



Appendix 10.1 Protected Species Plan

Lochluichart Wind Farm S42

Supporting Environmental Information Report

Bluebell Wind Limited

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Project No: 312771/314569

Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II & Grid Connection Protected Species Plan

Prepared for:

Bluebell Wind Farm Ltd.

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Contents Amendment Record

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Revision	Description	Date	Signed
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1.0	Final	10/10/24	A.Cox



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Acknowledgement

This report has been prepared for the sole and exclusive use of Boralex in accordance with the scope of work presented in Mabbett & Associates Ltd (Mabbett) Proposal (314569/AC/160124/1.0), dated 16 January 2024. This report is based on information and data collected by Mabbett. Should any of the information be incorrect, incomplete, or subject to change, Mabbett may wish to revise the report accordingly.

This report has been prepared by the following Mabbett personnel:

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Executive Summary

Contents	Summary
Site Location	Mabbett and Associates Ltd (Mabbett) was commissioned by Bluebell Wind Farm Ltd to produce a Species Protection Plan for the construction and operation of Lochluichart Wind Farm extension II and the overhead line to connect Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II to the Corriemoillie substation (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). The site is located on the Lochluichart Estate, East Ross, Highland; 18 km north-west of Dingwall and immediately due south of the A835, centred at OSGR grid reference NH 3334 6686.
Proposals	The development consists of a five-turbine extension to the existing wind farm and a new grid connection comprising of a 33kV Overhead Line (OHL), to connect Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II to Corriemoillie sub-station.
Survey Scope	The SPP is required to ensure that legislative requirements pertaining to the identified protected species are upheld during construction and to discharge condition 9cix of the planning consent 21/02985/FUL for Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II and conditions 9i and 9j of the Section 37 consent 22/00244/S37 for the grid connection. The SPP provides detailed of the most recent pre-construction protected species surveys and outlines the key legislation, mitigation measures, and emergency procedures that should be followed to protect birds during construction.
Results	Protected species surveys of the site have been conducted in 2023 and 2024 to discharge planning conditions for Lochluichart Windfarm Extension II. Surveys identified the potential presence of water vole, otter, pine marten, badger and red squirrel.
Recommended Avoidance/Mitigation	The following measures are general and applicable site wide for protecting wildlife including protected species: ▪ The site induction will contain information and location of (potential) protected species on site, including notification of any licensing requirements. This shall be communicated to all site personnel including contractors and visitors where appropriate; ▪ Toolbox talks shall be delivered specific to each protected and notable species and updated as appropriate. Daily briefings and site information board also to include details of wildlife mitigation where relevant; ▪ An Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) shall be present for the duration of the project to monitor the site and advise the site team on any change and requirements; ▪ Working hours regarding construction activities will be restricted to daylight to avoid disturbance of nocturnal species. Works will commence at least two hours after sunrise and cease two hours before sunset. Any working outside of normal hours will be communicated and agreed with the relevant parties including the ECoW prior to commencing; ▪ Any lighting will be directed away from suitable protected species habitat such as tree lines, scrub, and watercourse; ▪ Materials piles, pipes and similar items to be capped / covered to prevent wildlife from entering; ▪ Daily plant, excavation, and material pile checks to be completed to ensure good pollution prevention measures in addition to checking for wildlife including field signs (i.e., nesting material). Any trapped wildlife to be immediately released by ECoW or under instruction; ▪ All pollution prevention measures to be followed to protected wildlife on site, particularly when working near or within watercourses;

	▪ Bog mats to be used reducing wet muddy ground potentially trapping wildlife; ▪ Concrete structures to be precast where possible to prevent pollution and wildlife entrapment; ▪ Preconstruction walkovers to be undertaken by ECoW before breaking ground and repeated if left unattended for an extended period; ▪ Should wildlife enter the works vicinity (10-30 m) works will temporarily pause allowing the animal to move away; ▪ Excavations >1 m shall be covered or a ramp installed to prevent wildlife from becoming trapped and permit escape; ▪ No works exclusion zones will be installed with signage relevant to protected species as required. Licensing and working methods to be sought accordingly; ▪ Upon discovery of suspected dens or resting places for protected species, works will cease immediately and advice sought from the ECoW. The area will be excluded appropriately until licensing requirements are met or the ECoW confirms absence of protected species; ▪ In the event of a wildlife emergency, works to stop immediately and ECoW to be contacted for advice. The Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) will be contacted as appropriate: Animal helpline 03000 999 999. Suspected bird flu cases to be reported to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA): APHA.Scotland@apha.gov.uk Telephone 03000 600709 ; ▪ Personnel to report wildlife sightings, field signs, or concerns to Site Management and ECoW; ▪ Habitat enhancement for protected and notable species to be considered and agreed where appropriate; Further species-specific mitigation measures are detailed in the relevant sections.
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Section 1.0: Introduction

1.1 Background

Mabbett and Associates Ltd (Mabbett) was commissioned by Bluebell Wind Farm Ltd to undertake species specific surveys for otter, pine marten, red squirrel, water vole, bats and badger, prior to the construction of Lochluichart Wind Farm extension II and the overhead line to connect Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II to the Corriemoillie substation (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). The data collected has been used to produce associated Species Protection Plans (SPPs) for the relevant species. The surveys and protection plans are required to ensure that legislative requirements pertaining to the identified species are upheld during construction and to discharge condition 9cix of the planning consent 21/02985/FUL for Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II and conditions 9i and 9j of the Section 37 consent 22/00244/S37 for the grid connection.

This SPP provides details of the most recent pre-construction protected species surveys and outlines the key legislation, mitigation measures, and emergency procedures that should be followed to protect protected species during construction and has been produced in accordance with Nature Scot guidance (SNH, 2019).

The SPP is designed to give on-site guidance as to the actions that should be taken to avoid impacting on any protected species, and what to do if a protected species should be unexpectedly encountered. The SPP will remain a live document, and an up-to-date copy will be kept on site.

1.2 Site Summary

The site is located on the Lochluichart Estate, East Ross, Highland; 18 km north-west of Dingwall and immediately due south of the A835, centred at OSGR grid reference NH3334 6686, at a maximum elevation of 500 m above sea level. The consented developments comprise:

- Five wind turbines with a maximum blade tip height 149.9m, with associated foundations and hard standings;
- Onsite network of underground cables linking the turbines to a grid connection;
- Onsite access tracks connecting each turbine location;
- Onsite substation, if required, and control/maintenance building;
- Two borrow pits;
- Temporary works including a construction compound; and
- A 33 kV overhead line to connect Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II to the Corriemoillie substation.

As these projects will be constructed simultaneously, they are being treated as one development. This document has been produced to allow the discharge of the relevant planning conditions for both planning consents.

1.3 Planning requirements

Planning permission for Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II was granted on 30th January 2023 (21/02985/FUL), subject to 27 conditions; and planning permission for Lochluichart Grid connection was granted on 20th February 2023 (22/00244/S37), subject to 15 conditions.

1.3.1 Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II (21/02985/FUL)

Condition 9cix of the consent for Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension states that:

No development shall commence until a finalised Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is submitted to and agreed in writing by the Planning Authority, in consultation with SEPA. The document shall include provision for: [...]

c) the following specific CEMP details:

- ix. A Breeding Bird Protection Plan (BBPP) and Species Protection Plans, with associated survey and monitoring requirements to be agreed by the Planning Authority, in consultation with NatureScot. This must be informed by a further pre-construction ecological survey for legally protected species which must be carried out at an appropriate time of year for the species, at a maximum of 12 months preceding commencement of construction, and a watching brief must then be implemented by the*

Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) during construction. The species that should be surveyed for include, but are not limited to, breeding birds, otter, pine marten, water vole, badger, red squirrel, and wildcat. The area that is surveyed should include all areas directly affected by construction plus an appropriate buffer to identify any species within disturbance distance of construction activity and to allow for any micro-siting needs. A communication plan must be provided to ensure all contractors are aware of the possible presence of protected species frequenting the site and the laws relating to their protection. This plan must detail a notification and stop the job commitment requirements.

