Report

Ecological Impact Assessment

Proposed Battery Energy Storage System, Corriemoillie

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P01	01/11//2024	Initial	JRK	AC	MB
P02	07/11/2024	BNG terminology; habitat management table.	JRK	AC	MB

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1 Non-technical Summary

This ecological impact assessment report has been prepared by Sweco for Field Corriemoillie Ltd, and relates to a proposed battery energy storage system (BESS) at Corriemoillie for which planning permission is sought. The purpose of this report is to establish baseline ecological conditions at the site, detail mitigation measures that will be put in place to minimise any effects on important ecological features, identify residual effects and their significance including cumulative effects and detail enhancement measures to be incorporated into the development.

The site currently comprises blocks of Sitka spruce plantation with wet heathland rides between woodland blocks. Areas of upland acid grassland, upland birchwoods, Scots pine woodland, ditches and unsealed access tracks are also present. A burn is present on the southern boundary of the site. Of these habitats, wet heathland, upland birchwoods and Scots pine woodland are priority habitats. Following a preliminary ecological appraisal which included a UK Habitat survey and scoping for protected species, surveys for otter, beaver, water vole and invasive non-native species were carried out. A National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey to identify areas of potential Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems was also carried out.

During the protected species surveys:

- No otter resting places were identified, however incidental survey findings confirmed that otter use the burn at the south of the site.
- No signs of water vole or beaver were identified.
- No signs of badger were identified.
- It was confirmed through eDNA surveys that great crested newt are absent.
- The woodland edges were found to have some suitability for common species of foraging bat, however, the densely planted Sitka spruce plantation is of very low value to foraging bats. There were no potential roosting features identified on site.
- Rhododendron was the only invasive species present, in one area of the site.

The NVC community M15 *Trichophorum germanicum-Erica tetralix* wet heath and M15a *Carex Panicea* subcommunity is present on site; M15 is listed by SEPA as likely to be moderately groundwater dependent in certain hydrogeological settings. However, an assessment of the site hydrogeology by Fluid Environmental Consulting concluded that areas of M15 and M15a were unlikely to be groundwater dependent.

While impacts to golden eagle associated with the Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area were originally ruled out based on lack of suitable habitat on site, following incidental sightings of this species over areas surrounding the site, a Habitat Regulations Appraisal Screening confirmed there is insufficient data to rule out likely significant effects. A raptor vantage point survey will therefore be carried out to inform Stage 2 of the Habitat Regulations Appraisal - Appropriate Assessment. Given that the site is sub-optimal for this species, it is anticipated that mitigation for any likely significant effects identified will be easily accommodated within the proposals, and that these likely significant effects will subsequently be ruled out.

The following pre-construction surveys will be carried out to gather up to date information to inform appropriate mitigation ahead of works.

- Breeding bird surveys
- Badger walkover survey
- Otter survey
- Pine marten / red squirrel transect survey
- Mountain hare survey
- Reptile survey

Clearance of vegetation that is suitable for nesting birds will be undertaken outside the core nesting bird season (March to August inclusive), otherwise, a pre-works check for nesting birds will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to works. If active nests are found, then an appropriate no-works buffer will be implemented around the nest until any chicks have fledged or an ecologist has confirmed that the nest is no longer in use.

The Proposed Development will result in the loss of areas of wet heathland, which is a priority habitat. An area of wet heathland in the south of the site will be retained. These areas will be protected during the construction and operational stages through implementation of methods to be detailed pre-construction in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a Landscape and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan. The loss of wet heathland on site, outside the areas to be retained, will be compensated for through the restoration of wet heathland directly to the north of the development area which currently comprises felled non-native conifer plantation. This restoration will be carried out and monitored following a bespoke Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan. The loss of the non-native coniferous woodland on site will be compensated for by the restoration of a large area of wet heathland to the north of the site; wet heathland is of higher ecological value than non-native coniferous woodland. The loss of acid grassland on site will be compensated for through inclusion of this habitat in landscaping. Small areas of other priority habitats including upland birchwoods, and Scots pine woodland will be retained. The proposed development will result in a 24.33% increase in linear watercourse habitat.

A sensitive lighting strategy will be prepared and included in the CEMP to avoid light spill onto any of the habitats surrounding the site during the construction and operational phases, to mitigate any lighting impacts on foraging or commuting bats and other nocturnal wildlife. The following enhancement opportunities for securing positive effects for biodiversity in line with Policy 3 of National Planning Framework 4 will be implemented:

- Restoration of wet heathland within the biodiversity enhancement area;
- Creation of three permanently wet SuDS features, planted with native species;
- Bird and bat boxes erected onto retained and/or planted trees; and
- Inclusion of log piles in landscaping.

As a result of the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures no significant negative residual effects are anticipated from this development, and the proposals will secure positive effects for biodiversity. The Biodiversity Metric calculation demonstrates that the Proposed Development will deliver a 15.31% increase in the biodiversity value of area habitats within the Site.

2 Introduction

2.1 Purpose

This Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) report has been prepared by Sweco for Field Corriemoillie Ltd and relates to the Proposed Development at the land 200 m to the northeast of the operational Corriemoillie Sub-Station, Garve, IV23 2PY, hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

An initial ecological desk study, UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) survey and protected species scoping survey were undertaken for the site on 22 February 2024. The findings are included herein and in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report [1]. The PEA identified notable habitats on site and habitats suitable for notable and/or legally protected species and recommended further surveys to establish the ecological baseline. Subsequent surveys for great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), beaver (*Castor fiber*), water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), invasive non-native species (INNS), and a botanical survey to identify potential ground water dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTE), were carried out in June and August 2024. Following an expansion to the proposed Site boundary to incorporate a biodiversity enhancement area, a UKHab survey was carried out of additional areas on 23 and 24 September 2024. The results of these surveys are reported herein.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Establish baseline ecological conditions at the site.
- Provide details of ecological mitigation measures incorporated through design evolution as an intrinsic part of the project design.
- Detail any ecological mitigation measures to be implemented during site clearance and construction.
- Identify any residual ecological effects after avoidance and mitigation measures have been considered.
- Identify any compensation measures required to offset residual effects.
- Provide recommendations for how mitigation and compensation may be secured and monitored.
- Set out details of ecological enhancement measures to be included within the proposed development.
- Provide sufficient information to determine whether the project accords with relevant nature conservation policies and legislation and, where appropriate, to allow conditions or obligations to be proposed by the relevant authority.

2.2 Site Description

The site occupies an area of approximately 7.72 ha, 200 m northeast of the operational Corriemoillie Substation, and approximately 4.7 km northwest of Garve, centred at National Grid Reference (NGR): NH 35061 64099. The site is situated within the postcode IV23 2PY.

The red line boundary submitted with the planning application is shown on Field figure BTGBCOR01 – 002.1.2. Within this boundary, the areas that will be subject to development under these proposals, and were subject to detailed habitat survey are shown on Figure 65212332-SWE-XX-XX-D-J-0001.

The site currently comprises blocks of Sitka spruce plantation with wet heathland rides between woodland blocks. Areas of upland acid grassland, upland birchwoods, Scots pine woodland, ditches and unsealed access tracks are also present. A burn is present on the southern boundary of the site. Of these habitats, wet heathland, upland birchwoods and Scots pine woodland are priority habitats. An off-site enhancement area, located directly to the north of the site, comprises felled non-native coniferous plantation as well as small areas of heathland.

The site is bordered by coniferous woodland on all sides. Corriemoillie substation is located to the south of the site.

2.3 Proposed Development

The Proposed Development primarily comprises the construction of a new battery storage facility.

The construction phase will comprise of the following:

- Clearance of plantation woodland and wet heathland habitats on site, retaining some of the heathland, upland birchwoods and Scots pine woodland in the south of the site.
- Removal of drainage ditches, excluding the drainage ditch in the west of the site.
- Earthworks including lowering and raising ground level and establishment of a temporary construction compound;
- Construction of equipment platforms and foundations, including underground ducting and cabling;
- Diversion of existing drainage and creation of new drainage channels.
- Creation of three SuDS ponds.
- Delivery and arrangement of equipment;
- Cabling and connection works between battery equipment, ancillary equipment and substation compound;
- Installation of underground cabling between substation compound and Corriemoillie substation;
- Testing and commissioning; and
- Landscape planting, earthworks and site restoration.

The Proposed Development also includes restoration of habitats within a biodiversity enhancement area directly to the north of the development area.

The operational phase will comprise a battery storage facility. Construction is scheduled to commence in 2027.

3 Legislation and Policy Context

3.1 Current UK Legislation

The main pieces of legislation relating to ecology within Scotland are:

- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 (as amended)
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as (amended)
- Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act (2011)
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
- The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC.

All recommendations made in this EcIA report are in line with the above the legislation. The reader is referred to the original legislation for definitive interpretation.

3.2 Planning Policy

The recommendations of this report are in line with the key principles of NPF4 [2].

4 Methods

4.1 Technical Approach

This assessment has been produced following the CIEEM guidelines for ecological impact assessment [3]. As such, the work required has been carried out in accordance with the key principles of the National Planning Policy Framework [4] and Government Circular 05/06 [5].

The conclusions and recommendations for further works are in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

4.2 Personnel

This report was produced by Senior Ecologist Jo Robins King MSc, who has over seven years' experience in ecological consultancy including surveys and mitigation for a range of protected species and in producing ecological impact assessments. All surveyors used to establish baseline information have been trained or were supervised by experienced surveyors with extensive knowledge in the particular survey being undertaken. Surveyor names and qualifications are stated under each survey heading below. This report was reviewed by Ecologist Alex Clough MSc, who has over 6 years' experience and approved by National Ecology Lead Martin Brammah PhD MA (Cantab) BA (Hons) CEcol MCIEEM MRSB who has 20 years' experience in ecological consultancy and research.

4.3 Scope of the Assessment and Zone of Influence

The features considered for this assessment were designated sites, habitats and species of principal importance for conservation and species protected by wildlife legislation.

The features considered within the scope of this assessment were designated sites, habitats and species of principal importance for conservation and species protected by wildlife legislation.

