Volume 5: Appendix 11.1 – Desk Study and Legal/Policy Context

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AWI: Ancient Woodland Inventory

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EcIA: Ecological Impact Assessment

EIAR: Environmental Impact Assessment Report

EPS: European Protected Species

ESA: Ecological Survey Area

GWDTE: Ground-Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems

HRA: Habitat Regulations Assessment

INNS: Invasive Non-Native Species

LBAP: Local Biodiversity Action Plan

LEPO: Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)

LNCS: Local Nature Conservation Site(s)

LNR(s): Local Nature Reserve(s)

LOD: Limit of Deviation

MAGIC: Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside

NBN Atlas: National Biodiversity Network Atlas

NESBiP: North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership

NESBReC: North East Scotland Biodiversity Records Centre

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

NNR(s): National Nature Reserve(s)

NVC: National Vegetation Classification

OGL: Open Government Licence

OHL: Overhead Line

RSPB: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

SAC(s): Special Area(s) of Conservation

SBL: Scottish Biodiversity List

SPA(s): Special Protection Area(s)

SSEN: Scottish and Southern Energy Networks

SSSI(s): Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest

SWT: Scottish Wildlife Trust

WCA: *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Proposals

1.1.1 This appendix presents the full methodology and results of the desk study undertaken to inform the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) of the proposed Kintore to Tealing 400 kV Overhead Line (OHL) Connection, hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development'.

1.1.2 It should be read in conjunction with **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description** of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), which contains the full details of the Proposed Development, and **Volume 2, Chapter 11: Ecology**, which contains an assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development upon ecological features.

1.1.3 This appendix supports the EcIA in addition to the following appendices, which can be found in **Volume 5** of the EIAR:

- **Appendix 11.2: Habitat and Vegetation Survey Report;**
- **Appendix 11.3: Protected Species Survey Report;**
- **Appendix 11.4: Bat Survey Report;** and
- **Appendix 11.5: Outline Biodiversity Enhancement Plan.**

1.1.4 **Appendix 11.6: Confidential Protected Species Survey Report** is located in **Volume 6** of the EIAR.

1.1.5 This appendix is supported by the following figures which can be found in **Volume 3** of the EIAR:

- **Figure 1.1: Overview of the Proposed Development;**
- **Figures 3.1.1 to 3.1.29: Proposed Development for which Section 37 Consent (*Electricity Act, 1989*) is sought;**
- **Figures 11.1.1 to 11.1.23: The Proposed Development and Ecology Survey Area;** and
- **Figures 11.2.1 to 11.2.5: Designated Sites within 10 km, 5 km and 2 km of the Proposed Development**.

1.2 Requirement for the Report

1.2.1 LUC was commissioned by Scottish and Southern Energy Networks (SSEN) Transmission, hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant', to undertake an ecological desk study and provide legal context to aid the design process. A desk study is required to ensure the EcIA is cognisant of relevant nature conservation and policy, and to aid understanding of the existing baseline. Data returned by the desk study, such as historical records of protected species, is used to inform field survey methods and the scope of the assessment.

1.3 Terminology and Survey Area

1.3.1 The following terminology will be used throughout this report:

- **Proposed Development:** Defined as the infrastructure including towers, overhead line (OHL) conductors, access tracks, and temporary working areas within the Limit of Deviation (LOD) (**Volume 3, Figures 3.1.1 to 3.1.29: Proposed Development for which Section 37 Consent (*Electricity Act, 1989*) is sought**; see **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description**).
- **Proposed Alignment**: Defined as the centreline of the OHL (see **Volume 3, Figure 1.1: Overview of the Proposed Development**).
- **Limit of Deviation (LOD)**: The area either side of the Proposed Alignment and ancillary works within which micrositing may take place in accordance with the conditions of the Section 37 Consent.
- **Ecology Survey Area (ESA)**: The LOD of the Proposed Development, plus relevant buffers (up to 250 m from the LOD, with the exception of access tracks, tie-ins and tie backs for which a buffer of up to 50 m from the associated LOD was applied), in which all ecology surveys were undertaken in line with good practice guidelines for all ecological features surveyed (see **Volume 3, Figures 11.1.1 to 11.1.23: The Proposed Development and Ecology Survey Area**; details of survey guidance and methods can be found in **Volume 5, Appendices 11.2-11.5**, and **Appendix 11.6**, a confidential appendix, can be found in **Volume 6**).

- **Section**: To aid the reader in comprehension of the geographic spread of the ecology baseline data and assessment, the Proposed Development has been divided into six sections (as outlined below, defined fully in **Volume 1, Chapter 3: Project Description** and shown on all figures associated with this chapter);
  - Section A: Emmock 400 kV substation to Forfar, Towers S206 to S163;
  - Section B: Forfar to Brechin, Towers S162 to S106;
  - Section C: Brechin to Laurencekirk, Towers S105 to S52;
  - Section D: Laurencekirk to Hurlie 400 kV substation, Towers S51 to S1;
  - Section E: Hurlie 400 kV substation to River Dee, Towers N96 to N61; and
  - Section F: North of the River Dee to Kintore Substation, Towers N60 to N1.

1.4 Relevant Legislation

1.4.1 The protections afforded to ecological features in Scotland are set out in the following key legislation:

- *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)*[1];
- *The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)*[2];
- *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*[3]; and
- *The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended)*[4].

1.4.2 A brief summary of each piece of legislation is provided below, with specific reference to development planning.

1.4.3 To avoid repetition, national and local policy are not discussed in detail within this appendix (see **Volume 5, Appendix 11.5: Outline Biodiversity Enhancement Plan**). However, for completeness, non-statutory sites which are created via national and local policy (eg Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) Sites or Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS)) are considered and included within this desk study.