1.3.2 Overhead Line Grid Connection (22/00244/S37)

Condition 9 of the Section 37 consent for the grid connection states that:

There shall be no commencement of development until finalised Construction Environmental Management Plans ("CEMP"s) are submitted to and agreed in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with SEPA and other appropriate consultees as appropriate. These plans shall include: [...]

- i. A pre-construction survey for legally protected species carried out at an appropriate time of year for the species, at a maximum of 12 months preceding commencement of construction, and that a watching brief is then implemented by the Environmental clerk of Works ("ECoW") during construction. The area that is surveyed should include all areas directly affected by construction plus an appropriate buffer to identify any species within disturbance distance of construction activity and to allow for any micro-siting needs.*
- j. Bird Protection Plan and Species Protection Plan(s) as directed by the ECoW, with these to set out that:*
 - i. Any ground clearance or development should avoid the bird breeding season (01 April to 15 August). In the event that it is necessary to undertake any works within the breeding season, no more than 24-hours before works the area shall be subject to an ECoW pre-construction survey for raptors, diver and breeding bird surveys;*
 - ii. During construction, walkover breeding bird surveys must be carried out between 01 April to 15 August on a regular basis, to attempt to detect breeding territories and nests. If a nest is detected for any bird species, then an appropriate buffer zone, would be employed to protect it from damage and/or disturbance;*
 - iii. In the event that there is any evidence of red-throated divers breeding, no construction shall take place (or any vehicle movements) within a minimum 750m exclusion zone until the young have fledged or the breeding attempt has been confirmed as failed by a trained ecologist; and*
 - iv. In the event that there is any evidence of black grouse lek(s), no construction shall take place (or any vehicle movements) within a minimum 750m exclusion zone before 9am in the months of April and May inclusive;*

1.4 Scope of the SPP

This SPP includes the results of the pre-construction protected species surveys carried out in 2023 and 2024, and the required protection measures for protected species which may be present onsite. It has been produced to meet the requirements of condition 9cix of the planning consent for Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II and conditions 9i and 9j of the Section 37 consent for the grid connection.

The main objectives of the report are:

- Highlight the presence of any relevant statutory designated sites notified for their potential to support protected species.
- Outline the results of the protected species surveys carried out across the site during 2023 and 2024.
- Identify the potential impacts on protected species and set out the mitigation measures that are required during the construction of Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II to safeguard protected species local to the site.

Protected species of interest comprised otter, water vole, badger, red squirrel, pine marten, and wildcat. A breeding bird protection plan has been produced separately.

1.5 Legislation, Policy, and Guidance

European and national legislation, planning policies, conservation initiatives and general guidance relevant to this study include:

- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended);
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA);
- The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004;
- The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (WANE);
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992;
- The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP);
- The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy; and
- The Ross and Cromarty East Local Development Plan.

A summary of protected species legislation is provided in Appendix A.

Section 2.0: Methods

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 Designated Sites

Prior to conducting fieldwork in July 2023, a desk study was undertaken to review existing ecological data associated with the site. NatureScot's SiteLink and DEFRA's MAGIC websites were reviewed to ascertain the locations of any statutory designated sites with qualifying features that are relevant to the construction of the site.

2.1.2 Existing Site Knowledge

Data from the ornithological field surveys, which were undertaken as part of baseline data gathering for the site and as part of ongoing operational monitoring for the existing wind farms, are reported in full in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) chapter and technical appendices and are not reported further in this document, although the survey results have informed the mitigation approach.

2.2 Field Surveys

Field survey work in 2023 was undertaken by Emma Archer, Sandy Craig and Andy Cox, and in 2024 by Andy Cox and Emily Page; experienced and qualified ecologists. The survey was designed using the guidelines endorsed by CIEEM^{1,2}. The survey focussed on protected and notable faunal species that are most likely to be found in the geographical location and habitats which make up the site landscape. A summary of survey dates and weather conditions is available in Table 1. Each year's survey was completed over three days due to the size of the area to be covered.

Table 1: Survey dates and conditions

Date	Weather conditions
13/07/2023	Light rainfall and gentle breeze with average air temperature 17°C
14/07/2023	Light rainfall and gentle breeze with average air temperature 16°C
15/07/2023	Light rainfall and gentle breeze with average air temperature 18°C
20/06/2024	Overcast and moderate breeze with average air temperature 15°C
21/06/2024	Sunny, gentle breeze, with average air temperature 18°C
22/06/2024	Cloudy, gentle breeze, with average air temperature 16°C

The following sections provide details of the methods adopted in the survey areas described in Table 2.

Table 2: Survey Areas

Habitat/Species/Species Group	Survey Area
Bats	Site + 50m buffer where accessible
Otter	Site + 50m buffer where accessible (250m buffer along watercourses)
Water Vole	Site + 50m buffer where accessible (250m buffer along watercourses)
Pine Marten	Site + 250m buffer where accessible
Badger	Site + 100m buffer where accessible
Beaver	Site + 250m buffer along watercourses where accessible
Wildcat	Site + 200m buffer where accessible
Brown and Mountain Hare	Site + 50m buffer where accessible
West European Hedgehog	Site + 50m buffer where accessible
Reptiles	Site + 50m buffer where accessible

¹CIEEM (n.d.). General advice on surveys and methods. Retrieved from <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CSS-OVERVIEW-April-2013.pdf> (Accessed 03/08/2023).

²CIEEM (2017). Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing. Retrieved from <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Ecological-Report-Writing-Dec2017.pdf> (Accessed 03/08/2023).

2.2.1 Bats

The survey area was assessed for its potential to support foraging and commuting bats and specifically, any trees within the survey area were assessed for their potential to support bat roosts, in accordance with the criteria set out by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT)³. Evidence of bat activity can be detected by searching for the following signs:

- Bat droppings (faeces), for example, on the building or on the ground;
- Polishing, scratching or staining resulting from bats entering or exiting the buildings;
- Live or dead bats; and,
- Any insect remains which may indicate feeding.

Though the suitability of structures to support bat roosts can be carried out at any time of year, external evidence of use can be washed away by prolonged rainfall.

The habitat assessment was carried out in accordance with the BCT Guidelines¹⁶.

2.2.2 Otter

An otter survey was undertaken within the survey area including around identified waterbodies, where accessible. The otter survey followed best practice guidelines⁴, and aimed to identify suitable otter habitat and field signs, including:

- Spraints (otter faeces/droppings used as territorial signposts). Three categories are used for describing otter spraint: Dried fragmented (Df); Dried intact (Di); and Not fully dry (Nd);
- Footprints;
- Feeding remains (can often be a useful indication of otter presence);
- Paths/slides (otter can often leave a distinctive path from and into the watercourse);
- Holts (underground shelter) are generally found:
 - Within trees roots at the edge of the bank of a river;
 - Within hollowed out trees;
 - In naturally formed holes in the river banks that can be easily extended;
 - Or preferably in ready-made holes created by other large mammals such as badger setts, rabbit burrows or outlet pipes; and
- Couches/lay-ups (couches or lay-ups are places for lying up above ground are usually located near a watercourse, between rocks or boulders, under dense vegetation).

In order to assess their importance, the status of otter resting sites was assigned from Low to High⁵ according to Table 3 below.

Table 3: Status of Otter Resting Sites

Resting Site Status	Definition
Low	Feature with limited evidence of otter activity - low number of spraints, not all age classes present. Insufficient seclusion to be a breeding site or key resting site, unlikely to have links to the key otter requirements. Most likely to provide a temporary 'stop off' for otters when moving through their territory. Loss/disturbance of such a feature is unlikely to be significant in terms of the individual or population.
Moderate	Feature containing sprainting with a range of age classes, but not in significant quantities. Availability may be limited by season, tides or flow. Unlikely to be suitable as a breeding/natal site but will be a key resting site and may be linked to other important features within the territory. The impact arising from a loss or disturbance of such a feature will be determined by the availability of more suitable or well used sites within the other's territory.