The Zone of Influence (ZOI) is the area over which ecological features may be subject to change as a result of the proposed development and associated activities [3]. The ZOI varies depending on the ecological feature concerned and can extend beyond the site boundary. Where possible, ZOIs will be determined using the results of professionally accredited or published scientific studies. Where such studies are not available, the ZOI will be determined using the professional judgement of a suitably experienced and qualified ecologist. This is in line with professional guidelines [3].

Given the size and location of the site the zone of influence was generally taken to be the site boundary and its immediate environs only, although the following below exceptions apply:

- Statutory designated sites: The ZOI was considered as being 10km for internationally designated sites, 3 km for nationally and locally designated sites, and 2 km for Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) sites. These distances were chosen based on best professional judgement.

- Non-statutory designated sites: a 2 km ZOI was considered sufficient for non-statutory designated sites and Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS). This distance was chosen based on professional judgement.
- Bats: A 30 m ZOI was considered sufficient for bats.
- Great crested newt (GCN): a 500m ZOI from the site boundary was considered sufficient, based on professional guidelines [6].
- Water vole: a 10 m ZOI around any watercourse/wetland habitat from the site, plus 100 m upstream and downstream of any watercourses within the ZOI, was considered sufficient, based on professional guidelines [7].
- Otter: a 200 m ZOI from the site was considered sufficient, based on professional guidelines [8].
- Beaver: a 200 m ZOI from the site was considered sufficient, based on professional judgement.
- Badger (*Meles meles*): a 100 m ZOI was considered sufficient, based on professional guidelines [9].
- Pine marten (*Martes martes*) and red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris)*: a 100 m ZOI in suitable habitat was considered sufficient.

4.4 Desk Study

NatureScot SiteLink [10] was consulted to obtain information on nationally and/or internationally important statutory designations of relevance.

Records of protected/notable species within site's hectad (10 x 10 km square) were obtained from the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas [11]. Records of non-statutory designated sites are not readily available online. Only records of protected species from within the last 10 years are considered within this report.

Information on Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) and Native Woodland Survey of Scotland (NWSS) sites within 2km of the site was obtained from Native Woodland Survey of Scotland Data Explorer [12].

To assess potential cumulative effects, a search for nearby planning applications was made on the Highland Planning Portal. Additional information was gained from review of publicly available consultation material online.

4.5 UK Habitat Classification System Survey

A UKHab survey of the site was undertaken on 22 February 2024 by Ecologist Leonora Hunt MSc. Weather conditions at the time of the survey were snowy, becoming sunny, with a cool temperature of 1 - 5°C.

Following an expansion to the proposed Site boundary to incorporate a biodiversity enhancement area, an additional UKHab survey was carried out to account for areas within the boundary that had not previously been surveyed. An additional area immediately north of the site which was also procured in order to inform the most suitable area to deliver biodiversity enhancements, however this area is not included in the final redline boundary. This additional UKHab survey was carried out on 23 and 24 September 2024 by Alex Clough and Carol Greenwell BSc AMRSB ACIEEM.

A list of plant species was compiled in accordance with methodology required to establish UK habitat classification types [13] up to level 4. Level 5 was recorded

wherever possible, with care to accurately record all habitats of priority importance (if present). Secondary codes were added to polygons where deemed appropriate, taking special care to map mandatory codes for habitat mosaic, complex and origin. Survey was undertaken at the fine scale minimum mapping unit (MMU) of 25m^2 (polygons) and 1m width/5m long (lines). Key ecological features below the MMU in either area or length were mapped as points. The habitat classification highlights the habitat distinctiveness and whether they have the potential to classify as a priority habitat.

Habitats were classified and assessed in terms of both their conservation importance and potential to support notable and/or protected species (based on habitat suitability and/or field signs).

Common names and binomial scientific names of plant species identified are as they appear in Stace [14].

4.6 Use of Biodiversity Metric to Demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain

Whilst Biodiversity Net Gain is not a mandatory requirement in Scotland, as suggested in The Highland Council Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance [15], the English Statutory Biodiversity Metric has been used in order to demonstrate that the proposed development will deliver enhancement of biodiversity.

The Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.1 [16] was used to demonstrate the post-development biodiversity enhancement. This was completed following the guidance within the Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.0 technical supplement [17] and user guide [18] produced for the metric. A Condition Assessment was carried out on habitats present.

The information entered into the Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.1 calculator comprised:

- Broad Habitat;
- Habitat Type (used to determine Distinctiveness);
- Area (ha) OR Length (km);
- Condition (N/A, Poor, Moderate, Good); and
- Strategic Significance (whether the location is within the local plan (e.g. within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area) or not).

These data then provided a calculation of the Biodiversity Units for each habitat parcel which when summed gives the total Biodiversity Units of the site as a whole. The formula is set out below:

Baseline Biodiversity Unit = (Area x Distinctiveness x Condition) x (Strategic Significance)

The metric is divided into three sections: area-based habitats, hedgerow linear habitats, and watercourse linear features. The overall biodiversity score of the project is taken as the lowest-scoring change of these different habitat groups.

The Highland Council Local Plan was used to look at the location of priority habitats to assess whether the site is likely to be within the local strategy for habitat creation.

The habitats to be retained, created and/or enhanced were taken to be the proposed habitats as shown on Landscape Architect drawing: 2211 L01E Landscape Plan LVA Figure 5. These habitats were also assessed using the Biodiversity Metric 3.1 condition assessments to determine whether they will reach poor, moderate or good condition post development.

While Biodiversity Net Gain is not a statutory requirement for this development, the in-built trading standards have been applied.

4.7 Botany and Habitats

4.7.1 Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) Survey

Alex Clough and Assistant Ecologist Maisie Cooper BSc conducted a walkover of the site on 12 June 2024 to identify and record the location and extent of any INNS present, specifically any species listed on Annex B of NatureScot's Developing with Nature guidance [19].

4.7.2 National Vegetation Classification (NVC) Survey

Due to the potential for the wet heath habitats on site to be GWDTEs, a NVC survey was carried out to classify the habitats to determine whether they are listed in the SEPA Land Use Planning System [20] as potentially groundwater dependent. This was undertaken on 31 July and 1 August 2024, by Jo Robins King (FISC level 4) and Graduate Ecologist Georgia Barnett-Sadler QCIEEM. Weather conditions at the time of the survey were dry and sunny, with an ambient temperature of approximately 15-20°C.

The surveyors undertook quadrat sampling in 12 locations in the areas of UKHab classified 'wet heathland with cross-leaved heath – upland (H4010)' as identified during the PEA (hereafter referred to as wetland heath). The wet heathland habitat was divided into three areas because of slight differences in the vegetation (perceived as homogenous stands) in these areas; these were sampled with three quadrats in each area to ensure any different habitat or zonation was accounted for. Diffuse drainage lines within this habitat were sampled separately; these areas were small, and therefore were sampled in entirety. Three of 17 diffuse drainage lines were subject to NVC as representative samples of those that were present on site.

A 2m x 2m quadrat formed the primary recording unit with all species of vascular plant and bryophytes recorded. The location of quadrats and diffuse drainage line sampling locations is shown on Figure 65212332-SWE-ZZ-XX-D-J-0002. Separate recording forms were used for each habitat to document the species present and the relative abundance. The percentage cover of each species was selected using the DOMIN scale [21] as follows:

- 10 – 91% to 100% cover
- 9 – 76% to 90% cover
- 8 – 51% to 75% cover
- 7 – 34% to 50% cover

- 6 – 26% to 33% cover
- 5 – 11% to 25% cover
- 4 – 4% to 10% cover
- 3 - <4% (many individuals)
- 2 - <4%(several individuals)
- 1 – <4% (few individuals)

Frequency classes were allocated to show the number of times a plant was found in quadrats as follows:

Table 4.1. Frequency Class

Frequency Class	Percentage of Quadrats	Descriptive measure
I	1-20%	Scarce
II	21-40%	Occasional
III	41-60%	Frequent
IV	61-80%	Constant
V	81-100%	Constant

4.7.3 National Vegetation Classification Survey Analysis

To determine the vegetation communities on site, the community keys and floristic tables in the British Plant Communities Volume 2 [22] were analysed. The NVC Field Guide to Mires and Heaths [23] was also used. Species names including scientific and common names are as they appear in Stace 2019 [14], with consideration that old names as they appear in Stace 1997 [24] appear in the floristic tables and text. The systematic analysis and assignment of vegetation community types was undertaken by Jo Robins King.

4.8 Protected Species Scoping Survey

4.8.1 Badger

The site was searched for signs of badger including sett entrances, droppings, footprints and hairs. Mammal paths if found were noted and followed where possible.

4.8.2 Bats

The scoping criteria for bat commuting and foraging habitat suitability were taken from best practice guidance [25], summarised below.

Table 4.2. Suitability of Commuting and Foraging Habitats for Bats

Suitability	Roosting Habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
Low	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats, but isolated. Suitable but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats.
Moderate	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging.
High	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well-connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats. High-quality habitat that is well-connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats. Site is close and connected to well-known roosts.

Established trees on site were assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats by looking for and assessing any Potential Roost Features (PRFs). The trees were placed into one of three categories as described in the BCT survey guidelines [25] which are:

- NONE – Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any.
- FAR – Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree.
- PRF – A tree with at least one PRF present.

4.9 Great Crested Newt Survey

Ponds/ditches within 500m of the site boundary were subject to a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment to assess their suitability for GCN where access was possible, in line with relevant guidelines [26].

The GCN survey covered one pond within the site boundary and five ponds within 500m of suitable connective habitat to the site. The ponds included within the survey and their associated reference numbers are shown on Figure 65212332-SWE-ZZ-XX-D-J-0003.

4.9.1 Habitat Suitability Index Assessment (HSI)

A HSI assessment was undertaken on Pond 1 and Pond 7 on 22 February 2024 by Leonora Hunt, following relevant guidance [26].

The HSI can be used to assess the suitability of a pond for GCN, based on a number of factors including the size, water quality, permanence, shading, presence of fish, the number of nearby ponds and macrophyte cover. A score between 0 and 1 is given; where 0 represents poor suitability and 1 represent excellent suitability.