1.4.4 Protections specifically offered to avian features are discussed in **Volume 2, Chapter 12: Ornithology**. Similarly, sites designated for their geological interest are discussed within **Volume 2, Chapter 13: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils**.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

1.4.5 The *European Habitats Directive (Directive 92/42/EEC)* was transposed into United Kingdom ('UK') national legislation via the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)*. These Regulations apply to specific reserved and devolved activities on land in Scotland, and in Scottish inshore waters, including for consents under Section 37 of *the Electricity Act 1989*[5].

European Sites

1.4.6 The term 'European site' is used to refer to what were previously known as 'Natura' sites. These sites were originally designated as part of the 'Natura 2000' network, a Europe-wide system of sites designated for their ecological value. Sites are either designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), the qualifying features for which are normally internationally important habitats or species assemblages, or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which largely qualify for their assemblages of birds.

1.4.7 Ramsar sites, which support internationally important wetland habitats, are listed under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance as 'Waterfowl Habitat' (Ramsar Convention, 1971), and form part of the Natura 2000

[1] UK Government, 2017. *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017*. [Online] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents [Accessed January 2025].
[2] UK Government, 1994. *The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994*. [Online] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1994/2716/contents [Accessed January 2025].
[3] UK Government, 1981. *Wildlife and Countryside Act*. [Online] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69 [Accessed January 2025].
[4] UK Government, 1992. *Protection of Badgers Act 1992*. [Online] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51 [Accessed January 2025].
[5] S37 Electricity Act 1989, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/29/section/37

network in Europe. All Ramsar sites in Scotland are also European sites and are protected under the relevant statutory regimes.

1.4.8 SACs and SPAs receive considerable protection through the Regulations and these protections are normally reflected in national and local planning policy. Where developments have the potential to affect SACs or SPAs (refer to **Volume 2, Chapter 12: Ornithology**), an assessment process (a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)) must first be undertaken.

1.4.9 In order that potential effects on European sites can be fully understood, it is important that they are considered fully in EcIA desk studies.

1.4.10 There is no change to the protection of SACs or SPAs (refer to **Volume 2, Chapter 12: Ornithology**) as a result of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, and the requirements of the Directive continue to be relevant to the management of European sites.

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)

In Scotland, the *European Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC)* was transposed into national legislation via the *Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)* ('the Habitats Regulations'). The Habitats Regulations provide the highest level of legal protection available to ecological features and make provisions for the following protected species.

European Protected Species (EPS)

1.4.11 The Habitats Regulations afford wide-ranging protections to species considered to be of international conservation importance, listed under Schedule 2. EPS are also listed within Annex IV of the *Habitats Directive*. A species is normally considered important where it plays an important role in wider ecosystems and has historically suffered significant population decline. Regarding EPS, it is an offence to:

- 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 an animal's eggs (in Scotland, this is relevant only to the great crested newt and natterjack toad); and
- disturb any cetacean (dolphin, porpoise, or whale).

1.4.12 There is no change to the protection of EPS as a result of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

1.4.13 *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (WCA) is domestic legislation that gives rise to designated sites, regulates the management of invasive species and provides protections for species of national conservation importance. Important features of the legislation in relation to protected sites and species are set out below.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

1.4.14 The SSSI network in the UK extends to a system of sites designated for their national conservation value. Sites are designated for their biodiversity, habitats or species assemblages. There is a general presumption against development in SSSIs; however, where development is proposed, SSSI consent is required. SSSI consent will often

necessitate extensive mitigation or compensation. For this reason, it is important that EcIA desk studies identify SSSIs that may be affected by the Proposed Development.

Protected Species

1.4.15 Under the WCA Schedules 5 and 6, species considered to be of national conservation importance receive legal protections, often very similar to the protections available to EPS. For this reason, it is important that EcIA desk studies identify existing records of WCA protected species.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

1.4.16 Invasive species legislation in Scotland aims to prevent their spread and is covered under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended by the *Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2012*). Under the WCA it is an offence to:

- Release an animal to a location outside its native range[6];
- Allow an animal to escape from captivity to a location outside its native range;
- Otherwise cause an animal not in the control of any person to be at a location outside its native range; and
- Plant, or otherwise cause to grow, a plant in the wild at a location outside its native range.

1.4.17 For this reason, it is important that EcIA desk studies identify records of invasive non-native species of plants and animals.

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992

1.4.18 Although badgers are not rare in Scotland, they continue to receive protection due to the high levels of persecution they suffer. Badgers and their setts receive protection against killing, disturbance and destruction and, therefore, knowledge of existing records is of importance to EcIA desk studies.

Other Protections and Duties

National Nature Reserves (NNRs)

1.4.19 NNRs are areas which are set aside for nature, to promote their conservation and enjoyment[7]. This designation is awarded by a partnership of NNR providers and community representatives and fulfils NatureScot's statutory designation functions under the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended)* and WCA.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)

1.4.20 LNRs are selected and designated by local authorities under Section 21 of the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended)*[8]. A LNR is a protected area of land designated by a local authority because of its special natural interest and/ or educational value and may include a SSSI and/or a European site. LNRs are also areas which are of at least local importance to natural heritage and managed by the local authority through a countryside ranger service or committee. Their management may include by-laws to regulate inappropriate behaviour within LNRs.

Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act

1.4.21 Further to the protections afforded to ecological features described above, Section 1 of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended)[9] places a duty on all public bodies and officeholders in Scotland to further the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their functions in so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of

[6] NatureScot, 2024. Native Range. [Online] Available at: https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-species/invasive-non-native-species/native-range [Accessed January 2025].
[7] NatureScot, 2024. National Nature Reserves. [Online] Available at: https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/national-designations/national-nature-reserves [Accessed January 2025].
[8] NatureScot, 2024. Local Nature Reserves. [Online] Available at: https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-areas/local-designations/local-nature-reserves [Accessed January 2025].
[9] Scottish Government. Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004. [Online] Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/6/contents [Accessed August 2025].

those functions. This duty applies to the Energy Consents Unit and planning authorities in their functions as competent authorities, and to SSEN Transmission as a statutory undertaker.