³The Bat Conservation Trust, L. (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists. (J. (BCT) Collins, Ed.) (3rd Edition.). Bat Conservation Trust.

⁴Chanin (2003) Ecology of the European Otter *Lutra lutra*

⁵Bassett, S. and Wynn, J. (2010) Otters in Scotland: How vulnerable are they to disturbance? In Practise, 70: 19-22

Resting Site Status	Definition
High	Feature has a high level of otter activity, including an abundance of sprainting of all age classes, large spraint mounds, well used grooming hollows, paths and slides. Affords a high degree of cover and is linked to key features such as fresh water and abundance of prey. May be suitable as a breeding area (spraints may be absent from natal holts). The site is usually available at all times of year and at high and low tide/flow. The loss/ disturbance of such as feature will often be considered significant in terms of the individual or population.

2.2.3 Water Vole

The water vole survey was undertaken in conjunction with the otter survey and covered the same area. The survey consisted of a search for field evidence following standard survey guidelines⁶, in addition to an assessment of the habitat suitability of the site⁷.

Field evidence includes:

- Droppings: 8-12 mm long, 4-5 mm wide;
- Latrine sites: piles of droppings of mixed aged categories, often stamped into the ground;
- Runways: often 5-9 cm broad and multi-branched; usually within 2m of water's edge and often forming tunnels through vegetation; leading to water's edge or burrows;
- Burrows: 4-8 cm diameter, wider than high; can be up to 3m from the waters edge;
- Nests: size and shape of a rugby ball, often in base of rushes, sedges or reeds;
- Feeding stations: located along water's edge; usually a pile of cut/chewed vegetation in sections approximately 10cm long; vegetation ends show marks of two large incisors. Piles of chopped grass, sedge or rush stems, rush pith and leaves;
- Lawns: short, grazed vegetation around land entrances of burrows;
- Footprints; and
- Sound: characteristic 'plop' when a vole enters the water.

Emphasis is usually placed on locating latrine sites, as they are the most useful sign for recording purposes. They indicate whether there is definite presence of water voles at a site. As there had been prolonged heavy rain throughout July 2023, the 2023 survey primarily focused on identifying burrows. Heavy rain was also a factor in 2024, however the weather in the week before the survey was mostly dry.

Factors that influence the suitability of habitat for water voles include:

- Positive: The presence of riparian vegetation along the banks and in the water.
- Positive: A steep bank on a watercourse reducing the risk of burrow inundation.
- Positive: Slow-flowing, relatively deep (over 1m) watercourses.
- Negative: The presence of rocky or otherwise impenetrable substrates.
- Negative: Over-shading by trees.
- Negative: Fast flowing or shallow water, and flashy watercourses.
- Negative: The presence of American mink.

2.2.4 Pine Marten

A survey was undertaken based on best practice guidance⁸ which involves a search of suitable habitat for evidence of pine marten. This includes a search for:

- Suitable pine marten dens or shelters;
- Pine marten scats;
- Feeding remains; and
- Prints and scratches.

⁶Dean, M, et al (2016) The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series). Eds Fiona Matthews and Paul Chanin. Mammal Society, London.

⁷Strachan, Moorhouse & Gelling (2011), The Water Vole Conservation Handbook, Third Edition.

⁸ Mammal Society (2012) UK BAP Mammals: Interim Guidance for Survey Methodologies, Impact Assessment and Mitigation

An assessment of the habitat was also undertaken to identify likely prey resources, which include small mammals, birds and invertebrates, and potential resting sites and commuting opportunities.

2.2.5 Red Squirrel

A survey was undertaken based on best practice guidance⁹ which involves a search of suitable habitat (primarily coniferous woodland) for evidence of squirrel activity.

- Squirrel dreys within trees;
- Feeding remains (e.g. chewed cones, split nuts); and,
- Sightings of red squirrels.

It should be noted that dreys and feeding remains cannot be accurately distinguished between red or grey squirrels. However, grey squirrel are not known to be present in this geographical location, so any field signs are likely to indicate the presence of red squirrel.

2.2.6 Badger

A badger survey was undertaken in suitable and accessible habitat, with reference to the methodology described by Scottish Badgers¹⁰ and SNH^{11,12}, which aimed to identify the following field evidence:

- Presence of holes with evidence of badgers such as footprints, discarded hairs; etc.;
- Presence of dung pits or latrines;
- Presence of well-used runs with subsidiary evidence of badger activity; and
- Presence of other indications of badger activity such as signs of foraging, snuffle marks and footprints.

In addition, any mammal holes which were either dug by badger or could be used by badger (known as setts) were also noted. Setts were examined for evidence of current use including:

- Identifiable badger hairs present within sett entrances or spoil heaps;
- Badger prints present within sett entrances or spoil heaps;
- Well-worn paths connecting the sett with other known setts, badger latrines or dung pits;
- Recent digging when associated with other evidence of badger; or
- Bedding present at sett entrances or recently buried within spoil heaps.

Setts were categorised as per Scottish Badgers guidance¹³.

Day nests comprised of collections of bedding above ground were also noted if present.

The habitats on site were assessed for their ability to provide suitable foraging habitat on a primary and secondary basis as per best practice guidance¹⁴. An assessment of the distribution of primary and secondary habitat (defined below) within the survey area was undertaken:

- Primary foraging habitat: short grazed or mown grassland, improved or unimproved, golf course habitat and broadleaved woodland (> 80% broadleaves); and
- Secondary foraging habitat: arable, rough grassland (not grazed by domestic stock or mown), scrub and mixed woodland.

⁹Gurnell, J., Lurz, P., McDonald, R. & Pepper, H. (2009). Practical techniques for surveying and monitoring squirrels. Surrey: Forestry Commission. Available at: [https://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCPN011.pdf/\\$file/FCPN011.pdf](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FCPN011.pdf/$file/FCPN011.pdf)

¹⁰Scottish Badgers (2007) Level 1 Badger Awareness Manual, SNH Scotland's Wildlife Badgers and Development.

¹¹Scottish Natural Heritage: Licensing Guidance. Available from: https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2018-10/Guidance%20-%20Licensing%20-%20Badgers%20-%20What%20is%20a%20Badger%20sett_.pdf)

¹²Scottish Natural Heritage: Protected Species Advice for Developers – Badger. Available from: <https://www.nature.scot/species-planning-advice-badger>

¹³Scottish Badgers: Surveying for Badgers – Good Practice Guidelines. Version 1: 2018. Available from: https://www.scottishbadgers.org.uk/userfiles/file/planning_guidelines/Surveying-for-Badgers-Good-Practice-Guidelines_V1.pdf

¹⁴The Highland Council. Best Practice Guidance – Model badger Protection Plan (BPP)– Badger foraging habitats (2006). Available from:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/2635/badger_best_practice_guidance_badger_protection_plans_september_2006

2.2.7 Wildcat

A wildcat survey was conducted including a search of suitable habitat for potential den sites such as large log piles, tree roots, rock piles or disused mammal holes such as badger setts and rabbit warrens. The survey also searched for evidence of wildcat presence such as scats (e.g., on prominent features such as tree stumps, dead logs, or stones), urine spray, prey remains, scratch marks and footprints.

Distinguishing between wildcat, hybrid, and domestic cat from field evidence alone is not possible, therefore any potential den sites were mapped for future observation usually by camera trapping¹⁵.

2.2.8 West European Hedgehog

The suitability of the habitats for hedgehog was assessed according to guidance¹⁶. Suitable habitats include:

- Grazed pastureland separated into small fields by hedgerows;
- Deciduous woodland copses (oak, beech);
- Overgrown verges or margins; and
- Suburban gardens, woodpiles or parklands.

2.2.9 Brown & Mountain Hare

Guidance²⁴ was used to identify direct evidence of brown hare, and to assess the suitability of the habitat for brown hare as follows:

- Direct sightings;
- Suitable habitat: lowland, mixed arable, hayfields and pasture land with hedgerows and field margins;
- Forms (resting places): typically beside a tuft of grass or rushes or a shallow scrape in soil, on a gentle slope with a good view ahead; and
- Droppings: hard round or slightly flattened pellets, about 1 cm across, usually straw to mid brown coloured, scattered in small quantities or singular.