The results from individual waterbodies are also compared against a categorical scale as follows:

- <0.5 = poor
- 0.5 – 0.59 = below average
- 0.6 – 0.69 = average
- 0.7 – 0.79 = good
- >0.8 = excellent

An assessment of the suitability of the terrestrial habitat within the site and the surrounding area and the connectivity between ponds was also assessed.

4.9.2 Presence/Absence Environmental Deoxyribonucleic Acid (eDNA) Survey

Water samples were collected from Pond 1 and Pond 7 for a GCN eDNA survey. The eDNA survey establishes presence/absence only.

The eDNA sample collection was undertaken on 12 June 2024 by Alex Clough and Maisie Cooper. The sample collection was undertaken following SureScreen Scientific's 'instructions for sampling GCN eDNA', attached as Appendix A. These instructions have been produced in line with Defra's 'Analytical and methodological development for improved surveillance of the Great Crested Newt - WC1067 Appendix 5' [27].

Samples collected did not contain significant suspended sediment or other particulate matter, and water clarity was almost entirely clear within the Whirly-Pak (bag in which all water samples are mixed together during sample collection).

Laboratory work was undertaken following SureScreen Scientifics' methodology and following the relevant Defra guidance, as detailed in the SureScreen Scientifics eDNA report results appended as Appendix B.

4.10 Otter, Beaver and Water Vole

The suitability of habitat to support viable water vole populations was assessed using the Water Vole Habitat Suitability Assessment (HSA) method [28].

The survey area for water vole, otter and beaver included the burn (Coire Mhuilidh tributary) that runs through the site and an additional 100-200m buffer, and any ditches on site.

4.10.1 Otter

An otter survey was undertaken on all watercourses within 200m of the site on 13 and 14 June 2024 by Alex Clough, who has over six years' experience of undertaking otter surveys, assisted by Maisie Cooper. The weather conditions were clear and sunny, with an ambient temperature of approximately 22°C.

The survey recorded any field signs including spraints, footprints, sign heaps, anal jelly as well as resting sites, defined in **Table 4.3** following standard guidance [29]. Otter resting sites were considered to be "confirmed" if field signs indicated current or recent use (such as spraints or prints) which indicate that otter are aware of and have at least investigated such a feature. Resting sites which could be used by otter but at

which there was no additional evidence to indicate usage were referred to as "potential" resting sites.

Table 4.3. Resting site type for otter

Resting Site Type	Definition
Holt	An underground resting site deep enough that the back of the cavity cannot readily be seen.
Couch	An above-ground resting site that can be used for sleeping or grooming, including temporary "nest" within vegetation.
Breeding site	A term used to identify an area of land in which otters breed, within which a natal holt is located.
Natal holt	A discrete holt used by females to give birth to and nurse the cubs.

4.10.2 Beaver

Signs of beaver were searched for during the same survey undertaken for otter on the 13 and 14 June 2024 by Alex Clough and Maisie Cooper. This included searching for beaver feeding signs and droppings.

4.10.3 Water Vole

The suitability of habitat to support viable water vole populations was assessed using the Water Vole HSA method [28]. Watercourses were assessed based on particular features important to the establishment and maintenance of viable water vole populations, these are:

- Well-developed (>60%) bankside and emergent vegetation to provide cover.
- Year-round availability of food sources.
- Suitable refuge areas above extremes in water levels.
- Steep banks suitable for burrowing.
- Permanent open water.
- Presence of berm (ledge at water level).
- Lack of disturbance through poaching, grazing and/or recent management.
- Nest building opportunities in vegetation above water level.

These features are awarded a score of '1' if present and '0' if absent. The habitat suitability is then scored as follows: <3: Unsuitable, 3-5: Sub-optimal, >5 Optimal.

The first water vole survey of the watercourse on site was undertaken on the 13 and 14 June 2024 by Alex Clough and Maisie Cooper. The second water vole survey was carried out on 1 August 2024 by Jo Robins King, who has over six years' experience of undertaking water vole surveys, assisted by Georgia Barnett-Sadler. The weather conditions were dry and sunny, with an ambient temperature of 15-18°C.

The surveyors conducted the survey from within the burn wearing waders, and along the top of the bank.

Following standard practice for water vole survey [30], the survey comprised searching for field signs including burrows, runs, tracks, feeding stations, droppings and latrines 50m upstream and downstream of the site.

4.11 Limitations

UKHab, NVC, otter, water vole, great crested newt and invasive species surveys were carried out before a change to the site boundary was made. The changes have extended the boundary approximately 125m to the west, 45m to the north and 135m to the south-east. Subsequent to the boundary change, a UKHab survey was carried out to classify the habitats in the additional areas. Wet heathland within additional areas was assessed for its consistency with this habitat type within the original site boundary; additional areas of wet heathland are similar in composition to that within the original boundary, and as such, these areas have been classified as the same NVC community. Small, localized diffuse drainage lines within the wet heathland were surveyed and mapped separately; the diffuse drainage lines that were mapped in the additional areas are consistent in species composition and topographical context to those that were surveyed during the NVC survey, and as such, those surveyed in detail for NVC are still considered a representative sample for these additional areas.

The new survey boundary extends the area that needs to be considered for protected species such as otter, however, given that works are programmed for 2027, update surveys for protected species such as otter will be carried out ahead of this, and as such, this is not considered a significant limitation.

The NBN Atlas was used to conduct the data search for the desk study. Species records were obtained for the site's hectad. However, nearly all the available records were not available for commercial use. Additionally, information on non-statutory designated sites could not be obtained.

During the otter survey, access was not possible beyond a fenced and culverted area 140m to the south of the site. This has been accounted for in the recommendations.

Dense vegetation within blocks of plantation could not be accessed.

4.12 Impact Assessment

Potential effects on important ecological features are summarised with full characterisation and significance assessed for residual effects after the consideration of avoidance and mitigation measures. Any compensation and enhancements measures will be discussed but will not be considered when assessing the effects, in line with the CIEEM guidance.

4.12.1 Important Ecological Features

The important ecological features to be considered within the impact assessment were determined following the desk study, UKHab, NVC and protected species surveys. The geographic level of importance of each of the features was assessed, as recommended within the CIEEM guidance on ecological impact assessment [3], using the criteria in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4. Assessment of Conservation Value of Ecological Features

Geographical Frame of Reference	Brief Description
International and European	• Habitats that meet criteria for Ramsar, SAC or SPA site. • A species present in internationally important numbers (>1% of international population). • Notable species which is part of the cited interest of an SPA or SAC and which regularly occurs in internationally or nationally important numbers.
National	• Habitats that meet criteria for SSSI or an important reserve to Scotland. • A species present in nationally important numbers (>1% of UK population). • A species which is part of the cited interest of a SSSI and which regularly occurs in internationally or nationally important numbers. • Rare breeding species (e.g. birds with <300 UK breeding pairs).
Regional	• A local site with important regional habitats or significant populations of species of principal importance under the NERC act. • Species present in regionally important numbers (>1% of regional population). • Species listed as priority species, which are not covered above, and which regularly occur in regionally important numbers. • Sustainable populations of a species that is rare or scarce within a region. • Species on the BoCC Red List and which regularly occur in regionally important numbers.

Geographical Frame of Reference	Brief Description
County	• A local site with a habitat that is characteristic of the county or rare on a county scale, or with significant populations of locally important species. • Species present in county important numbers (>1% of county population). • Species listed as priority species, which are not covered above, and which regularly occurs in county important numbers. • Sustainable populations of a species that is rare or scarce within a county. • A site designated for its county important assemblage of birds, reptiles, invertebrates, etc. • Species on the BoCC Red or Amber List and which regularly occur in county important numbers.
Local	• A site which has wildlife corridors likely to be essential to allow viable movement of species or improve the biodiversity of the area. • Species listed as priority species, which are not covered above, and are rare in the locality. • Species present in numbers just under county importance (<1% of county population). • Sustainable populations of a species that is rare or scarce within the locality. • A site whose designation is just under for inclusion for its county important assemblage of a particular species on site. • Other species on the BoCC Red or Amber List and which are considered to regularly occur in locally important numbers.

4.12.2 Characterisation of Effects

The following were used when categorising the ecological effects:

- Extent.
- Positive or negative.
- Duration.
- Reversibility.

4.12.3 Significance of Effects

The significance of an effect is evaluated simply as significant or not significant, where a significant effect is an effect which either supports or undermines the biodiversity conservation objectives for the important ecological features or for biodiversity in general. Effects will be considered significant at a geographic scale from local to international, in accordance with CIEEM guidelines [3].

4.12.4 Confidence of Impact

The confidence of each impact has been assessed as being either certain, probable, unlikely or extremely unlikely. These are predictions arrived at using professional judgement based on the characterisation and significance of effects after mitigation.

5 Ecological Baseline

5.1 Designated Sites

NatureScot SiteLink [10] confirmed the presence of four internationally designated sites within 10km of the site boundary. Three Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and two Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) are detailed below in Table 5.1 and shown on Figure 65212332-SWE-ZZ-XX-D-J-0004.

Table 5.1. Statutory designated sites within 10km of the site boundary

Site Name	Distance and Direction from Site	Description/reason for Designation
Glen Affric to Strathconon SPA	1.6km south	Regularly supports a population of European importance of Annex 1 species golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos)*, with ten active territories in 2003 (2.2% of the GB population).
Achanalt Marshes SPA	7.3km south	Regularly supports a nationally important population of the Annex 1 species wood sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*). The site is also of interest for its assemblage of other breeding waterfowl.
Fannich Hills SAC	8.2km northwest	The site is designated for supporting diverse habitats including alpine and subalpine heaths; blanket bog; dry heaths; wet heathland with cross-leaved heath; clear water lakes with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient content; montane acidic grasslands; plants in crevices on acid rocks and acidic scree.
Ben Wyvis SPA and SAC	8.6km (SPA) and 9.2km (SAC) east	The SPA is designated for its nationally important population of breeding dotterel (*Charadrius morinellus*). Additional qualifying interests include breeding golden eagle and golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*). The SAC is designated for supporting the following habitats: 4060 alpine boreal heaths; 6150 silicieous and boreal grasslands;

Site Name	Distance and Direction from Site	Description/reason for Designation
		7130 blanket bogs. 3130 oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Litotrelleta uniflorae and/or of Isoëto-Nanojuncetea; 4030 European dry heaths; 6430 Hydrophiopus tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels; 8110 siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani); 8220 siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation.