1.5 Key Policy

National Planning Framework 4

1.5.1 On 13 February 2022, the Scottish Ministers adopted National Planning Framework (NPF) 4. This forms part of the statutory development plan, along with the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2 (see below) and its supplementary guidance. NPF4 supersedes National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (2014).

1.5.2 The document sets out the following key policies:

- **Policy 1** is relevant to all developments: "When considering all development proposals significant weight will be given to the global climate and nature crises". This policy marks a considerable shift to previous nationally planning policy. It clearly denotes that when considering Proposed Developments, tackling climate change should be at the forefront for decision makers.
- **Policy 3 Biodiversity** seeks to "protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive effects from development and strengthen nature networks". Development proposals, wherever feasible, are required to provide nature-based solutions to be integrated into the design of development to ensure significant biodiversity enhancements are provided to sites. Biodiversity enhancements should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the development using best practice methods and in accordance with national and local guidance.
- **Policy 4 Natural Places** seeks to "protect, restore and enhance natural assets making best use of nature-based solutions". Policy 4 adopts a precautionary principle when evaluating potential significant effects, a Proposed Development may have on national or local designated landscapes. It states that a development will not be supported if it will have a significant effect on the integrity of a designated area or the qualities for which it has been identified for; this is unless any significant effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits. Furthermore, it states that where adverse effects on species protected by legislation may occur, development proposals will only be supported where the relevant statutory tests are met.
- **Policy 5 Soils** is designed "to protect carbon-rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance to soils from development". The policy states that where development proposals on peatland, carbon-rich soils or priority peatland habitats is proposed, a detailed site-specific assessment is required to identify likely effects and net effects. Policy 5 is intended to protect carbon-rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance to soils as a result of developments. It is also envisaged that essential infrastructure relevant to achieving Policy 1, eg wind farms, will be acceptable in principle on peatlands.
- **Policy 6 Forestry, woodland and trees** seeks to "protect and expand forests, woodland and trees". Policy 6 supports proposals to enhance, expand or improve woodland and tree cover. Conversely, it will not support developments that would result in loss of ancient woodland, ancient or veteran trees or have an adverse impact on their ecological condition. It will also not support developments that will result in adverse impacts on native woodlands, hedgerows and individual trees of high biodiversity. Fragmentation or severing woodland habitat in the absence of mitigation will also not be supported. Where woodland removal is required, it will only be justified where it demonstrates significant and clearly defined public benefits and compensatory planting is likely to be required to offset the loss.

Angus Local Development Plan 2016

1.5.3 The Angus Local Development Plan (LDP)[10] was adopted in 2016 and sets out a strategic framework for development and conservation within the Angus Council area.

1.5.4 The document sets out the following key policies relevant to the Proposed Development:

[10] Angus Council, 2016. Angus Local Development Plan. [Online] Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/media/angus_local_development_plan_adopted_september_2016 [Accessed June 2025]

- **Policy PV1 Green Networks and Green Infrastructure**: The aim of Policy PV1 is to protect and enhance the functionality and connectivity of existing Green Networks within settlements and across Angus. The policy also aims to promote and support developments that are designed to enhance Green Networks.
- **Policy PV4 Sites Designated for Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Value**: The aim of Policy PV4 is to protect and enhance habitats of natural heritage value across the plan area. This includes objectives to protect and enhance the nature conservation interests within the River Tay and River South Esk Catchment areas.
- **Policy PV5 Protected Species**: Policy PV5 aims to protect and enhance all wildlife including its habitats, important roost or nesting places.
- **Policy PV7 Woodland, Trees and Hedges**: Policy PV7 includes a commitment to identify and seek to enhance woodlands of high nature conservation value. In addition, woodland, trees and hedges that contribute to the nature conservation, heritage, amenity, townscape or landscape value of Angus will be protected and enhanced.

1.5.5 Additional planning advice and information relevant to the Angus LDP is found in the following documents:

- **Biodiversity: A Developer's Guide**[11]: This leaflet provides advice to developers in the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership area, and covers topics including protected species, habitat creation, water management, and landscaping.
- **River South Esk Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - Advice to planning applicants**[12]: This guidance aims to assist developers when considering submitting a planning application for a development which may affect the River South Esk SAC.
- **River Tay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - Advice to developers when considering new projects which could affect the River Tay Special Area of Conservation**[13]: This guidance aims to advise developers on the types of appropriate information and safeguards which should be provided in support of planning applications.
- **Angus Forestry & Woodland Strategy** 2024-2034[14]: The strategy includes policies to protect woodland of high nature conservation value and encourage their management and expansion.
- **Angus Local Nature Conservation Sites - Local Biodiversity Sites Initial Phase Report**[15]: This document reports the results of a study undertaken to identify Local Biodiversity Sites, which together with Local Geodiversity Sites form a suite of LNCS in Angus. The report identifies an initial phase of 28 sites that were assessed to be suitable for designation as LNCS, and includes brief details of the main habitats of each site.

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023

1.5.6 The Aberdeenshire LDP 2023[16] sets out a strategic framework for development and conservation within the Aberdeenshire Council area.

1.5.7 The document sets out the following key policies relevant to the Proposed Development:

- **Policy E1 Natural Heritage**: This policy aims to protect nature conservation sites designated for biodiversity, species, habitat, or geodiversity. This policy includes identification of 113 LNCS which are introduced in the LDP.