Similar direct evidence and field signs are used to identify mountain hare with key differences being slightly smaller body than brown hare with shorter ears, lacking black tips, and an all-white tail. Summer coat is more greyish than brown, and the Winter coat mostly white or in transitional period – summer coats were expected during the survey period. Tracks are key field sign to look for to determine the presence of the mountain hare.

2.2.10 Reptiles

An assessment of habitat suitability for reptiles was undertaken in accordance with the criteria set out by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation¹⁷. This considers habitat type, basking and foraging opportunities, and linkages to other areas of suitable habitat. Habitat quality was assessed using the following criteria:

- High - Suitable vegetation cover offering foraging opportunities, basking sites and a variety of refugia. Good linkages with other areas of reptile habitat. For example semi-improved grassland with areas of dense continuous scrub.
- Moderate - Some suitable vegetation cover offering foraging opportunities, basking sites and refugia. Limited linkages to other areas of suitable reptile habitat. For example dense continuous scrub surrounded by short improved grassland.
- Low - Unsuitable vegetation cover with no linkages to other areas of suitable reptile habitat. For example dense mature conifer plantation, closely mown amenity grassland.

¹⁵The Mammal Society (2012). UK BAP Mammals: Interim Guidance for Survey Methodologies, Impact Assessment and Mitigation. (W. J. Cresswell, J. D. S. Birks, M. Dean, M. Pacheco, J. W. Trehwella, D. Wells, & S. Wray, Eds.). Southampton: The Mammal Society.

¹⁶The Mammal Society (2012). UK BAP Mammals: Interim Guidance for Survey Methodologies, Impact Assessment and Mitigation. (W. J. Cresswell, J. D. S. Birks, M. Dean, M. Pacheco, J. W. Trehwella, D. Wells, & S. Wray, Eds.). Southampton: The Mammal Society.

¹⁷Edgar, P., Foster, J. and Baker, J. (2010). Reptile Habitat Management Handbook. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.

In addition, direct sightings of reptiles, and features that offer suitable hibernation refugia (e.g., dry stone walls, vegetated stone piles containing cavities etc.) were noted.

2.3 Constraints

2.3.1 Desk Study Limitations

The desk study detailed within the EIAR was completed in 2021 and may not be representative of current status; ecological data tends to be valid for 12 months. However, the purpose of the 2023 and 2024 updated surveys was to provide the latest information on protected species on site and within 250 m; therefore, this data is considered relevant as a baseline.

Desk studies are limited by the reliability of third-party information and the geographical availability of biological and/or ecological records and data. This emphasises the need to collate up-to-date, site-specific data based on field surveys by experienced surveyors. The absence of a species from biological records cannot be taken to represent actual absence. Species distribution patterns should be interpreted with caution as they may reflect survey/reporting effort rather than actual distribution.

2.3.2 Survey Limitations

Prolonged periods of heavy rainfall in the Highlands throughout July 2023 may have resulted in field evidence being washed away and discouraged protected species activity. There was again heavy rain for much of Spring 2024, although the weather was drier around the time of the survey.

Faunal species are transient and can move between their preferred habitats regularly throughout and between years. This survey provides a snapshot of field signs present in the survey area in July 2023, and in June 2024.

Section 3.0: Results

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Designated Sites

Glen Affric to Strathconon Special Protection Area (SPA) is the only designated site within 5 km of the proposed development. The site regularly supports a population of European importance Annex 1 species golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*. No further protected species are designated features of the SPA.

Table 4: Statutory Designated Sites

Site Name	Designation	Distance & Orientation	Ecological Connectivity	Designated Features
Glen Affric to Strathconon	SPA	2.4km South	Moorland and watercourses	Golden eagle (<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>)

3.1.2 Protected Species

The following records of protected species (excluding birds) were noted within the EIAR desk study.

Table 5 : Biological records results

Species	Latin Name	No. of records	Presence on Biodiversity Action Plans
Mammals			
Red squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>	9	UKBAP, SBL
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	1	
Herpetofauna			
Common lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	3	SBL
Slow worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	1	

3.2 Field Survey

The 2023 Protected Species Survey Results Map can be found in Figure 1 and the Photographs and Target Notes in Appendix B.

The 2024 Protected Species Survey Results Map can be found in Figure 2 and the Photographs and Target Notes in Appendix C.

The surveys identified the presence of otter, water vole, pine marten, red squirrel, mountain hare and common lizard.

No other evidence of protected or notable species were identified. A breeding bird survey and protection plan have been produced separately.

3.2.1 Bats

No records of bats were returned from the desk study, and there is no previous mention of bats within the EIAR. The site is considered to lack suitable roosting features; however, tree lines and watercourses are likely to hold high levels of insect activity, providing foraging and commuting routes for bats. As these are outside of the main construction areas bats are not considered further within the species protection plan at this stage.

3.2.2 Otter

No records of otter were returned during the desk study. Evidence of otter was identified during the 2023 field surveys; prey remains and a spraint in the same location (Figure 1, TN01). This was located on a moss mound between Allt Coire Mhuilidh and the lochan Coire Muilidh. A spraint site (Figure 2, TN09) was identified during the 2024 field surveys, beside a burn approximately 850 m to the south of the 2023 record.

Watercourses on site are considered to offer potential for supporting an otter population, and while likely to host limited fish populations, other prey species such as amphibians and reptiles are present. The site also supports small birds and likely small mammal populations, providing suitable food source.

Suitable breeding holt habitat was limited within the survey area, lacking underground holes, rock piles, and tree roots. However, the riparian habitats offered suitable habitat for opportunistic resting of otter including for forming couches in addition to foraging and commuting.

3.2.3 Water vole

No records of water vole were returned from the desk study. A single sighting of a water vole was made during the 2023 field surveys on the banks of Loch Dubh Beag (Figure 1, TN02). Two burrows in the vicinity of the planned water crossing of Allt na Beinne Leithe Bige which both appeared to be disused with no further sign of occupation (Figure 1, TN03 and TN04). Two further burrows with droppings nearby were identified on the banks of Allt Coire Mhullidh between the two lochans Loch na Salach and Loch a' Mheallain Chaorainn (Figure 1, TN05).

During the 2024 field surveys, two burrows within 50 m of the planned water crossing of Allt na Beinne Leithe Bige appeared active, with fresh droppings and grazed grass (Figure 2, TN10 and TN11). Further potential burrows were present closer to the planned water crossing, although they appeared to be disused (Figure 2, TN12, TN13, TN14). Potential burrows were present elsewhere (TN15 to TN23); no droppings were found in these locations; however two burrows were considered potentially active, with a clear pathway to the water (TN17) and signs of recent grazing (TN19).

The habitat is considered suitable for supporting a water vole population, including slow-flowing deep water, easily penetrable banks which are fairly shallow, and riparian vegetation providing cover and food. Sub-optimal habitat included slightly steeper banks or more shallow watercourses connected to suitable habitat downstream and/or upstream that had potential to support water vole. Unsuitable features included watercourses with flat banks, susceptible to flooding or rocky substrate which would be difficult for water vole to excavate burrows.

3.2.4 Pine Marten

No records of pine marten were returned from the desk study.

During the 2023 surveys, evidence of pine marten foraging was identified in the recently felled woodland at the southern end of the site, to the north of Corriemoillie Substation. This area of woodland provides numerous opportunities as suitable denning habitat (Figure 1, TN06). Scat was identified on the road to the entrance of the Corriemoillie Substation (Figure 1, TN07).

During the 2024 surveys, pine marten scat was identified close to the access track to the Substation (TN24).

The woodland habitat in the south of the site is considered suitable to support a population of pine marten, with a mix of ages of trees, including recently felled and some veteran trees with features such as holes and disused nests which could be used as shelter. Similar to otter, features and holes along watercourses and across site may offer suitable resting or denning opportunities for pine marten.

3.2.5 Red Squirrel

Nine records of red squirrel were returned by the desk study.