There are no nationally or locally statutory designated sites within 3km of the site.

Glen Affric to Strathconon SPA is designated for supporting golden eagle. The habitats on site are not optimal for supporting this species, and as such, given that large tracts of more suitable habitat are present in the landscape, the site was originally assessed during the PEA as being of little interest to this species. As such, likely impacts to the SPA resulting from the project were ruled out. However, during subsequent visits to the site for further surveys, five sightings were made of golden eagle over three days (see section 5.4.5 below for details). These sightings have shown that eagles whose territories are within the SPA may use the habitats surrounding the site. A Habitat Regulation Appraisal (HRA) Screening has therefore subsequently been carried out; given that Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) to the SPA cannot be ruled out at this stage, the HRA will be progressed to the next stage, Appropriate Assessment, to determine whether the proposed development will result in any LSEs and whether mitigation will be required.

Given the distance from site as well as the sub-optimal nature of habitats on site for notified features, no impacts are anticipated on any of the other designated sites.

5.2 Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) and Native Woodland Survey of Scotland

There are 19 parcels of AWI, 18 Ancient (of semi-natural origin) and one Long-Established (of plantation origin) found within 2km of the site boundary. Two parcels are found within 200m of the site boundary.

There are 41 parcels of NWSS woodland within 2km of the site on the NWSS Data Explorer [12]. There are no parcels within the site boundary, however a parcel of native pinewood is present across the burn that forms the southern boundary of the site.

5.3 Habitats

The results of the UKHab survey are presented below and on Figure 65212332-SWE-ZZ-XX-D-J-0001. The results of the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey of the wetland on site are also included below and shown on Figure 65212332-SWE-ZZ-XX-D-J-0002.

The following UKHab habitat types are present on site (secondary codes in brackets):

- Other upland acid grassland (rushes dominant) – g1b6 (280)
- Bracken - g1c
- Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath; upland - h1b6 (H4010).
- Other standing water (ditches) - r1g (50)
- Other rivers and streams – r2b
- Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface – u1c
- Upland birchwoods - w1e
- Other Scots pine woodland - w2b
- Other coniferous woodland (plantation) - w2c (29)

The following habitat types are present within the biodiversity enhancement area:

- Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath; upland (H4010) - h1b6
- Other coniferous woodland (felled) - w2c 206
- Other upland acid grassland g1b6.

On site habitats

5.3.1 Other upland acid grassland (rushes dominant) – g1b6 280

Present in the southwest of the site, this habitat is marshy, and dominated by rushes (*Juncus* sp.) (Photo 1). Other species include mat grass (*Narda stricta*) and foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*). Further identification, particularly of less robust grasses, was not possible due to the time of year the UKHab survey was carried out, however, this does not affect the categorisation of this grassland using UKHab.

Photo 1. Grassland dominated by rushes. Wet heath can be seen in the distance.

5.3.2 Other upland acid grassland – g1b6

A very small area of acid grassland that is not dominated by rushes is present in the north-west of the site. Species present included dominant wavy hair-grass (*Avenella flexuosa*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), soft rush. Heather and cross-leaved heath were also present in this habitat but occurred rarely.

5.3.3 Bracken - g1c

Small patches of bracken (Photo 2) were present between the coniferous plantation and wet heath habitats to the east of the site. The ground cover beneath was largely bare, with some bryophytes present beneath the bracken including red-stemmed feather-moss (*Pleurozium schreberi*) and neat feather-moss (*Pseudoscleropodium purum*).

Photo 2. Bracken dominated area.

5.3.4 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath; upland (H4010) - h1b6

This habitat covered most of the area around the coniferous plantation, forming rides between plantation blocks (Photo 3). This habitat was also present in small areas in

the biodiversity enhancement area to the north of the site in gaps between felled plantation blocks, and alongside the eastern boundary.

Species included heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*), deer grass (*Tricphorum germanicum*) and included a bryophyte assemblage including glittering wood-moss (*Hylocomium splendens*), common haircap (*Polytrichum commune)*, red-stemmed feather-moss, neat feather-moss and *Sphagnum* spp. Common cotton-grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) was also present in some areas.

Old, scattered tree stumps also indicate that some of these rides have previously been wooded, likely with planted coniferous species; the tree stumps in this area are not from recent felling. A review of historical aerial photographs also indicates that areas of wet heathland on site were previously within plantation woodland.

This habitat on site is modified, criss-crossed by artificial ditches, and in some areas there is evidence of significant poaching and grazing, with dried, bare ground visible on frequently used paths (likely deer and possibly sheep). The habitat is generally significantly drier in sections of this habitat that are found in the northern half of the site, with many of the patches of *Sphagnum* spp. having a dry appearance.

This habitat was also classed as NVC community M15 *Tricophorum germanicum-Erica tetralix* wet heath. Further details are given in section 5.3.13 below with regards to the potential of this habitat to be groundwater dependent.

Photo 3. Wet heathland between plantation blocks.

5.3.5 Other standing water, ditches (r1g 50)

A network of ditches cross the site, draining towards the southeast (Photos 4 and 5). In places, the waterflow spreads across adjacent habitats forming waterlogged conditions. No aquatic vegetation is present in the ditches.

The ditches are typically clear of the tree line and run through wet heathland, with a vegetative composition similar to the habitat on their banks.

Photo 4. Ditch inside northern fence line.

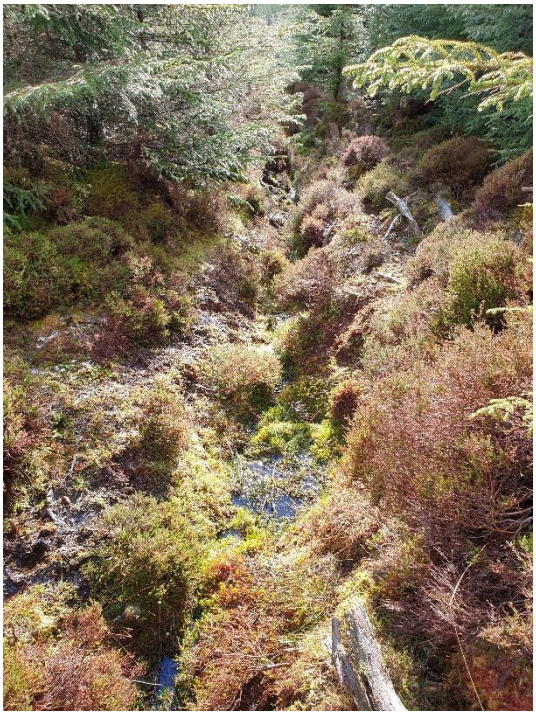

Photo 5. Overgrown ditch in the east of the site.

5.3.6 Other rivers and streams – r2b

A burn runs west (Photo 6) to east (Photo 7) along the southern border of the site. At the western end, the burn is wider, with steep banks on either side.

Photo 6. The burn as it flows west into the western boundary of the site.

Photo 7. The burn at the eastern boundary of the site.

5.3.7 Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface – u1c

Constructed artificial, unvegetated, unsealed surfaces (previous forestry tracks) run through the westernmost plantation parcel and link to the forestry tracks leading to the north, south and east.

5.3.8 Upland birchwoods (w1e)

A small patch of birch (*Betula* sp.) is present along the burn to the southeast of the site (Photo 8).

Photo 8. Birch has colonised the banks of the burn to the east of the site.

5.3.9 Other Scots pine woodland (w2b)

A patch of Scots pine is present at the southeast of the site (Photo 9). The ground, thick with needles, is free of vascular plants, however it has a bryophyte community comprising common tamarisk moss (*Thuidium tamariscinum)*, red-stemmed feather-moss, heath plait-moss (*Hypnum jutlandicum)*, waved silk-moss (*Plagiothecium undulatum*), and greater fork-moss (*Dicranium majus*).

Photo 9. Scots pine woodland.

5.3.10 Other coniferous woodland (w2c)

The majority of the site comprises non-native Sitka spruce (*Picea stitchensis*) plantation (Photo 10). The trees are less than 20 years old but, in places, the dense planting restricts the light reaching ground level. In such places, the ground flora is comprised solely of bryophytes, including common tamarisk-moss, waved silk-moss, common haircap, little shaggy-moss (*Rhytidiadelphus loreus*), and red-stemmed feather moss (Photo 11). In areas with a thinner canopy, the ground flora species composition is similar to the wet heathland surrounding the plantations.

Photo 10. Coniferous woodland overview.

Photo 11. Coniferous woodland.

Habitats within the biodiversity enhancement area

5.3.11 Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath; upland (H4010) - h1b6

A narrow strip of this habitat is present in the east of the biodiversity enhancement area, and small patches are also present in the center. Species present in this area include dominant heather and purple moor grass (*Molinea cerulea*) with frequent devil's bit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and occasional deer grass (*Trichophorum cespitosum*), bell heather, bog asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Sitka spruce, bog moss (*Sphagnum sp.*) and red stemmed feather-moss. Cross-leaved heath was present but occurred rarely.

5.3.12 Other Coniferous Woodland (Felled) - w2c 206

The majority of the biodiversity enhancement area comprised recently felled Sitka plantation. The remaining ground flora in this area included dominant Sitka spruce saplings with abundant heather with frequent purple moor grass and bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), bog asphodel (*Ossifragum narthecium*) and common haircap. Occasional bell heather (*Erica cinerea*), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) and birch were also present. Star sedge (*Carex echinata*) and cross-leaved heath was also present, but rare.

5.3.13 National Vegetation Classification (NVC) Survey and Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE)

No rare or notable species were identified during the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey. Appendix C provides the constancy tables for the species encountered in the quadrats.