[11] Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, no date. Biodiversity: A Developer's Guide. [Online] Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/media/biodiversity-developers-guide [Accessed June 2025]
[12] SNH, Angus Council, and SEPA, 2011. River South Esk Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - Advice to planning applicants. [Online] Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/media/river-south-esk-code-practice-developers [Accessed June 2025]
[13] SNH, Perth & Kinross Council, Angus Council, and SEPA, 2011. River Tay Special Area of Conservation (SAC) - Advice to developers when considering new projects which could affect the River Tay Special Area of Conservation. [Online] Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/media/river-tay-code-practice-developers [Accessed June 2025]
[14] Angus Council, 2024. Angus Forestry & Woodland Strategy 2024-2034. [Online] Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/media/angus_forestry_and_woodland_strategy_2024_to_2034_pdf [Accessed June 2025]
[15] Angus Council, 2023. Angus Local Nature Conservation Sites - Local Biodiversity Sites Initial Phase Report. [Online] Available at: https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/Report%20319_23%20Local%20Nature%20Conservation%20Sites%20in%20Angus%20-%20Initial%20Phase%20of%20Local%20Biodiversity%20Sites_App%201.pdf [Accessed June 2025]
[16] Aberdeenshire Council, 2023. Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. [Online] Available at: https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/ldp-2023 [Accessed June 2025]

Policy E1 also seeks to avoid unacceptable detrimental impact on protected species. Further, this policy requires developers to provide baseline ecological survey and design developments to minimise habitat fragmentation and adverse impacts on the site's environmental quality, ecological status, or viability. Finally, Policy E1 requires that developments should measures that will be taken to enhance biodiversity in proportion to the potential opportunities available and the scale of the development.

- **Policy E3 Forestry and Woodland**: Policy E3 seeks to promote and support the forestry industry while strongly protecting and enhancing trees and woodlands in the planning and construction of built development. Development is also required to continue to ensure that opportunities are taken to promote the role of woodlands in providing opportunities for protecting and enhancing environmental quality and biodiversity. The policy notes the development of a Forestry and Woodland Strategy[17], and that a map of 'Preferred Areas for New Woodland Creation' has been included in the Strategy to identify where new woodlands could go to maximise benefits and promote integrated land use.

1.5.8 Additional planning advice relevant to the Aberdeenshire LDP is found in the following documents:

- **Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy – Planning Advice PA2023-01**[17]: This planning advice sets out Aberdeenshire Council's approach towards the contribution of trees and woodlands towards climate change, timber and business development, amenity and the environment. It identifies objectives and actions to support Policy E3 of the Aberdeenshire LDP.
- **Baseline Ecological Survey – Planning Advice PA2023-17**[18]: This planning advice details the requirements of a baseline ecological survey in order to allow a full assessment of the impact of a proposed development on habitats, species and wider ecosystem services. The document outlines good practice in relation to ecological surveys and promotes the use of established methodologies for this work.

Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan

1.5.9 The Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) 2016-2026[19] has been developed to contribute to the delivery of Scottish and UK policies, plans and strategies. It covers the local authority areas of Angus Council and Perth & Kinross Council. Its intention is to focus attention on the conservation and enhancement of the region's natural heritage and to address its decline. It identifies actions for key species, and provides objectives and actions for a range of ecosystem types. In addition, it identifies priority habitats and key sites, ecosystem services and ecosystem scale projects, and pressures on ecological features.

North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership

1.5.10 The North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership (NESBiP)[20] covers the local authority areas of Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council, and Moray Council. It provides information for developers, including habitat statements which give a summary of habitats found in northeast Scotland. These statements include information on habitat status and an outline of some of the species they support. The statements also illustrate the importance of each habitat group and opportunities to secure and enhance each habitat for the future.

1.5.11 In addition, NESBiP signposts information on locations that are important for biodiversity in northeast Scotland, and important local species (both legally protected species and those which have been identified as being locally important species).

[17] Aberdeenshire Council, 2023. Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy – Planning Advice PA2023-01. [Online] Available at: https://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning-advice/ [Accessed June 2025]
[18] Aberdeenshire Council, 2023. Baseline Ecological Survey – Planning Advice PA2023-17. [Online] Available at: https://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning-advice/ [Accessed June 2025]
[19] Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, 2016. Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan, 2nd edition, 2016-2026. [Online] Available at: https://www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk/action-plan/action-plan-new-lbap-2015/ [Accessed June 2025]
[20] North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership, no date. Biodiversity Information for Developers. [Online] Available at: https://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/biodiversity-information-for-developers/ [Accessed June 2025]

2 METHODS

2.1.1 The purpose of the desk study is to identify features of ecological importance within defined buffers around the Proposed Development. Data collected via the desk study is subsequently used to inform the scope of the EcIA and to supplement and guide field surveys and assessments.

2.1 Guidance and Resources

2.1.1 In addition to national and local planning policy, the desk study has been carried out with reference to the following relevant guidance:

- NatureScot: *Advising on Peatland, Carbon-Rich Soils and Priority Peatland Habitats in Development Management*[21];
- SEPA Guidance Note: *Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE)*[22];
- North East Scotland LBAP[23];
- Tayside LBAP[19];
- Aberdeenshire LNCS[24]; and
- Angus LNCS[15].

2.1.2 Furthermore, the following resources have been used to aid in the identification of potentially sensitive ecological features:

- Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)[25];
- Carbon and Peatland 2016 Map[26]; and
- Publicly available records of EPS and WCA Protected Species on National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas[27].

2.1.3 The above guidance and resources have been incorporated into the desk study to ensure all ecological constraints have been considered as far as reasonably practicable.