No signs of red squirrel were recorded during the 2023 surveys, or the surveys conducted to inform the EIAR. During the 2024 surveys, squirrel feeding debris was found in the conifer plantations immediately to the north of the Substation (TN25 and TN26). No dreys were recorded.

Many of the trees within 50 m of the proposed line and turbines are not of a size that would support a squirrel drey. (Immature and stretched due to competition for light). As above with pine marten, more suitable mature trees are located further into the woodland areas to the southern end of the site near

Corriemoillie substation and include a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees which can be considered more suitable for supporting a potential red squirrel population.

3.2.6 Badger

The desk study returned a single record of badger within a 2 km radius of the proposed route. No setts were recorded within 50 m of the site during the 2023 surveys, or the surveys conducted to inform the EIAR. A single partial footprint was identified on site to the north of woodland surrounding Corriemoillie substation (Figure 1, TN08), indicating that badger traverse and likely forage onsite.

No badger signs were recorded during the 2024 surveys.

The woodland habitats further south of the site are considered to offer perfect sett creation and primary foraging habitats for badgers. Badger will not be considered further within the species protection plan; however, this should be revised upon confirmation of presence within the construction area either as sightings or field signs.

3.2.7 Wildcat

No records of wildcat were returned with the desk study; however, the site is approximately 3.5 km from the Strathpeffer wildcat priority area.

No evidence of wildcat was recorded during the 2023 and 2024 field surveys, with limited suitable denning features recorded within the woodland and marginal areas, however the site and adjoining area provides suitable habitat to support the typical prey species of wildcat, with rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) signs noted, and likelihood of smaller mammal also being present. Small birds have also been noted throughout site visits.

3.2.8 Western European Hedgehog

No records of hedgehog were returned from the desk study, and there is no previous mention within the EIAR.

Hedgehog will not be considered further within the species protection plan; however, it is considered that the general mitigation should suffice for protecting any hedgehog present on site. The plan should be revised accordingly in change of circumstance.

3.2.9 Brown & Mountain Hare

No records of hare were returned from the desk study. The surveys informing the EIAR noted the presence of mountain hare on several occasions in the northern and central parts of the site around Lochuichart Wind Farm.

Mountain hare and signs of mountain hare were observed throughout the upland moorland areas of the site during the 2024 survey.

Hare are known to enter construction areas including compounds, particularly mountain hare in winter when they often shelter underneath cabins or close to generators for warmth. It is considered that general mitigation measures will be sufficient for protecting mountain hare on site.

3.2.10 Reptiles

Four records of reptiles were returned by the desk study. No reptiles were observed during the 2023 field surveys, or the surveys conducted to inform the EIAR. It may be considered that recent cooler and wetter than average weather conditions may have discouraged reptile activity. While the temperature was considered within an acceptable range for reptile activity, July is not considered optimal for undertaking reptile presence/absence surveys.

Common lizard were observed throughout the upland moorland areas of the site during the 2024 surveys.

A single record of a predated slow worm was recorded in the wider area during the 2023 Moorland Breeding Birds Survey.

Much of the site is considered to offer suitable habitat such as open moorland habitat with varying vegetation lengths and bare areas suitable for basking. There are also areas suitable for cover present for hibernacula.

3.3 Other

Sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) were observed during the surveys, and the habitat is also considered suitable for red deer (*Cervus elaphus*). Measures for habitat management relating to deer are further detailed within the associated Habitat Management Plan (HMP) (Mabbett, 2023).

An osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) was found close to the substation during the 2023 surveys, indicating that osprey regularly fly over the site during summer. Meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) and stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*) were also observed during the surveys; numerous nests/territories were noted throughout site, particularly close to woodland. A white-tailed eagle was observed flying low over the site during the 2024 surveys.

Further details of protecting breeding birds including Schedule 1 are detailed separately within the Breeding Bird Protection Plan (BBPP).

3.4 Impact Assessment

This SPP is based on the key findings of the of previous surveys accompanying the planning applications and pre-construction surveys conducted by Mabbett in 2023 and 2024. A summary of the findings and subsequent scoping of potential; impacts is shown in Table 6. Species specific protection plans will be produced for the following species:

- Water vole
- Otter
- Pine marten
- Red Squirrel
- Badger

Table 6: Species Scoping Table

Species	Summary of survey results	Potential Impacts	Risk Rating	Protection Plan Required?
Bats	No evidence of bats, however tree lines and watercourses are provide foraging and commuting routes.	Destruction of suitable foraging and/or commuting habitat. Disturbance impacts to commuting/foraging bats.	Negligible	No
Otter	Records of recent activity found along Allt Coire Mhuilidh and the lochan Coire Muilidh. Otters are likely to be active in the area.	Disturbance of animals during construction.	Moderate	Yes
Water vole	Evidence of water vole recorded on Loch Dubh Beag, Allt na Beinne Leithe Bige, and Allt Coire Mhuilidh.	Disturbance of animals during construction. Destruction or fragmentation of habitat.	Moderate	Yes
Pine marten	Records of recent activity found at the southern end of the site, to the north of Corriemoillie Substation. No active dens were found. Pine marten are likely to be active in the area.	Disturbance of animals during construction.	Low	Yes
Red Squirrel	No signs of red squirrel were recorded during the 2023 surveys however feeding signs were recorded during 2024.	Disturbance of animals during construction.	Low	Yes

	and suitable habitat for red squirrel exists nearby.			
Badger	No setts were recorded within 50 m of the site but evidence of activity recorded on site to the north of woodland surrounding Corriemoillie substation indicating that badger traverse and likely forage onsite.	Disturbance of animals during construction. Trapping of animals within excavations.	Low	Yes
Wildcat	No evidence of wildcat recorded, however the site and adjoining area provides suitable habitat to support the typical prey species of wildcat.	Disturbance of animals during construction.	Negligible	No
West European Hedgehog	No evidence of hedgehog recorded although suitable habitat exists. General mitigation should suffice for protecting any hedgehog present on site.	Disturbance of animals during construction. Trapping of animals within excavations.	Negligible	No
Brown and Mountain Hare	The surveys informing the EIAR noted the presence of mountain hare on site. General mitigation should be sufficient for protecting mountain hare on site.	Disturbance of animals during construction. Trapping of animals within excavations.	Negligible	No
Reptiles	Reptiles were observed during the 2024 field surveys, and the site offers suitable habitat to support such species.	Killing of animals during construction.	Negligible	No

Section 4.0: Species Protection Plan

4.1 Additional Survey Work and Licensing

With the exception of ongoing monitoring by an ECoW, no further protected species surveys or NatureScot licences are required at present.

ECoW monitoring should be undertaken periodically during the construction phase to identify changes to the above baseline.

Ecological data is considered valid for a period of 12 months, at which time it is suggested that this baseline is updated. Mitigation including general and site-specific measures are detailed in section 4.2. If the site boundary were to change, or new species/habitat results recorded, further survey work may be required.