The habitat that was identified as UKHab h1b6 fits best with the NVC community M15 *Trichophorum germanicum-Erica tetralix* wet heath (known as *Scirpus cespitosus-Erica tetralix* wet heath previous to taxonomic changes). The NVC classification is consistent with the original UKHab survey finding. Within the M15 habitat there were a number of diffuse drainage lines which supported a different plant community to the surrounding wet heathland. These areas were surveyed separately and fit best with the M15a *Carex panicea* sub-community.

The M15 is characterised by the constant occurrence of *Sphagnum* sp. across all quadrats, together with constant heather and cross-leaved heath, with heather being by far more dominant of the two. Another species that characterised this community was the constant occurrence of purple moor grass across all quadrats. *Sphagnum subnitens* was also constant, which is consistent with this community. M15 is known to be very variable, with some species that are listed as constants in the floristic tables often varying in dominance or being either sparse or absent. In this case, deer grass was not present in all areas, and common cotton-grass was absent from most quadrats. Notwithstanding this, the other constants and the community composition of this habitat were still most consistent with M15.

M15 is listed as a habitat that is consistent with the Annex I Habitat 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*. While this is an Annex I habitat, it is not in the NatureScot list of Annex I features that qualify for designation of SAC [31].

The diffuse drainage lines within the habitat fit best with the M15a sub-community. Purple moor grass, heather and cross-leaved heath were constant, as well as tormentil, all of which are consistent with the M15a NVC community. Round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) was also constant, as well as bulbous rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), which was constant with the highest dominance across all samples. Star sedge and common yellow-sedge (*Carex demissa*) were also constant. While carnation sedge (*Carex panicea*) was not as high in prominence as is typical for this habitat, it was present in one of the areas sampled.

The areas of M15a typically contained patches of wet bare ground. These areas did not contain standing water at the time of the survey. The M15a areas appeared to be associated with topography, occurring close to tracks where water flows down the gradient. They were also found close to artificial drainage ditches. This is consistent with the description in the British Plant Communities 2, which states that M15a is “typically found in small stands, often in obvious soakaways or water tracks”.

The assessment caried out by Fluid Environmental Consulting confirmed that neither the M15 or the M15a habitats are likely to be supported by a substantial groundwater component [32]. This assessment has been included as part of the planning application.

M15a is not differentiated from M15 in the description of the 4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* priority habitat.

5.4 Species

5.4.1 Plants

There were no records of notable or protected species from within the hectad.

5.4.2 Invertebrates

Available records of invertebrates were restricted to Lepidoptera. Species recorded within the hectad include the priority species brindled beauty (*Lycia hirtaria*), goat moth (*Cossus cossus*), oblique carpet (*Orthonama vittate*), streak (*Chesias legatella*) and white ermine (*Spilosoma lubricipeda*).

The grassland, heathland and woodland habitats on site have the potential to support a common assemblage of invertebrate species.

5.4.3 Amphibians

There were records of common toad (*Bufo bufo*), common frog (*Rana temporaria*) and palmate newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*) from within the hectad. There are no nearby records of GCN.

There is one pond on site and six waterbodies within 500m of the site boundary, shown on Figure 65212332-SWE-ZZ-XX-D-J-0003 and described in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Waterbody descriptions and scoping

Waterbody ID	Location and description	Scoped in for HSI
P1	NH 34905 63884. Lined, artificial pond (Photo 12) set into young broadleaf plantation, adjacent to the existing sub-station.  **Photo 12. Pond located to the southwest of site.**	Yes
P2	NH 35521 64302. On far side of fast flowing Allt Coire Mhuilidh.	No – no connectivity to site
P3	NH 35572 64247. On far side of fast flowing Allt Coire Mhuilidh.	No – no connectivity to site
P4	NH 35541 63650. On far side of fast flowing Allt Coire Mhuilidh.	No – no connectivity to site

P5	NH 35085 63522. On far side of A832.	No – no connectivity to site
P6	NH 34984 65674 – reservoir behind hydroelectric dam.	No – reservoir limited suitability; too high altitude (290m)
P7	NH 34903 64133. Approximately 2m^2 and up to 30cm deep (Photo 13). Formed in a depression in material on site and lacking aquatic vegetation, although filamentous algae suggests a permanent presence of water. Given the location's high precipitation, it was considered possible that it is suitable for use by breeding amphibians.  **Photo 13. Small area of open water on site.**	Yes

The HSI assessment carried out on ponds 1 and 7 concluded the ponds were of poor suitability for GCN, although the grassland, heath and woodland offer suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians. Results are shown below in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3. GCN HSI assessment results

Feature	Pond 1	Pond 7
OS Grid Reference	NH 34905 63884	NH 34903 64133
Geographic Location	0.01	0.01
Pond Area	0.6	0.05
Permanence	0.9	0.1
Water quality	0.67	0.33
Shade	1	1
Waterfowl	0.67	1
Fish	1	1
Pond count	0.1	1
Terrestrial habitat	0.67	1
Macrophytes	0.3	0.3
Score	0.37 - Poor	0.29 - Poor

Given that a population of GCN is known to be present in the Inverness area, eDNA sampling was carried out on ponds 1 and 7, and both returned a negative result. GCN are therefore not considered further.

5.4.4 Reptiles

There are records of adder (*Vipera berus*) within the hectad.

There is potential foraging and basking habitats on site for common reptiles within the grassland and heathland areas.

5.4.5 Birds

Listed below in Table 5.4 are notable bird species recorded within the hectad. These include bird species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA1), the European Birds Directive, Annex 1 (BD Annex 1), Priority Species listed in the Highland Nature Biodiversity Action Plan and Scottish Biodiversity List (HNBAP & SBL) and those with a conservation status currently listed as red[1] or amber[2] by the 5th review of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) [33].

The grassland, heath and woodland provide potential wintering and breeding habitat for numerous notable species of bird on site.

Table 5.4. Results of the database search for bird species records

[1] Red is the highest conservation priority with species requiring urgent action and includes globally threatened species and species that have experienced a sever historical decline. A summary of relevant factors can be accessed via the RSPB website: https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/uk-conservation-status-explained/

[2] Amber is the next most critical group after red and includes species which have suffered a moderate decline. A summary of relevant factors can be accessed via the RSPB website: https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/uk-conservation-status-explained/

Common name	Scientific name	BOCC / WCA / BD Annex 1
Black Grouse	*Lyrurus tetrix*	Red BOCC, SBL, HNBAP
Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*	Amber BOCC,
Common Gull	*Larus canus*	Amber BOCC
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	Amber BOCC
Cuckoo	*Cuculus canorus*	Red BOCC, SBL,
Greenfinch	*Chloris chloris*	Red BOCC
Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*	Amber BOCC, WCA1, HNBAP
House Martin	*Delichon urbicum*	Red BOCC
House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	Red BOCC, SBL
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	Amber BOCC, SBL
Lesser Redpoll	*Acanthis cabaret*	Red BOCC, SBL
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*	Amber BOCC,
Meadow Pipit	*Anthus pratensis*	Amber BOCC
Mistle Thrush	*Turdus viscivorus*	Red BOCC
Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*	Amber BOCC, WCA1, SBL, BD Annex 1
Red Kite	*Milvus milvus*	WCA1, SBL, HNBAP, BD Annex 1
Red-throated Diver	*Gavia stellata*	WCA1, SBL, HNBAP, BD Annex 1
Skylark	*Alauda arvensis*	Red BOCC
Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	Amber BOCC, HNBAP
Song Thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	Amber BOCC, SBL,
Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*	Amber BOCC
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	Red BOCC, SBL,
Tawny Owl	*Strix aluco*	Amber BOCC
Tree Pipit	*Anthus trivialis*	Red BOCC, SBL,
Wheatear	*Oenanthe oenanthe*	Amber BOCC
Willow Warbler	*Phylloscopus trochilus*	Amber BOCC
Wood Warbler	*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*	Red BOCC, SBL
Woodpigeon	*Columba palumbus*	Amber BOCC
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	Amber BOCC
Yellowhammer	*Emberiza citrinella*	Red BOCC, SBL

Golden Eagle were incidentally observed flying over site five times during the protected species surveys on 12 and 13 June, and during the NVC survey on 31 July.

One osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) was recorded flying over the site on 1 August carrying a fish.

A pair of red kite were also incidentally observed on site and were suspected to be breeding, during the protected species surveys on 12 and 13 June.

5.4.6 Bats

There are records of at least two species of bat within the hectad. The species include brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) and pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus* sp.).

The habitats on site, in particular the woodland edges, provide commuting and foraging habitat for bats.

The plantation on site is young (less than 20 years) and no roost features were identified during the survey. It is considered unlikely that roost features are on site due to the species and age of the trees, however a comprehensive roost assessment of all trees on site was not possible due to the density of the vegetation.

Densely planted commercial coniferous plantation like that which is present on site is typically avoided by foraging bats [34].

5.4.7 Badger

There are records of badger within the hectad.

The grassland, heath and woodland provide suitable habitat for badger setts and foraging. No badger field signs were observed on site, however, the dense vegetation prevented access in places.

5.4.8 Otter

There are no records of otter from within the hectad.

There is one watercourse on site, Allt Coire Mhuillidh, that runs along the southern border of the site.

No field signs of otter were identified on site during the PEA, however recent snowfall led to an increase in waterflow which may have washed evidence away.

No field signs of otter were identified during the targeted otter survey.

One spraint was identified on Allt Coire Mhuillidh during the water vole survey in August 2024, underneath the bank's heather overhang (see Figure 65212332-SWE-ZZ-XX-D-J-0003).

No otter resting places were identified during either survey.

Beaver

There are no records of beaver from within the hectad and no signs of this species were identified during surveys. Beaver are not considered further.

Water Vole

There are no records of water vole from the hectad, however the burn along the southern boundary was subject to an HSA.

The suitability of the Allt Coire Mhuillidh of the site for water vole was assessed as optimal. Habitat suitability features which scored well included the presence of open water, refuge areas above the water level, lack of disturbance and nest building opportunities. Table 5.5 below summarises the results of the water vole HSA and the full habitat suitability results are provided in Appendix D.