[21] NatureScot, 2023. *Advising on Peatland, Carbon-Rich Soils and Priority Peatland Habitats in Development Management*. [Online] Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/advising-peatland-carbon-rich-soils-and-priority-peatland-habitats-development-management [Accessed January 2025].
[22] SEPA, 2017. *Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Development Proposals on Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE)*. [Online] Available at: https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/a1yh0blq/guidance-on-assessing-the-impacts-of-developments-on-groundwater-dependent-terrestrial-ecosystems.docx *and Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Development Proposals on Groundwater Abstractions*. [Online] Available at: https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/mfzpnjwb/guidance-on-assessing-the-impacts-of-developments-on-groundwater-abstractions.docx [Accessed January 2025].
[23] North East Scotland Local Biodiversity Partnership, 2019. *Important Habitats for Biodiversity – our Local Biodiversity Action Plan*. [Online] Available at https://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/biodiversity-information-for-developers/important-habitats-for-biodiversity-in-the-north-east-of-scotland/ [Accessed January 2025].
[24] Aberdeenshire Council, n.d. *Appendix 12: Local Nature Conservation Sites*. [Online] Available at: https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldpmedia/LDP2021/Appendix12LocalNatureConservationSites.pdf [Accessed January 2025].
[25] NatureScot, 2000. Ancient Woodland Inventory. [Online] Available at: https://opendata.nature.scot/datasets/ancient-woodland-inventory/explore [Accessed January 2025].
[26] NatureScot, 2016. Carbon and Peatland 2016 Map. [Online] Available at: https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/thematic-maps/carbon-and-peatland-2016-map/ [Accessed January 2025].
[27] NBN Atlas, 2024. Publicly Available Records of EPS and WCA Protected Species. [Online] Available at: https://nbnatlas.org/ [Accessed January 2025].

2.2 Baseline Data Collection

Designated Sites

2.2.1 A desktop search for statutory designated nature conservation sites was conducted within 10 km and 5 km of the ESA, including sites of international[28], national[29] and local[30] importance. A search for non-statutory designated sites[31] within 2 km of the ESA was also conducted.

Protected and Notable Species

2.2.2 A desktop search for protected[32] and notable species[33] was conducted using publicly available biological records (post-2000), within 5 km of the Proposed Development (and 10 km for bat species). Records were requested from North East Scotland Biodiversity Records Centre (NESBReC)[34] and NBN Atlas[27], within the buffers described in **Table 11.1.1: Features Targeted in Desk Study**.

2.2.3 Due to the sensitivity around records of some protected species (such as badger (*Meles meles*), Scottish wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) and freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)), desk study results pertaining to these species are reported separately in **Volume 6, Appendix 11.6: Confidential Protected Species Survey Report**.

2.2.4 Due to iterations in the location of the Proposed Development, ecology field surveys were undertaken across large areas of Aberdeenshire and Angus during 2023 and 2024. As such, a data request was not submitted to Scottish Badgers[35] because a large volume of field data was available and collected from a wider area than the Proposed Development itself. The assessment is therefore well-informed by this field data, resulting in a suitable level of understanding of where badgers occur, relative to the Proposed Development, and how the species is using the habitats within the ESA and wider landscape. Historic data and data from further afield would not significantly add to this understanding.

2.2.5 Reference should be made to **Volume 2, Chapter 12: Ornithology** for details of ornithological survey and assessment.

Targeted Study Areas

2.2.6 **Table 11.1.1: Features Targeted in Desk Study** summarises the features targeted in the desk study, and the resources used to identify them. In order that the desk study was appropriately focused, search buffers from the LOD were applied, and these are also shown within the table.

Table 11.1.1: Features Targeted in Desk Study

Ecological Feature	Comment	Desk Study Resource	Buffer from LOD
International Statutory Designated Sites	To include: • SACs • Ramsar Sites	NatureScot SiteLink Website[36] Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)[37]	10 km
National and Local Statutory Designated Sites	To include: • SSSIs • NNRs		5 km

[28] i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar Sites.
[29] i.e. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs).
[30] i.e. Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).
[31] i.e. Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), non-governmental organisation (NGO) nature reserves and Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) Sites.
[32] i.e. European Protected Species, species listed within the WCA and species included in the Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL).
[33] i.e. Species included in Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
[34] NESBReC, n.d. Biological Records for the North East of Scotland. [Online] Available at: https://nesbrec.org.uk/ [Accessed January 2025].
[35] Scottish Badgers, n.d. Desk Study Service for Data Searches. [Online] Available at: https://www.scottishbadgers.org.uk/professional-hub/data-searches/ [Accessed February 2025].
[36] NatureScot, n.d. NatureScot SiteLink. [Online] Available at: https://sitelink.nature.scot/home [Accessed January 2025].
[37] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs et al, n.d. Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside. [Online] Available at: http://magic.defra.gov.uk [Accessed January 2025].

Ecological Feature	Comment	Desk Study Resource	Buffer from LOD
	• LNRs	Scotland Environment Mapping Service[38]	
Non-Statutory Designated Sites	To include: • LCNS • Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) Reserves • Ancient/Long-Established Woodland	MAGIC Scotland Environment Mapping Service AWI[2525] NESBiP Local Biodiversity Action Plan[20,23] Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan[19] Aberdeenshire Local Nature Conservation Sites[16,24] Angus Local Nature Conservation Sites[15] National Woodland Survey of Scotland[39] (see **Volume 2, Chapter 11: Ecology** for details)	2 km
Existing Records of Deep Peat and Carbon-Rich Soil	N/A	The Carbon and Peatland Map26	2 km
Existing Records of EPS and WCA Protected Species	To include: • All native EPS and WCA protected species records, post-2000	NBN Atlas Scotland, under Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) Licence[27] NESBReC[34] Scottish Badgers Data Search[35]	5 km for Protected Species 10 km for Bat Species

Limitations

2.2.7 Due to licensing rules, desk study data obtained from NBN Atlas was limited to records made available under the CC_BY and Open Government Licence (OGL) only (ie publicly available records). As such, a number of records were not available for use. However, the desk study is considered sufficient as records of all considered protected and notable species were returned from the NBN and NESBReC data searches.