4.2 Mitigation

4.2.1 General

The following measures are general and applicable site wide for protecting wildlife including protected species:

- The site induction will contain information and location of (potential) protected species on site, including notification of any licensing requirements. This shall be communicated to all site personnel including contractors and visitors where appropriate;
- Toolbox talks shall be delivered specific to each protected and notable species and updated as appropriate. Daily briefings and site information board also to include details of wildlife mitigation where relevant;
- An Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) shall be present for the duration of the project to monitor the site and advise the site team on any change and requirements;
- Working hours regarding construction activities will be restricted to daylight to avoid disturbance of nocturnal species. Works will commence at least two hours after sunrise and cease two hours before sunset. Any working outside of normal hours will be communicated and agreed with the relevant parties including the ECoW prior to commencing;
- Any lighting will be directed away from suitable protected species habitat such as tree lines, scrub, and watercourses;
- Materials piles, pipes and similar items to be capped / covered to prevent wildlife from entering them. Any trapped wildlife to be immediately released by ECoW or under instruction;
- Daily plant, excavation, and material pile checks to be completed to ensure good pollution prevention measures in addition to checking for wildlife including field signs (i.e., nesting material).
- All pollution prevention measures to be followed to protected wildlife on site, particularly when working near or within watercourses;
- Bog mats to be used reducing wet muddy ground potentially trapping wildlife;
- Concrete structures to be precast where possible to prevent pollution and wildlife entrapment;
- Preconstruction walkovers to be undertaken by ECoW before breaking ground and repeated if left unattended for an extended period;
- Should wildlife enter the works vicinity (10-30 m) works will temporarily pause allowing the animal to move away;
- Excavations >1 m shall be covered or a ramp installed to prevent wildlife from becoming trapped and permit escape;
- No works exclusion zones will be installed with signage relevant to protected species as required. Licensing and working methods to be sought accordingly;
- Upon discovery of suspected dens or resting places for protected species, works will cease immediately and advice sought from the ECoW. The area will be excluded appropriately until licensing requirements are met or the ECoW confirms absence of protected species;
- In the event of a wildlife emergency, works to stop immediately and ECoW to be contacted for advice. The Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) will be contacted as appropriate: Animal helpline 03000 999 999. Suspected bird flu cases to be reported to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA): APHA.Scotland@apha.gov.uk Telephone 03000 600709 ;
- Personnel to report wildlife sightings, field signs, or concerns to Site Management and ECoW;
- Habitat enhancement for protected and notable species to be considered and agreed where appropriate;

4.2.2 Water vole

The following mitigation is specific to water vole on site and shall be implemented alongside the general working measures:

Table 7: Water vole species Protection Plan

Controls/Mitigation measures	Responsibility	Achievement Criteria	Completion date	Notes/further actions
Surveys for water vole should be conducted along all watercourses within 50m of the works area and 250m up and downstream of the water crossings, prior to construction works taking place and annually until construction is completed.	Ecologist/ ECoW	Completion	Prior to construction	The surveys will be undertaken during a period of dry weather and will be based on to Dean et al (2016).
Site inductions and toolbox talks should be used to ensure all staff on site are aware of the potential presence of protected species.	Contractor/ Ecologist	Completion	All times	Any sightings should be reported back to the ECoW or Site Agent.
The ECoW will attend site on a regular basis throughout the construction period to ensure all environmental mitigation is delivered.	Ecologist	Completion	Construction	
With the exception of watercourse crossings, all construction works will maintain a minimum buffer distance of 50 m from all watercourses unless checked by ECoW prior to commencement .	Contractor/ ECoW	Avoidance	Construction	Buffer will avoid damage to riparian habitats during enabling works and construction. In particular to avoid or minimise impacts on optimal water vole habitats.
Should any water vole burrows be encountered within 10m of any proposed works, all works and activity must cease immediately and NatureScot approached for further advice/licence before works can continue.	Contractor/ Ecologist	Completion	All times	ECoW to be informed in the first instance
Any task lighting will be used and be directional if required.	Contractor	Avoidance	All times	

4.2.3 Pine marten

The following mitigation is specific to pine marten on site and shall be implemented alongside the general working measures:

Table 8: Pine marten Species Protection Plan

Controls/Mitigation measures	Responsibility	Achievement Criteria	Completion date	Notes/further actions
Pine marten surveys should be carried out, resurveying accessible habitats around proposed infrastructure and encompassing a 250m buffer of suitable den habitat, prior to construction works taking place and annually until construction is completed.	Ecologist	Completion	Prior to construction	Should take place no more than ten weeks pre-construction /clearance and will determine any licensing needs.
If a non-breeding den is identified during works, an exclusion zone of a minimum of 30m will be marked out (exclusion may be increased depending on level of disturbance expected). If the den is breeding (or suspected) then an exclusion zone of 100m will be marked out. If works are required within these exclusion zones (including the destruction of a den) then a licence will be sought from NatureScot.	Ecologist/ Contractor	Avoidance/ Completion	All times	A licence may be required to camera trap den sites to confirm breeding status.
In areas that will be cleared or otherwise disturbed, but where trees/vegetation are too dense to permit survey, further mitigation may be required to minimise the risk to pine marten dens. Seasonal restriction of clearance in any sensitive areas that are identified by pre-construction/pre-clearance survey.	Ecologist	Completion	Completion of felling works	May include additional checks of any areas that provide good potential for den sites if these become exposed by vegetation clearance.
Pine marten should be considered in any post-development habitat management plans.	Ecologist	Completion	Operation	Measures for pine marten included in HMP
Site inductions and toolbox talks should be used to ensure all staff on site are aware of the potential presence of protected species.	Contractor	Completion	All times	Any sightings should be reported back to the ECoW or Site Agent.
The disturbance corridor should be kept to a minimum wherever practically possible.	Contractor	Completion	All times	
Any lighting used should be restricted to the specific area needed with minimised light spill.	Contractor	Avoidance	All times	
All open trenches must be fitted with a mammal escape ramp, installed at an angle of less than 45°. Excavations should be checked for trapped animals daily, prior to commencement of works	Contractor	Avoidance/ Completion	During construction	The ECoW should be contacted immediately should a trapped animal be discovered.

4.2.4 Otter

The following mitigation is specific to otter on site and shall be implemented alongside the general working measures:

Table 9: Otter Species Protection Plan

Controls/Mitigation measures	Responsibility	Achievement Criteria	Phase	Notes/further actions
Survey for otter will be conducted along all watercourses within 250m of the works area prior to construction works taking place and annually until construction is completed.	Ecologist	Completion	Prior to construction	Survey methodology to be based on Chanin (2003).
Site inductions and toolbox talks will be used to ensure all staff on site are aware of the potential presence of protected species.	Contractor/ Ecologist	Completion	All times	Any sightings should be reported back to the ECoW or Site Agent.
If an otter holt/resting site is identified an exclusion zone will be marked out. An exclusion of at least 200m will be erected around a suspected/confirmed breeding holt. For a non-breeding holt, a minimum of 30m exclusion will be marked (potentially larger depending on works). If works are required within the exclusion zones, a NatureScot Licence will be required to continue.	Contractor/ Ecologist	Avoidance/ Completion	All times	
With the exception of watercourse crossings, all construction works will maintain a minimum buffer distance of 50 m from all watercourses unless checked by ECoW prior to commencement .	Contractor	Avoidance	Construction	
The ECoW will attend site on a regular basis throughout the construction and will have responsibility for the delivery of environmental mitigation.	Ecologist	Completion	Construction	
All watercourse crossings will be either be bridged structures or open bottomed culverts to avoid effects on otter associated with habitat fragmentation.	Designers	Completion	Design	
Potential hazards such as trenches and steep-sided holes that could act as pitfall traps will be covered at night. Holes left open overnight will have a means of escape, such as an access ramp, provided for any animals that may fall in. Excavations should be checked for trapped animals daily, prior to commencement of works	Contractor	Avoidance	Construction	The ECoW should be contacted immediately should a trapped animal be discovered.
Construction works that may affect otters will be limited to daylight hours to reduce the impact on otters active during hours of darkness	Contractor	Avoidance	Construction	Any lighting used should be restricted to the specific area needed with minimised light spill.
Any lighting scheme should be sensitively designed so not to illuminate watercourse corridors.	Designers	Completion	Operation	

4.2.5 Red squirrel

The following mitigation is specific to red squirrel on site and shall be implemented alongside the general working measures:

Table 10: Red Squirrel Species Protection Plan

Controls/Mitigation measures	Responsibility	Achievement Criteria	Completion date	Notes/further actions
Red squirrel surveys should be carried out, resurveying accessible habitats around proposed infrastructure and encompassing a 50m buffer of suitable habitat prior to construction works taking place and annually until construction is completed.	Ecologist	Completion	Prior to construction	Should take place no more than ten weeks pre-construction / and will determine any licensing needs.
If a non-breeding drey is identified during works, an exclusion zone of a minimum of 10m will be marked out (exclusion may be increased depending on level of disturbance expected). If the drey is considered to be used for breeding (or suspected) then an exclusion zone of 50m will be marked out. If works are required within these exclusion zones (including the destruction of a drey) then a licence will be sought from NatureScot.	Ecologist/ Contractor	Avoidance/ Completion	All times	A licence may be required to camera trap den sites to confirm breeding status.
In areas that will be cleared or otherwise disturbed, but where trees/vegetation are too dense to permit survey, further mitigation may be required to minimise the risk to pine marten dens. Seasonal restriction of clearance in any sensitive areas that are identified by pre-construction/pre-clearance survey.	Ecologist	Completion	Completion of felling works	May include additional checks of any areas that provide good potential for den sites if these become exposed by felling.
Red Squirrel should be considered in any post-development habitat management plans.	Ecologist	Completion	Operation	Measures for pine marten included in HMP
Site inductions and toolbox talks should be used to ensure all staff on site are aware of the potential presence of protected species.	Contractor	Completion	All times	Any sightings should be reported back to the ECoW or Site Agent.
The disturbance corridor should be kept to a minimum wherever practically possible.	Contractor	Completion	All times	
Any lighting used should be restricted to the specific area needed with minimised light spill.	Contractor	Avoidance	All times	
All open trenches must be fitted with a mammal escape ramp, installed at an angle of less than 45°. Excavations should be checked for trapped animals daily, prior to commencement of works	Contractor	Avoidance/ Completion	During construction	The ECoW should be contacted immediately should a trapped animal be discovered.

4.2.6 Badger

The following mitigation is specific to badger on site and shall be implemented alongside the general working measures:

Table 11: Badger Species Protection Plan

Controls/Mitigation measures	Responsibility	Achievement Criteria	Completion date	Notes/further actions
Pre-works survey for badger should be conducted within 30m of the works area prior to construction works taking place and annually until construction is completed.	Ecologist/ECoW	Completion	Prior to construction	
Site inductions and toolbox talks should be used to ensure all staff on site are aware of the potential presence of protected species.	Contractor/ Ecologist	Completion	All times	Any sightings should be reported back to the ECoW or Site Agent.
The ECoW will attend site on a regular basis throughout the construction period to ensure all environmental mitigation is delivered.	Ecologist	Completion	Construction	
Should any badgers or badger setts be encountered within 30m of any proposed works, all works and activity must cease immediately and NatureScot approached for further advice/licence before works can continue.	Contractor/ Ecologist	Completion	All times	ECoW to be informed in the first instance

Figures

Figure 1 – Protected Species Survey Results 2023

Figure 2 – Protected Species Survey Results 2024

Appendix A: Legislation

European Protected Species (Bats, beaver, wildcat, and otter)

A European Protected Species (EPS) is a species listed in the EC Directive (92/43) The Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna (the “Habitats Directive”), which is transposed into Scottish law through the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (the “Habitat Regulations”) as amended. Under this legislation it is an offence to deliberately or recklessly:

- capture, injure or kill such an animal;
- harass an animal or group of animals;
- disturb an animal while it is occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection;
- disturb an animal while it is rearing or otherwise caring for its young;
- obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place, or otherwise deny an animal use of a breeding site or resting place;
- disturb an animal in a manner or in circumstances likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species;
- disturb an animal in a manner or in circumstances likely to impair its ability to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or otherwise care for its young;
- disturb an animal while it is migrating or hibernating;
- take or destroy its eggs; and
- possess, control, transport, sell or exchange specimens of any animal listed on Annex IV of the Habitats Directive. This applies to living or dead specimens and to their derivatives.

It is an offence of strict liability to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal. These sites and places are protected even when the animal isn't present. For example, great crested newt ponds are protected all of the time as long as it can be shown that the newts use the ponds some of the time.

A licence may be issued to permit the otherwise unlawful activities listed above if these three tests are satisfied:

- There must be a licensable purpose which includes 'preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment;'
- There is 'no satisfactory alternative'; and
- The derogation (i.e. any permission/licence granted) is 'not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range'.

Red Squirrel & Pine Marten

Red squirrel and pine marten are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Subject to certain exceptions, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- kill, injure or take (capture) an individual;
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place which they use for shelter or protection;
- disturb an individual while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose; or to
- possess or control, sell, offer for sale or possess or transport for the purpose of sale any live or dead animal or any derivative of such an animal.

Knowingly causing or permitting any of the above acts to be carried out is also an offence.

In some cases licences may be issued by NatureScot (NS) to enable certain otherwise illegal activities to take place for social, economic or environmental reasons (including development) as long as:

- the licensed activity will contribute to significant social, economic or environmental benefit;
- there is no satisfactory alternative; and
- there will be no significant negative impact on the conservation status of the species.

Water Vole

Water voles are partially protected under Schedule 5, Part 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to 'intentionally or recklessly':

- damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place which a water vole uses for shelter or protection; or to
- disturb a water vole while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

Knowingly causing or permitting any of the above acts to be carried out is also an offence.

In some cases, licences may be issued by Nature Scot (SNH) to enable certain otherwise illegal activities to take place for social, economic or environmental reasons (including development) as long as:

- the licensed activity will contribute to significant social, economic or environmental benefit;
- there is no satisfactory alternative; and
- there will be no significant negative impact on the conservation status of the species.

Badger

Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992) (as amended). Offences under the Act include:

- wilfully taking, injuring or killing a badger;
- cruelty to a badger;
- intentional or reckless interference with a badger sett;
- sale or possession of a badger; and
- marking or ringing of a badger.

Interfering with a badger sett includes:

- damaging or destroying a sett or any part of it;
- obstructing access to a sett;
- disturbing a badger while it is in a sett; and
- causing or allowing a dog to enter a badger sett.

Where an offence is committed the individual (as well as the body corporate, Scottish partnership or, as the case may be, unincorporated association) is guilty of the offence and is liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

Licences can only permit someone to 'interfere' with a badger sett for the purpose of development. A licence cannot permit the removal, translocation or killing of badgers for the purpose of development. Interference primarily means anything that might:

- disturb any badger in a sett; and
- damage or block the tunnels that radiate from a sett's entrances.

Licences aren't generally issued during the breeding season (30 November to 1 July). Activities that necessarily involve disturbance should be scheduled to take place outside of this period.

Brown & Mountain Hare

Brown hare are partially protected under Schedule 5A of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take an individual within the closed season. The closed season for brown hare is 1 February to 30 September.

Mountain hares are included on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and so have full protection. This means, for example, that anyone who intentionally or recklessly kills, injures or takes mountain hare without a licence will be acting unlawfully. Licensing is available for those wishing to kill or take mountain hare.

Intentionally or recklessly killing, injuring, or taking mountain hare at any time or brown hare in the closed season is an offence under the amended Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Licences can only be granted for specific purposes, including:

- to prevent serious damage – e.g. to forestry interests
- social, economic or environmental purposes

Clear justification and evidence must be provided to support why control is necessary at this time, and what alternative action preventative action has been undertaken to date.

Western European Hedgehog

Hedgehogs are protected by British law under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, making it illegal to kill or capture them using certain methods. They are also protected in Britain under the Wild Mammals Protection Act (1996), prohibiting cruelty and mistreatment.

Amphibians & Reptiles

Great crested newts, natterjack toads and all marine turtles are European protected species. They have full protection under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended).

All other amphibian and reptile species found naturally in Scotland are given limited protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These are:

- common frog
- common toad
- palmate newt
- smooth newt
- adder
- common lizard
- slow worm

Offences for common lizard, slow worm and adder:

- intentional or reckless killing and injury
- trade – i.e. sale, barter, exchange, transport for sale, or advertise for sale or to buy

Smooth and palmate newts, common frog and common toad are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), but only against trade (i.e., sale, barter, exchange, transport for sale, or advertise for sale or to buy).

Birds

All wild bird species in the UK are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), with species listed on Schedules A1, 1 and 1A afforded additional protection.

For any wild bird species, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- kill, injure or take a bird;
- take, damage, destroy or interfere with a nest of any bird while it is in use or being built;
- obstruct or prevent any bird from using its nest;
- take or destroy an egg of any bird;
- possess or control a living or dead wild bird; and
- possess or control an egg of a wild bird (or any such derivatives).