Table 5.5. Water vole HSA results

Section	Approximate Section Length (m)	Habitat Suitability Score	Habitat Suitability Category
1	100	6	Optimal
2	100	6	Optimal
3	100	6	Optimal
4	100	6	Optimal

No field signs of water vole were identified on site during the PEA (February 2024) or during further water vole surveys undertaken in June and August 2024. Water vole are therefore not considered further.

5.4.9 Pine Marten and Red Squirrel

There are no records of pine marten but there are records of red squirrel within the hectad. Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels sightings map [35] shows red squirrels have been recorded within 500m of the site.

Some of the more mature areas of woodland near to site, and in particular the Scots pine to the south of the site, could be suitable for these species. No signs of either species were recorded during the survey.

5.4.10 Mountain Hare

There are no records of mountain hare (*Lepus timidus*) within the hectad. Habitats on site are not optimal for this species but have some potential to support them.

5.4.11 Other mammals

There is potential for the dense scrub and woodland to support hedgehogs on site.

5.4.12 Invasive Species

There are records of rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) from within the hectad.

There was one stand of rhododendron identified within the site boundary, and two stands across the burn that forms the southern boundary of the site (Photo 14).

Photo 14. Rhododendron shrub and sapling.

6 Assessment of Effects

The evaluation in this section is based on the site surveys undertaken as described above. For purposes of the assessment, it is assumed there has been no change in the condition of the site since the site surveys (unless otherwise stated).

The detailed mitigation and enhancement measures with regards to NPF4 is included as Appendix E.

6.1 Important Ecological Features for Which No Effect is Anticipated

Three internationally designated sites within 10km of the site boundary are not expected to be impacted, including Achanalt Marshes SPA, Fannich Hills SAC and Ben Wyvis SPA and SAC.

6.2 Important Ecological Features and Potential Effects

The features which are considered important in the context of the site and so will be the subject of the ecological impact assessment are listed in Table 6.1 below, along with their geographic importance.

Table 6.1. Important Ecological Features and Their Geographic Importance

Important Ecological Feature	Legislation/ Policy	Geographic Importance of Ecological Feature	Potential Effects
Glen Affric to Strathconon SPA – Golden Eagle	HabRegs	International	Disturbance during construction.
Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* Annex I Habitat	HabRegs NCA NPF4	Local	Loss of priority habitat. Damage / fragmentation of priority habitat.
Upland birchwoods	NCA NPF4	Local	Loss of priority habitat. Damage / fragmentation of priority habitat.
Scots pine woodland	NCA NPF4	Local	Loss of priority habitat. Damage / fragmentation of priority habitat.
Reptiles (if present)	WCA Sch 5	Local	Loss of habitat. Killing/injury of reptiles.
Breeding birds	WCA BoCC Red / Amber BD Annex 1	Local/ Regional/ National (Dependent on results of surveys)	Damage and destruction of nests, eggs and/or chicks during site clearance. Loss of nesting habitat. Disturbance of schedule 1 species.
Upland acid grassland	N/A	Not important at a local level	Loss of habitat. Damage / fragmentation of habitat.
Other coniferous woodland	N/A	Not important at a local level	Loss of habitat. Fragmentation of habitat.

Important Ecological Feature	Legislation/ Policy	Geographic Importance of Ecological Feature	Potential Effects
Bats	WCA Sch 5 HabRegs HNBAP	Local	Loss of commuting and foraging habitat. Disturbance due to increased lighting/construction works.
Otter	WCA Sch 5 HabRegs	Local	Killing/injury/capture of otter. Damage or destruction of a resting place or breeding place for otter. Disturbance of otter which may impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or affect significantly the local distribution of this species. Obstruction of access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by an otter. Disturbance of an otter while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.
Badger	PBA	Not important at a local level	Killing/injury of badger.
Mountain hare	WCA HNBAP	Local	Killing/injury. Disturbing while in a place of shelter. Damage or destruction or obstructing access to a place of shelter.
Pine marten	WCA HNBAP	Local	Killing/injury. Disturbing while in a place of shelter. Damage or destruction or obstructing access to a place of shelter.
Red squirrel	WCA HNBAP	Local	Killing/injury. Disturbing while in a place of shelter. Damage or destruction or obstructing access to a place of shelter.
Rhododendron	WCA (as	Not important at a local level	Spreading non-native species.

Important Ecological Feature	Legislation/ Policy	Geographic Importance of Ecological Feature	Potential Effects

WCA - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). **WCA Sch 1** - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 1. **WCA Sch 5** - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 5 (killing, injuring and sale of animals). **NCA** Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. **WFD** Water Framework Directive 2000. **BD Annex 1**- European Birds Directive, Annex 1. **HabRegs**- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), Annex I, Annex II, Annex IV of the Habitats Directive. **PBA** - Protection of Badgers Act (1992). **BoCC Red/Amber** - Birds of Conservation Concern - Red or Amber listed.

6.3 Avoidance

6.3.1 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* Annex I Habitat

Loss of this priority habitat on site will be avoided where possible. While this is an Annex I habitat, it is not listed as a qualifying interest for SAC consideration by NatureScot [31].

While original landscaping layouts showed some areas containing this habitat as due to be planted with trees, this was revised to retain as much existing wet heathland on site as possible. In addition, parts of the biodiversity enhancement area containing this habitat were also due to be used for tree planting, and this has been revised to retain the wet heath in this area. As a result, wet heathland is being retained in the south of the site.

6.3.2 Upland Birchwoods

The upland birchwood in the far south-east of the site will be retained within landscaping proposals.

6.3.3 Scots Pine Woodland

The majority of the Other Scots Pine Woodland present in the south-east of the site will be retained.

6.3.4 Birds

Where possible, vegetation clearance will be undertaken outside of the core nesting period (March-August inclusive).

6.4 Mitigation

6.4.1 Glen Affric to Strathconon SPA

Impacts to the SPA were originally ruled out given the lack of optimal habitat at the site for golden eagle in the context of the wider landscape. Survey findings from the ornithological chapter of the EIA for the nearby Lochluichart windfarm to the north of the site were reviewed, and no significant activity of golden eagle was reported [36].

Since this original assessment, golden eagle was incidentally sighted flying over areas surrounding the site during further surveys. As such, an HRA Screening has been carried out (65212332-SWE-ZZ-XX-T-J-0002) and has concluded that likely significant effects (LSEs) from disturbance cannot be ruled out, and as such that Stage 2 of an HRA must be carried out. Raptor vantage point surveys and a specialist record search for known golden eagle nest sites in the area will be carried out to inform Stage 2 of the HRA, which will determine whether any mitigation is required to prevent LSEs. Following the surveys there will be consultation with NatureScot to discuss any specific mitigation requirements. These will then be detailed within the HRA Stage 2.

While there is currently insufficient data to rule out LSEs, based on the sub-optimal nature of the habitat on site, together with findings from the nearby development, it is anticipated that any mitigation required will be actionable within the current proposals, and therefore rule out any LSEs.

6.4.2 Breeding birds

Breeding bird surveys will be carried out on site pre-construction to identify species that may be breeding on the site or within disturbance distance of the site. This will require six visits March-July inclusive.

Red kite were seen on site incidentally during surveys. This species is listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, affording them additional protection while breeding, including from disturbance. If this species is found to be breeding on site or within disturbance distance from the site, appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented to safeguard any breeding red kites.

If vegetation clearance cannot be undertaken outside of the core nesting season then a pre-works check for nesting birds will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to works. If active nests were found, there would be no other option but to delay works until chicks have fledged which could be a period of up to ten weeks.

6.4.3 Bats

The lighting strategy for the project will ensure tree lines on and adjacent to the site are kept dark. The lighting on site will be low-level and directional, using hooded lamps or similar to minimise light spill.

No trees with roost potential were identified during the PEA. Given that construction is programmed more than two seasons after the initial survey, a pre-construction check for potential roost features on trees to be felled will be carried out. This will be timed to allow sufficient time for emergence surveys to be carried out ahead of felling.

Trees with potential roost features with the highest potential to support a high conservation status roost (categorised as PRF-M) must be subject to three close inspection surveys or emergence surveys May-September, at least three weeks apart, with at least two surveys May-August. If surveys identify a bat roost that will be affected by the proposals, a licence will be required from NatureScot to proceed.

6.4.4 Otter

No potential resting places for otter were identified. Given that construction is programmed more than two seasons after the initial survey, an update otter survey will be carried out to confirm the absence of resting places within disturbance distance of works. In addition, given the highly mobile nature of otters, a pre-construction check will be required within three months of construction. There is no seasonal constraint on this survey.

If a pre-construction survey identifies an otter resting place that will be affected by the proposals, a licence will be needed from NatureScot to proceed.

Excavations will be covered overnight during the construction phase of the development to avoid the entrapment of otters and other wildlife.

6.4.5 Badger

No signs of this species were identified during the preliminary survey. Given that construction is programmed more than two seasons after the initial survey, an update survey will be required no more than three months ahead of construction. There is no seasonal constraint on this survey.

If a pre-construction survey identifies a badger sett that will be affected by the proposals, a licence will be needed from NatureScot to proceed. Impacts to badgers are typically only licensable between July and November inclusive, when badgers do not have dependant young.

Excavations will be covered overnight during the construction phase of the development to avoid the entrapment of badgers and other wildlife.

6.4.6 Mountain Hare, Pine Marten and Red Squirrel

Given that construction is programmed more than two seasons after the initial survey, survey for these species will be required to inform any mitigation required. These surveys will be timed to allow sufficient mitigation and licencing to be put in place if required. It is anticipated that any mitigation required will be easily actionable within the current proposals.

Pine marten and red squirrel survey can be carried out during February-September, and a mountain hare survey can be carried out during September-November inclusive.

If a pre-construction survey identifies that any of these species will be affected by the proposals, a licence may be required from NatureScot to proceed.

Excavations will be covered overnight during the construction phase of the development to avoid the entrapment of wildlife.

6.4.7 Habitats

Habitats on site and in the immediate surroundings that are being retained, including wet heathland and the burn to the south of the site, will be safeguarded through implementation of a pollution prevention plan for the construction and operational phases of the development, as well as appropriate Controlled Activities Regulations

(CAR) licencing. Details of these measures will be included in a Habitat Management and Monitoring plan.