2.2.8 It should be noted that a lack of records of a given species does not equate to the absence of the species. Thus, where there are no desk study records of a species, the assessment seeks to utilise other indicators of presence from the field surveys.

[38] Scottish Environment Protection Agency, n.d. Scotland's Environment Map. [Online] Available at: https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/ [Accessed January 2025].
[39] Scottish Forestry, 2025. Native Woodland Survey of Scotland. [Online] Available at: https://open-data-scottishforestry.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/6d27b064fcba471da50c8772ad0162d7_0/explore [Accessed March 2025].

3 RESULTS

3.1.1 To aid understanding of the Proposed Development, baseline results are presented with reference to sections. Sections A, B and the southern half of Section C (until the River North Esk) are in Angus, with the northern half of Section C and all of Sections D-F in Aberdeenshire. The closest tower number to each feature has also been included, to further aid the reader in understanding the geographic spread of the results.

3.1 Designated Sites

3.1.1 Statutory and non-statutory designated sites within 2 km, 5 km and 10 km of the Proposed Development are listed in **Tables 11.1.2** to **11.1.7: Designated Sites (Sections A-F)**, in line with the Scoping Report[40].

[40] Scottish Southern Energy Networks Transmission, 2024. *Environmental Impact Assessment: Scoping Report. Kintore to Tealing 400 kV Overhead Line*. Available at: https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx?cr=ECU00005225.

Table 11.1.2: Designated Sites: Section A

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Impact Pathway
International Statutory Sites within 10 km					
Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary	SAC	• Common seal (*Phoca vitulina*) • Estuaries • Intertidal mudflats and sandflats • Subtidal sandbanks	7.56 km south	S206	Hydrological connectivity to the Proposed Development. The SAC is connected to the Dighty Water and the Fithie Burn, which flows adjacent to the associated Emmock substation development. The distance to the SAC is over 15 km via these watercourses, therefore no likely impact pathway.
	Ramsar	• Bird Assemblages (see **Volume 2, Chapter 12: Ornithology**)	8.65 km south		
River Tay	SAC	• Otter (*Lutra lutra*) • River lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) • Brook lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*) • Sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*) • Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) • Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels	Kerbert Water: within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	S168 – S167	Hydrological connectivity to the Proposed Development as it flows through the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
			Dean Water: within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	S165 – S164	
National and Local Statutory Sites within 5 km					
Gagie Marsh	SSSI	• Fens: Flood-plain fen	4.61 km east	S206	No ecological connectivity between the SSSI and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.
Auchterhouse Hill	SSSI	• Upland habitats: Subalpine dry heath	1.88 km west	S198 – S190	Limited ecological connectivity between the SSSI and the Proposed Development via upland habitats present within the Sidlaw Hills. Given the distance from the Proposed Development, no likely impact pathway is identified.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Impact Pathway
Trottick Mill Ponds	LNR	• Open water • Woodland • Scrub • Grassland	3.16 km southeast	S206	No ecological connectivity between the LNR and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.
Non-Statutory Sites within 2 km					
Glamis – Captains Pond	LNCS	• Mosaic of open water, basin bog and marshy grassland	1.38 km west	S166 – S163	Limited hydrological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development via drainage channels which flow into the Dean Water. The LNCS is upstream of the Dean Water, therefore no likely impact pathway.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S193	Area is largely heath with scattered trees. Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin) (LEPO)	Within the Proposed Development	S178 and S177	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within 50 m of the Proposed Development	S170	AWI is outwith the LOD. There is some potential for limited ecological connectivity via features such as hedgerows and treelines. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	No ecological connectivity as AWI is 492 m from a Proposed New Stone Access Track LOD.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Impact Pathway
19 Named and Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	Potential for limited ecological connectivity via hedgerows and treelines; closest AWI is 130 m from the LOD. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Other (on Roy Map)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	S171	No ecological connectivity as AWI is 325 m from the LOD.