For any wild bird species listed on Schedule 1, it's an offence to disturb:

- any bird while it is building a nest;
- any bird while it is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young;
- any bird while lekking; and
- the dependent young of any bird.

For any wild bird species listed on Schedule 1A, it's an offence to intentionally or recklessly harass any bird.

For any wild bird species listed on Schedule A1, it's an offence to intentionally or recklessly take, damage, destroy or interfere at any time with a nest habitually used by any bird.

Licences cannot be issued for this purpose.

Appendix B: Survey Photographs & Target Notes

TN no. & Description	Photograph
TN01: Evidence of otter foraging and spraint	
TN02: Location of water vole sighting in suitable habitat.	
TN03: Water vole burrows considered inactive.	

TN no. & Description	Photograph
TN04: Water vole burrows considered inactive.	
TN05: Water vole burrows with latrines nearby.	
TN06: Pine marten foraging signs and potential denning habitat.	

TN no. & Description	Photograph
TN07: Pine marten scat at entrance to Corriemoillie substation	 A close-up photograph of a dark, elongated, and somewhat irregular piece of animal scat resting on a surface of grey and brown gravel. The scat has a slightly textured appearance with some lighter-colored material visible inside.
TN08: Partial badger footprint.	 A photograph showing a partial badger footprint in dark, moist soil. A black, graduated scale is placed vertically next to the footprint for size reference. The footprint is a deep, dark impression in the soil, showing the characteristic shape of a badger's foot.

Appendix C: Survey Photographs & Target Notes

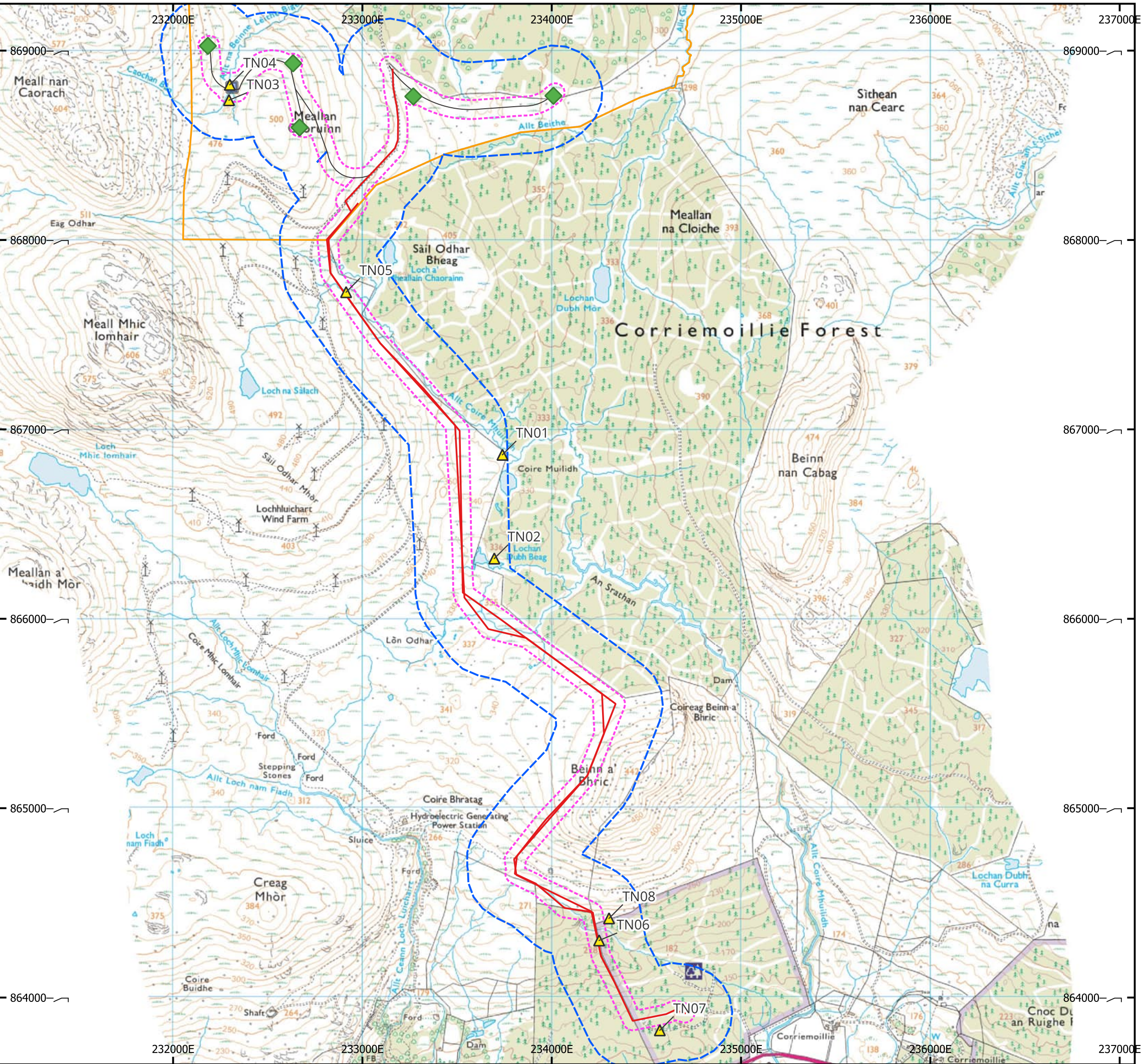
TN no. & Description	Photograph	
TN09: Otter spraint site		
TN10: Water vole burrow considered active		
TN11: Water vole burrow considered active		

TN no. & Description	Photograph	
TN12: Water vole burrow considered inactive – no droppings or grazing.		
TN13: Water vole burrows considered inactive – several possible holes in area but no grazing or droppings.		
TN14: Water vole burrows considered inactive – several holes here, but no droppings. Grazed grass, but evidence of deer and hare.		
TN15: Water vole burrow considered inactive – no droppings, some grazing but evidence of hare.		

TN no. & Description	Photograph	
TN16: Water vole burrow considered inactive – no droppings. Some grazing on grassy areas.		
TN17: Water vole burrow considered potentially active – no droppings but clear path to water.		
TN18: Water vole burrow considered inactive – no droppings or grazing.		
TN19: Water vole burrow considered potentially active, with some shortened grass and nibbling on stick in front of hole. No droppings.		

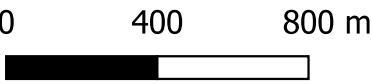
TN no. & Description	Photograph	
TN20: Water vole burrow considered inactive		
TN21: Water vole burrow considered inactive – no signs of recent use.		
TN22: Water vole burrow considered inactive – no droppings, only a small amount of grazing.		
TN23: Water vole burrow considered inactive – several holes in the area that look like water vole burrows, but no droppings.		

TN no. & Description	Photograph	
TN24: Pine marten scat		 A photograph showing a dark, elongated, and segmented piece of pine marten scat resting on a bed of dry, brown pine needles and some green moss.
TN25: Squirrel feeding debris		 A photograph showing a dense layer of dry, brown pine needles and some green moss, which is the debris left by a squirrel feeding.
TN26: Squirrel feeding debris		 A photograph showing a dense layer of dry, brown pine needles and some green moss, which is the debris left by a squirrel feeding.



Lochluichart Extension II	
Bluebell Wind Farm (C/O Boralex)	Lochluichart Extension II SPP Figure 1 04/08/23

- KEY
- Protected Species Target Note
 - Consented Turbines
 - EstimatedCombinedRoute_281021
 - 50 m Protected Species Buffer
 - 250 m Protected Species Buffer
 - Lochluichart Northern Boundary



Drawing Number: Figure 1		Project Number: 312771		
SHEET: A3	SCALE: 1:20,000	BY: SCr	QA: EA	REV:
Projection: OSGB 1936/British National Grid - EPSG 27700		Issue Date: 04/08/23		