6.4.8 Invasive Species

The invasive species rhododendron will be removed from the site prior to construction to ensure that the species will not be spread. Rhododendron is listed as an invasive non-native species of concern in the Highland Nature Biodiversity Action Plan. Management including removal of this species from the site will be included within the HMMP.

6.5 Residual Effects

6.5.1 Habitats

0.7ha of wet heathland site will permanently be lost as part of the development. This residual effect is considered significant at the local geographical scale because this is a priority habitat, however it is limited in extent on this site, and is common in this region.

0.16ha of upland acid grassland will also be lost. This residual effect is not considered significant at the local geographical scale because it is limited in extent and this habitat is also common in the region and surrounding area.

6.5.2 Protected species

The non-native coniferous woodland on site has potential to support foraging bats, pine marten and red squirrel. This woodland is densely planted, and this type of habitat is known to be of low value to foraging bats [34]; the edge of this habitat is of most value to this group. Given the presence of this type of woodland, as well as woodland containing native species (which is of higher value to bats, pine marten and red squirrel) in the surrounding area, this residual effect is not considered significant at the local scale.

With regards to mountain hare, while areas of wet heathland that is suitable for this species will be lost, the restoration of wet heathland in the biodiversity enhancement area will compensate for the loss of this habitat on site. Together with the abundance of woodland habitat in the surrounding area, this this residual effect is not considered significant at the local geographical scale.

6.6 Cumulative Effects

Other significant development proposals in the surrounding area are summarised in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2 Developments in the surrounding area

Development Name	Approximate distance from site	Details
Land 460M NE Of Fannich	3km west	Installation of a 20m high lattice tower, ancillary equipment, compound,

Development Name	Approximate distance from site	Details
Lodge Lochluichart Garve Lattice Tower		access track and associated development
Lochliuchart Energy Storage/Big Battery	4km west	The development would consist of containers containing batteries and associated equipment, an access track, electricity, meter building and fencing
Lochliuchart Wind Farm Extension II	4.5km north	Five turbines of maximum tip height 133m; temporary construction compound, borrow pits, crane pads, access tracks, underground cables, sub-station, battery storage, maintenance and control buildings with welfare facilities.
Carn Fearna Wind Farm	5.5km east	Nine turbines up to 200m in height
Tarvie Wind Farm	7.5km south-east	30MW proposal of five turbines up to 200m in height

The lattice tower and associated works are restricted to a narrow access track and a small area containing a tower and are unlikely to result in significant cumulative habitat loss.

At the time of writing, no ecology report was available for the Lochliuchart Energy Storage/Big Battery project, however, this project is small in scale, and unlikely to contribute to significant cumulative effects. No ecological report was available for Tarvie Wind Farm.

The wind farm developments in the surrounding area are widely dispersed in the landscape and include ecological mitigation measures that will limit their ecological impact, including impacts to wet heathland and GWDTEs.

Other planning applications in the surrounding area that were identified on review of the planning portal are very small scale and associated with individual residential properties and have not been included in the table above; these are very small in scale and are therefore not expected to contribute to cumulative effects

No significant cumulative effects are anticipated.

6.7 Compensation

6.7.1 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* Annex I Habitat

The 0.7ha of wet heathland habitat that will be lost on site will be compensated for by the creation and restoration of 2.9ha of this habitat in the biodiversity enhancement area to the north of the site.

The understorey vegetation within the felled non-native coniferous woodland in the biodiversity enhancement area contains some of the key characteristics of the wet heathland habitat on site, with a plant community comprising heather, cross-leaved heath and purple moor grass, together with the presence of *Sphagnum* sp. mosses and other bryophytes. These features indicate that by implementing the appropriate management interventions, this area presents an excellent opportunity to restore a far larger area of wetland heathland habitat than what is being developed within the site boundary.

The presence of tree stumps within the wet heathland habitat on site, together with a review of historical aerial imagery indicate that most of the area containing this priority habitat on site contained plantation woodland in the past; this increases the likelihood that the restoration of the felled plantation in the biodiversity enhancement area will reach a target state similar to the wet heathland on site that is proposed for development.

Management interventions to restore this habitat will include the introduction of low-intensity grazing, removal of regenerating non-native conifers, blocking of drainage ditches and pollution control [37]. Interventions to restore a natural water regime in the biodiversity enhancement area will present the potential for recreation of the same types of assemblages as those that are present on site, including diffuse drainage lines supporting the M15a habitat.

6.7.2 Upland Acid Grassland

0.16ha of upland acid grassland will be lost on site during the works; this will be compensated for by the inclusion of 2.9ha of this habitat type within the landscaping and biodiversity enhancement area for the site.

6.7.3 Other Coniferous Woodland

The loss of other coniferous woodland on site will be compensated for by the restoration of wet heathland in the biodiversity enhancement area. Wet heathland is a far more valuable habitat than the non-native, densely planted coniferous woodland that is being lost.

6.8 Biodiversity Net Gain

As a result of adjacent habitat restoration and onsite landscaping, the development will result in more than 10% enhancement in biodiversity value.

6.9 Securement of Mitigation and Compensation for the Scheme

Table *6.2* shows the avoidance, mitigation or compensation required for each important ecological feature and suggests possible ways in which these could be achieved.

Table 6.2. Recommendations for Securing Ecological Mitigation and Compensation

Important Ecological Feature	Avoidance/ Mitigation/ Compensation	Possible method for securing
Glen Affric to Strathconon SPA	To be confirmed following Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)	Surveys, HRA and mitigation if required to be secured through planning application.
Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* Annex I Habitat	Avoid loss of this habitat on site where possible, and protect any areas being retained during construction and operation. Compensate for loss of this habitat by recreating it in areas of felled plantation in the biodiversity enhancement area where an appropriate understorey of vegetation has been identified.	CEMP and Landscape And Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, secured by planning condition or similar.
Upland acid grassland	Avoid loss of this habitat on site where possible. Create more of this habitat in landscaped areas.	CEMP and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, secured by planning condition or similar.
Protected species for which pre-construction surveys required: • **Reptiles** • **Breeding birds** • **Bats** • **Otter** • **Badger** • **Mountain hare** • **Pine marten** • **Red squirrel**	Complete surveys and update EcIA.	Pre-commencement planning condition for an updated EcIA including results of further species surveys and details of mitigation to be submitted to the LPA for approval or similar.

6.10 Enhancement

Three new permanently wet SuDS ponds in the north and south-east of the site will be landscaped using native species to maximise their biodiversity value. While a very

small area of open water was identified on site during the PEA, this does not contain any aquatic vegetation and while it may have some very limited value to amphibians, creation of permanently wet areas that include aquatic vegetation will create new habitat that is not currently present on site.

Bat boxes will be installed in appropriate locations on site as part of the development.

Log piles will also be created using trees that are felled on site, and will be sited in vegetated areas of the development to provide shelter and habitat for a range of species.

6.11 Management

A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will detail the management required for the habitats being retained, created or enhanced as part of the development. This will include the planned management activities and the roles and responsibilities of those carrying out the management. **Table 6.3** shows a summary of management recommendations for achieving the target habitat conditions. The habitats created as part of the proposed development will be managed for at least 30 years.

Table 6.3. Management Recommendations for Achieving Target Habitat Conditions

Habitat	Baseline condition	Target condition	Habitat management required
Within the development area			
Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, upland	Good	Good	Ensure areas of this habitat that are being retained are protected from impacts (including pollution) during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases. Maintain baseline levels of grazing (light grazing) in the area in the south of the site where this habitat is being retained.
Other upland acid grassland	Good	Good	Where this habitat is being created on site, this should be done re-using substrate from an area on site where acid grassland is being removed. This habitat can be maintained using light grazing pressure or mowing. Remove encroaching woody species. Maintain a varied sward height and avoid areas of bare ground. Remove any encroaching bracken. If it is mown, arisings should be removed; this will help maintain and improve species diversity.

Habitat	Baseline condition	Target condition	Habitat management required
Proposed bioswale	N/A	Good	Establish varied vegetation structure. Schedule periodic inspections to check for erosion, INNS, sediment build-up or blockages; remove build-up of debris.
Proposed SuDS basin	N/A	Good	As for bioswale.
Ditches	Moderate	Good	Plant native aquatic and marginal species. Monitor for INNS, and remove if any occur. Maintain vegetation so that no more than 10% of the ditch length is shaded.
Other Scots pine woodland	Moderate	Moderate	Install fencing and implement a pollution prevention plan to ensure this habitat is protected from impacts including pollution during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases. Retain standing deadwood where safe to do so. During construction, maintain a root protection zone around all trees in this habitat.
Upland birchwoods	Poor	Poor	As for Scots pine woodland.
Proposed broadleaved woodland	N/A	Moderate	Use tree protection and check tree guards, stakes and ties in spring and autumn to ensure they are effective and not damaging the trees. Replace any trees that die. Install deadwood piles using wood from trees felled on site. Carry out thinning every five to ten years.
Proposed native broadleaved tree	N/A	Good	Use tree protection and check tree guards, stakes and ties in spring and autumn to ensure they are effective and not damaging the tree. Replace any trees that die.
Proposed upland scrub mix	N/A	Good	Where possible, create this habitat using substrate from areas of wet heathland on site that are being removed. Use moderate grazing pressure to supress tree growth.
Within enhancement area			

Habitat	Baseline condition	Target condition	Habitat management required
Wet heathland with cross-leaved heath, upland	N/A	Good	Remove saplings and thereafter schedule periodic removal of tree regrowth. Prevent further re-growth using light (not intensive) grazing pressure. Maintain tree cover at less than 10%. Prevent or remove bracken and gorse encroachment. Minimise areas of bare ground, and remove any invasive species that arise. Block any existing forestry drains to re-establish natural hydrology and facilitate the accumulation of water in the surface substrates, encouraging the formation of pools and diffuse drainage lines. Ensure no pollution enters the habitat from the catchment above, including nutrient-rich agricultural pollution.