Table 11.1.3: Designated Sites: Section B

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
International Statutory Sites within 10 km					
River South Esk	SAC	• Freshwater pearl mussel • Atlantic salmon	River South Esk: within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	S143 – S139	Hydrological connectivity to the Proposed Development as it flows through the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
			Noran Water: within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	S131 – S130	
Loch of Kinnordy	Ramsar (Underpinned by Loch of Kinnordy SSSI)	• Eutrophic loch • Open water transition fen • Supports the nationally scarce plants cowbane (*Cicuta virosa*) and mudwort (*Limosella aquatica*), and the near threatened lesser tussock sedge (*Carex diandra*). • Bird assemblages (see **Volume 2, Chapter 12: Ornithology**)	4.97 km west	S151 – S148	No ecological connectivity between the Ramsar and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors. The site is upstream of the Proposed Development via the Gairie Burn. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
National and Local Statutory Sites within 5 km					
Restenneth Moss	SSSI	• Fens: Basic Fen	4.18 km east	S158 – S157	No ecological connectivity between the SSSI and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.
Forest Muir	SSSI	• Lowland heathland: Lowland wet heath • Fens: Spring fens	0.97 km west	S150 – S145	Ecological connectivity between the SSSI and the Proposed Development via woodland corridors at Woodside LNCS and Forestmuir Wood. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Den of Ogil	SSSI	• Woodlands: Scrub • Fens: Valley fen	2.89 km northwest	S131 – S130	Ecological connectivity between the SSSI and the Proposed Development via a riparian woodland corridor along the Noran Water and the Burn of Ogil.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
					The SSSI is upstream of the Proposed Development, therefore no likely impact pathway identified.
Non-Statutory Sites within 2 km					
Woodside	LNCS	• Birch woodland • Semi-improved acid grassland	Within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	S151 – S150	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the LNCS is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Eskhill	LNCS	• Lowland birch woodland • Acid grassland	1.17 km west	S146 – S142	Ecological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development via a riparian woodland corridor along the King's Burn, and via woodland corridors at Woodside LNCS and Forestmuir Wood. The LNCS is upstream of the Proposed Development. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Auchleuchrie	LNCS	• Lowland birch woodland	Within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	S140 – S137	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the LNCS is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Deuchar Hill	LNCS	• Semi-improved acid grassland • Marshy grassland • Dry heath • Valley mire	1.42 km northwest	S128 – S126	Ecological and hydrological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development via a riparian woodland corridor along the Cruick Water. The LNCS is upstream of the Proposed Development. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S155	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
					Potential impact pathway.
Forestmuir Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S150	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S147	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S141	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S140-S139	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S133	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S130	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Oak/Redford Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S126	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Boggie Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S121	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
					Potential impact pathway.
Duns Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S115-S113	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Lochty Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S112-S111	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within 50 m of the Proposed Development	S130	AWI is outwith the Proposed Development. However, there is potential for limited ecological connectivity via features such as hedgerows and treelines. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Two Named and Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	No ecological connectivity as closest AWI is 266 m from the LOD.
41 Named and Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	Limited ecological connectivity as closest AWI is 174 m from the LOD. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.

Table 11.1.4: Designated Sites: Section C

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
International Statutory Sites within 10 km					
Montrose Basin	Ramsar	• Estuary • Mudflats • Bird assemblages (see **Volume 2, Chapter 12: Ornithology**)	5.68 km southeast	S87 – S84	No ecological connectivity between the Ramsar and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors. The basin is downstream of the Proposed Development via over 25 km of watercourse, therefore no likely impact pathway.
National and Local Statutory Sites within 5 km					
Gannochy Gorge	SSSI	• Non-vascular plants: Bryophyte assemblage • Non-vascular plants: Lichen assemblage • Invertebrates: Beetle assemblage	3.20 km north	S84 – S82	Ecological and hydrological connectivity between the SSSI and the Proposed Development via a riparian woodland corridor along the River North Esk. The SSSI is upstream of the Proposed Development, therefore no likely impact pathway.
Eslie Moss	SSSI	• Fens: Basin fen	0.68 km west	S69 – S67	No ecological connectivity between the SSSI and the Proposed Development due to lack of green corridors.
Non-Statutory Sites within 2 km					
Barrelwell Bog	LNCS	• Wet woodland • Neutral grassland • Marshy grassland	1.19 km south	S107 – S105	No ecological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.
Keeper's/Belliehill Woods	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S104-S102	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
Little Brechin Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S101	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S82	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Capo Plantation	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S79	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Cleary Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S78	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Inverury Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S77-S73	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Lady Jane's Plantation (Pitgarvie/Lower Thorton Wood)	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S65-S63	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S60	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Greenbottom Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S58	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S58	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within 50 m of the Proposed Development	S92	AWI is outwith the Proposed Development. However, there is potential for limited ecological connectivity via features such as hedgerows and treelines. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Pitgarvie/Lower Thornton Wood	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	No ecological connectivity as AWI is 213 m from the Access Track LOD.
35 Named and Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	Limited ecological connectivity as closest AWI is 191 m from the LOD. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.

Table 11.1.5: Designated Sites: Section D

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
International Statutory Sites within 10 km					
There were no international statutory sites within 10 km of Section D.					
National and Local Statutory Sites within 5 km					
There were no national or local statutory sites within 5 km of Section D.					
Non-Statutory Sites within 2 km					
Elf Hill	LNCS	• This small site forms a fairly steep sided river valley, with semi-natural broadleaved woodland, gorse scrub and acid grassland. • Good diversity of plant species and particularly important for the native bluebell.	0.09 km east	S7 – S4	Ecological and hydrological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development via a riparian woodland corridor along the Burn of Elfhill and Burn of Annamuick. LNCS is designated for woodland, scrub and grassland habitats which are not reliant on the watercourse. In addition, the LNCS is located to the south of a minor road with the Proposed Development north of this road. No likely impact pathway has been identified.
Cammackmuir Plantation	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S47 – S46	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Woods of Redhall	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S34	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Den Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S31 – S29	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S16	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Jacksbank Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	S14	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
					Potential impact pathway.
Two Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	No ecological connectivity as closest AWI is 797 m from the LOD.
30 Named and Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	Limited ecological connectivity as closest AWI is 88 m from the LOD. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Two Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Other (on Roy Map)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	No ecological connectivity as closest AWI is 817 m from the LOD. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.

