ecological sites. Furthermore, habitats of ecological value outside of these sites have largely been avoided.

- 245 The greatest impact is associated with the locating of towers on hedgerows / treelines of moderate to low value (approximately 400m impacted). The maximum level of impact here will typically be 30m of hedgerow or treeline per tower location. Therefore, the overall impact will be 390m of hedgerow removal for the construction of the 13 towers identified.

- 246 Post construction, hedgerow habitat will naturally re-generate under towers. This is based on observations of towers along existing transmission lines, and protection of these habitats from livestock grazing; refer to **Appendix 6.3, Volume 3D Appendices** of the EIS. Hedgerow re-growth can be hampered by livestock grazing and or excessive damage to the soil structure around towers.

- 247 Stockpiling of spoil material has the potential to cause additional short term habitat loss should it be placed in a manner that would smother vegetation. Works areas located adjacent or close to hedgerows / treelines may disturb these habitats through inappropriate soil management or damage by heavy machinery.

- 248 The overall impact of direct habitat loss resulting from the construction of the towers in hedgerow treeline habitat is deemed to be a temporary moderate impact. This evaluation is based mainly on the ecological value of the habitats and the overall area of habitat involved.

- 249 **Table 6.14** indicates the number of towers that are located in various habitats, evaluation of impact and the potential area impacted.