6.12 Monitoring

A HMMP will be created to detail the monitoring of all habitat creation and biodiversity enhancements on site. The habitats created as part of the proposed development will be monitored for at least 30 years.

7 Conclusions

The proposed development comprises the construction of a battery storage area at Corriemoillie substation with construction scheduled for 2027.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site was carried out by Sweco in February 2024, and subsequent to this, surveys for otter, beaver, great crested newt, water vole and INNS were carried out. An NVC survey to identify areas of potential GWDTE was also carried out.

The site currently comprises blocks of Sitka spruce plantation with wet heathland rides between woodland blocks. Areas of upland acid grassland, upland birchwoods, Scots pine woodland as well as artificial ditches and unsealed access tracks are also present. A burn is present on the southern boundary of the site. Of these habitats, wet heathland, upland birchwoods and Scots pine woodland are priority habitats.

During the protected species surveys:

- No otter resting places were identified, however incidental survey findings confirmed that otter use the burn at the south of the site.
- No signs of water vole or beaver were identified.
- No signs of badger were identified.
- It was confirmed through eDNA surveys that great crested newt are absent.
- The woodland edges were found to have some suitability for common species of foraging bat, however, the densely planted Sitka spruce plantation is of very low value to foraging bats. There were no potential roosting features identified on site.
- The only invasive non-native species present on site was rhododendron, in one location on site.

Further pre-construction survey will be carried out to provide up-to date information on any mitigation that is required for these groups: raptors including golden eagle, breeding birds, otter, badger, mountain hare, pine marten and red squirrel. A survey for potential roost features for bats will also be carried out.

The NVC survey identified potentially ground-water dependent habitats on site, however, following further hydrogeological assessment none of these areas are considered likely to be groundwater dependent.

While the original assessment ruled out impacts to the Glen Affric SPA, which is designated for supporting golden eagle, following incidental sightings of this species during subsequent surveys, an HRA Screening has been carried out. Given that further survey data is required to inform a full assessment, the HRA screening concluded that likely significant effects on the SPA cannot be ruled out at this stage, and as such, the HRA will progress to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, and will be informed by a full suite of raptor vantage point surveys as well as a specialist record search for known golden eagle nest sites in the area. Given that the site is sub-optimal for this species, it is anticipated that mitigation for any likely significant effects identified in the HRA process will be easily accommodated within the proposals.

The proposed development will result in the loss of areas of wet heathland, which is a priority habitat. An area of wet heathland in the south of the site will be retained. This

area will be protected during the construction and operational stages through implementation of methods detailed in a CEMP and a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.

The loss of wet heathland on site will be compensated for through restoration of habitat directly to the north of the site. This area currently comprises felled Sitka spruce plantation. The remaining understorey of heathland species in the felled area, together with the presence of wet heathland in small areas surrounding it, indicate that this site is suitable for restoration to wet heathland through appropriate management interventions such as ditch blocking, herbivore management, clearance of non-native conifer saplings and pollution control. The management required to achieve the target habitat will be detailed in a bespoke management plan for the site and will be subject to monitoring to identify success of the interventions.

Small areas of other priority habitats including upland birchwoods, and Scots pine woodland area also present on site, and will be retained. The loss of acid grassland on site will be compensated for through inclusion of this habitat in landscaping.

The loss of the non-native coniferous woodland on site will be compensated for by the restoration of a large area of wet heathland to the north of the site; wet heathland is of higher ecological value than non-native coniferous woodland. New watercourse features will also be created as part of the proposed development, which will create new ecological niches to further enhance biodiversity on site.

The proposed landscape strategy includes enhancements that are in line with the current Scottish Government National Planning Framework 4 and NatureScot published guidance. The proposed development will deliver improvements to enhance the biodiversity, with a 15.31% gain in biodiversity value, while protecting important ecological features on site and in the immediate surrounds. The provision of bat and bird boxes, log piles will create opportunities for nesting, roosting and shelter. The creation of three permanently wet SuDS ponds which will be planted with native species will introduce the new ecologically valuable habitat of standing water to the site. The creation of 1.22km of ditches as part of the proposed development will result in a 24.33% increase in linear watercourse habitat on site.

As a result of the mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures, no significant negative residual effects are anticipated from this development and the proposals will secure positive effects for biodiversity.

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Drawings

BTGBCOR01-002.1.2 – Site Location Plan

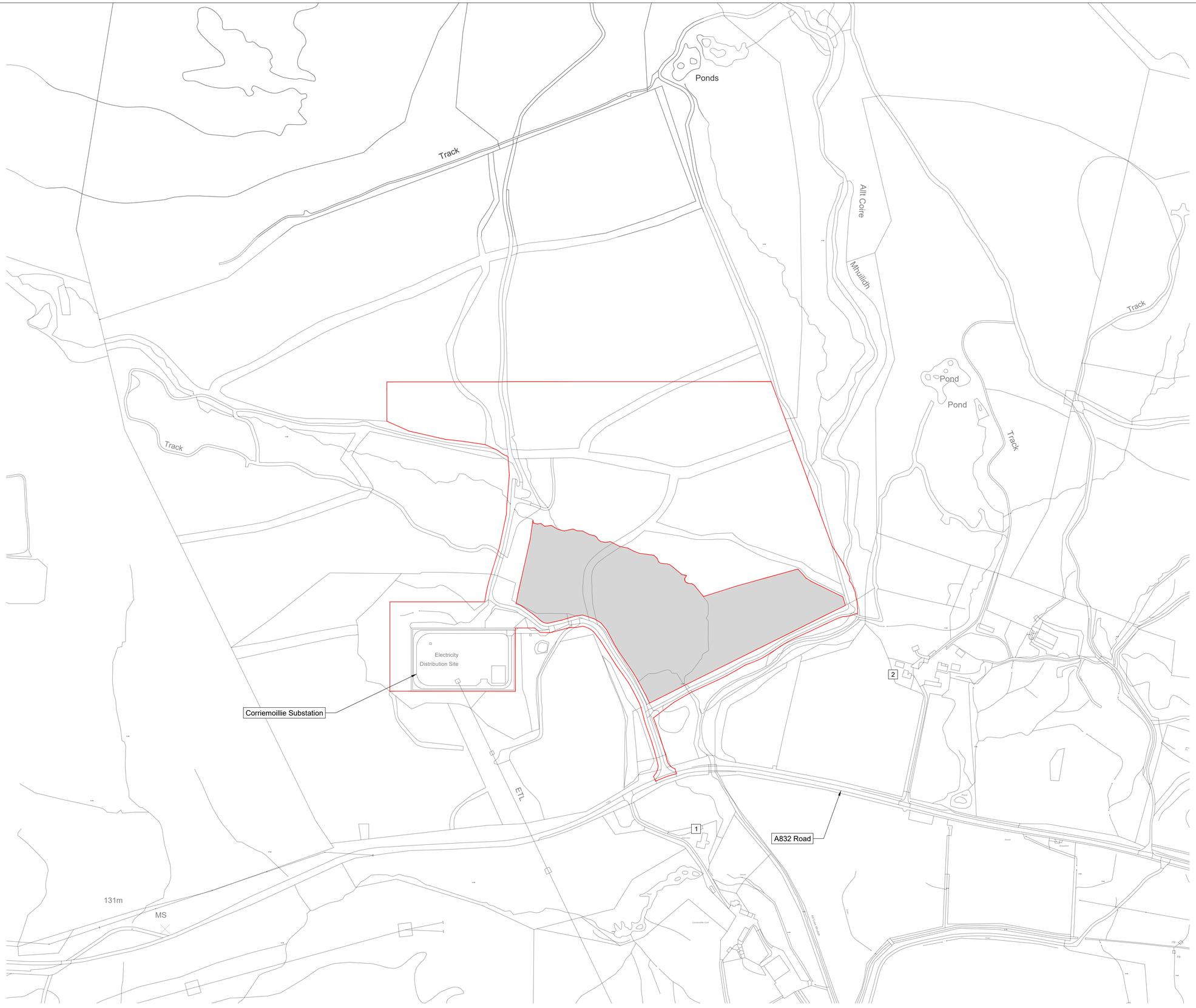
Landscape Plan LVA Figure 5 L01G

65212332-SWE-XX-XX-D-J-0001 UKHab – Onsite

65212332-SWE-XX-XX-D-J-0002 NVC and GWDTE

65212332-SWE-XX-XX-D-J-0003 Protected and Invasive Species

65212332-SWE-XX-XX-D-J-0004 Designated Sites



1 Site Location Plan
Scale 1:2000 @ A0

Notes

1. All dimensions are shown in metres unless noted otherwise.
2. Do not scale from this drawing.
3. Total planning boundary area = 16.774ha

Legend

Planning Boundary

Area Excluded From Planning Boundary

List of Addresses	
1	Glenview, Corriemoillie, Garve, IV23 2PY
2	Corriemoillie Farm, Garve, IV23 2PY

1:100	1m	2m	3m	4m	5m	6m	7m	8m	9m	10m
1:200	5m	10m	15m	20m
1:250	5m	10m	15m	20m	25m
1:500	10m	20m	30m	40m	50m
1:1000	10m	20m	30m	40m	50m	60m	70m	80m	90m	100m
1:2000	50m	100m	150m	200m
1:2500	50m	100m	150m	200m	250m
1:5000	100m	200m	300m	400m	500m

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY	CHK'D
3	06.11.2024	Planning boundary amended.	WL	RS
2	24.10.2024	Planning boundary amended. Area excluded from planning boundary hatch added.	JH	AP
1	23.10.2024	Planning boundary amended.	JH	AP
0	21.10.2024	Site Location Plan - Original.	JH	AP

FIELD

Field
Fora Montacute Yards
186 Shoreditch High Street
London
E1 6HU

PROJECT
Corriemoillie

TITLE
Site Location Plan

DISCIPLINE
PLANNING

DRAWING STATUS
FOR PLANNING

SCALE	DATE	DRAWN BY	CHECKED BY	APPROVED BY
1:2000 @ A0	21.10.2024	JH	AP	RS

PROJECT NO.	DRAWING NO.	REV.
BTGBCOR01	002.1.2	03