

Steven Cameron

Subject: FW: Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II Grid Connection - Ornithology and Ecology Consultation

From: Karen Reid <Karen.Reid@nature.scot>

Sent: 22 March 2021 18:07

To: Karen Aldridge <karen.aldridge@nevisenvironmental.com>

Subject: RE: Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II Grid Connection - Ornithology and Ecology Consultation

Dear Karen,

Thanks for your email and apologies for the delay replying. Thank you very much for providing the report, we have the following comments on your proposed survey methods.

Ornithology

- We recommend that survey work and mitigation follows our guidance “Assessment and mitigation of impacts of power lines and guyed meteorological masts on birds (2016)”, see: <https://www.nature.scot/guidance-assessment-and-mitigation-impacts-power-lines-and-guyed-meteorological-masts-birds>.
- Your report notes that impacts to birds are likely to be limited to construction stages due to the presence of existing wind farms either side of the line, and it seems that vantage point survey work is not currently proposed. Available information for the surrounding area suggests there could also be operational impacts to sensitive species. In particular I note the potential for red-throated divers to be present and that the grid connection may cross their flight path. It is not clear how we could assess collision risk to this species without VP work. The overhead line is also within connectivity distance of the Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area (SPA) meaning a Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) is likely to be required, and as part of this we would need to assess collision risk to golden eagle. The southerly section of the line is closest to the SPA and more distant from the existing developments and it is not clear how we could assess collision risk without VP work. If you have further information which demonstrates VP work is not required we would be happy to review it. Our current advice would however be that VP work is carried out in line with our guidance, unless flight activity information is already available from previous surveys undertaken in this area, and this covers the route of the line and is less than 5yrs old. I would suggest that breeding season VP work may be most important to complete at this site and that depending on the outcome of that we can review the need for any winter work.
- Survey work for breeding birds is currently proposed within 500m of the line. Our guidance recommends that surveys cover a wider buffer for certain species (see Table 1.6 of “Recommended bird survey methods to inform impact assessment of onshore wind farms”: <https://www.nature.scot/recommended-bird-survey-methods-inform-impact-assessment-onshore-windfarms>). We would therefore recommend that, if suitable habitat exists for target species beyond 500m, surveys extend to 1km for divers, 1.5km for black grouse and relevant distances for raptors and follows recommended methods. If however existing data is available, covers the relevant area and is less than 5 years old it is likely this can be used for your assessment. We also recommend contacting the Raptor Study Group for information on their coverage of the area and any data they may hold.
- Once survey work is complete we recommend an assessment of potential impacts through habitat loss/change, disturbance and/or displacement, and collision risk to SPA and wider countryside bird populations. Mitigation options should be considered as part of this process.

Ecology

- We recommend habitat survey to NVC level is carried out along areas of the route outside the forestry plantation. The Carbon and Peatland 2016 map (see: http://map.environment.gov.scot/Soil_maps/?layer=10) shows that the grid connection route is within an area mapped as nationally important Class 1 peatland. The 2016 mapping is indicative, and we recommend site specific peat and vegetation surveys to confirm the quality

and distribution of peatland over the development area plus an appropriate buffer. For further advice, see: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/planning-and-development-advice/planning-and-development-standing-advice-and-guidance-documents>.

- We agree with your recommended protected species surveys. In addition, we advise that badger surveys are carried out if there is suitable habitat and, as the site is around 3.5km from a wildcat priority area, that the need for wildcat surveys are considered in line with our guidance, see: [https://www.nature.scot/standing-advice-planning-consultations-wildcats](https://www.nature.scot/standing-advice/planning-consultations-wildcats). For our standing advice on protected species survey and mitigation, see: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/planning-and-development/planning-and-development-advice/planning-and-development-protected-species>.

Please let me know if you have any queries on the above, happy to discuss anything further.

Kind regards
Karen

Karen Reid | Area Officer, South Highland

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From: Karen Aldridge
Sent: 29 January 2021 11:15
To: SOUTH_HIGHLAND
Cc: Alistair Blackshaw ; project+153@nevis-environmental-limited.accelo.com
Subject: Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II Grid Connection - Ornithology and Ecology Consultation

Dear South Highlands Team,

Please find attached a consultation request in relation to supporting surveys for the proposed Section 37 Application 33kV Grid Connection to Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II, together with a map showing the location of the proposal.

If you require any further information or clarification do let us know.

We would also like to consult with SEPA on the proposals but we understand that they were subject to a cyber attack over Christmas and their email system is not functioning. Do you know if it is currently possible to contact SEPA for consultations?

Kind regards,

Karen Aldridge (GradCIEEM, AEECOW)
Project Manager - Ecology



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