Table 11.1.6: Designated Sites: Section E

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
International Statutory Sites within 10 km					
River Dee	SAC	• Otter • Freshwater pearl mussel • Atlantic salmon	Burn of Sheeoch: within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	N68 – N67	Hydrological connectivity to the Proposed Development as it flows through the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
			River Dee: within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	N62 – N61	
Red Moss of Netherley	SAC	• Active raised bogs • Degraded raised bogs	6.23 km east	N76 – N68	No ecological connectivity between the SAC and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
Garron Point	SAC	• Narrow-mouthed whorl snail (*Vertigo angustior*)	8.81 km east	N92 – N87	No ecological connectivity between the SAC and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.
National and Local Statutory Sites within 5 km					
There were no national or local statutory sites within 5 km of Section E.					
Non-Statutory Sites within 2 km					
Mergie	LNCS	• Neutral and acid grassland, broadleaved and coniferous woodland, wet heath, scrub, bracken, bog, pond, rivers and rush pasture alongside the Cowie Water. • Locally important species such as lesser twayblade (*Listera cordata*) and bog myrtle (*Myrica gale*).	0.04 km east	N90 – N87	Ecological and hydrological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development via the Cowie Water and associated riparian woodland corridors. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
River Dee	LNCS	• Series of glacial and fluvio-glacial landforms and sediments. • Oak, birch and wet woodland, shingle banks and species rich grasslands. • Rich in invertebrates. • Good assemblage of birds.	River Dee: within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	N62 – N61	Hydrological connectivity to the Proposed Development as it flows through the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Crathes	LNCS	• The woodlands forming part of the Crathes estate contain a variety of woodland types including semi-natural broadleaved woodland, semi natural pine woodland and plantation. • Locally uncommon species.	1.59 km west	N63 – N58	No ecological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.
Wood of Mergie	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N90	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N89	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N87	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N87	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located adjacent to the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Funach/Free Church Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N67	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Kirkton Wood	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N67, N66	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within 50 m of the Proposed Development	N91	AWI is outwith the Proposed Development. However, there is potential for ecological connectivity via features such as hedgerows and treelines. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Slug Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N79	AWI is outwith the Proposed Development. However, it is located adjacent to the LOD. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Number(s)	Notes on Potential Connectivity
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	N69	No ecological connectivity as the AWI is 200 m from the LOD.
12 Named and Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	Limited ecological connectivity as the closest AWI is 130 m from the LOD. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.

Table 11.1.7: Designated Sites: Section F

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Numbers	Notes on Potential Connectivity
International Statutory Sites within 10 km					
Loch of Skene	Ramsar (Underpinned by the Loch of Skene SSSI)	Ramsar and SSSI • Bird Assemblages (see **Volume 2, Chapter 12: Ornithology**)	2.67 km east	N26 – N22	Hydrological connectivity between the Ramsar/SSSI and the Proposed Development via the Corskie Burn. The distance to the Loch of Skene Ramsar/SSSI is over 4 km via the watercourse. Qualifying features are all ornithological.
National and Local Statutory Sites within 5 km					
Loch of Park	SSSI	• Woodland: Wet woodland • Fens: Basin Fen	Within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	N56 – N53	Ecological connectivity between the SSSI and the Proposed Development as it is located adjacent to the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Old Wood of Drum	SSSI	• Woodlands: Upland oak woodland	1.30 km east	N50 – N47	No ecological connectivity between the SSSI and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.
Loch of Skene	SSSI	• See Loch of Skene Ramsar above.	2.67 km east	N26 – N22	Hydrological connectivity between the Ramsar/SSSI and the Proposed Development via the Corskie Burn.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Numbers	Notes on Potential Connectivity
					The distance to the Loch of Skene Ramsar/SSSI is over 4 km via the watercourse. Qualifying features are all ornithological.
Non-Statutory Sites within 2 km					
Loch of Park	LNCS	• Fen and wet woodland with acid grassland, heath, rush pasture, bog, swamp, coniferous woodland and reedbed. • A high diversity of plants including some locally important species such as coralroot orchid (*Corallorhiza trifida*) and lesser butterfly orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*).	Within the Proposed Development (oversailed)	N56 – N49	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the LNCS is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Candyglirach	LNCS	• Extensive area of lowland raised bog, with birch, conifer and wet woodland, acid grassland and rush pasture around the margins. • Good diversity of plants and invertebrates.	1.25 km west	N49 – N44	No ecological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.
Baads Moss	LNCS	• The site is comprised mainly of lowland fen, rush pasture and acid grassland. There are also some small areas of neutral grassland and dry heath, plus three ponds.	1.92 km east	N41 – N39	No ecological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.
Leuchar Moss	LNCS	• Wet heathland with interesting and diverse flora. LNCS is covered by wet *Sphagnum* bogs and open peaty pools, with ridges of drier ground between them.	0.23 km east	N37 – N33	No ecological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development due to distance and lack of green corridors.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Numbers	Notes on Potential Connectivity
Barmekin Wood	LNCS	• Mosaic of habitats including heathland, rush pasture and birch woodland. • Good diversity of plants with locally rare species.	1.44 km west	N27 – N21	Ecological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development via woodland corridors. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Cottown Woods	LNCS	• Mosaic of woodland types with small area of fen habitat. Good diversity of plant and invertebrate species. • The site forms part of a network of woodlands within the local area.	1.18 km north	N1	Ecological connectivity between the LNCS and the Proposed Development via woodland corridors. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
Collonach Plantation	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N54	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located adjacent to the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Coldstream Plantation	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N52-N51	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Backstrip Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N36	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Marketmuir Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N34	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
North Kirkton Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N33-N32	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Numbers	Notes on Potential Connectivity
Myriewell Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N30	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N21	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Tillybrig/Scaur Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N20-N18	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Corskie Wood	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within the Proposed Development	N16	Ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development as the AWI is located within the LOD. **Potential impact pathway**.
Unnamed Woodland	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within 50 m of the Proposed Development	N35	Limited ecological connectivity to the Proposed Development via features such as hedgerows and treelines. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
3 Named and Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within 50 m of the Proposed Development	N43 N30 N23	AWIs are outwith the Proposed Development. However, there is potential for ecological connectivity via features such as hedgerows and treelines. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.
6 Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Ancient (of Semi-Natural Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	Limited ecological connectivity as the closest AWI is 177 m from the LOD. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.

Site Name	Designation	Qualifying Features	Approximate Distance and Orientation to the Proposed Development	Closest Tower Numbers	Notes on Potential Connectivity
67 Named and Unnamed Woodlands	AWI	• Long-Established (of Plantation Origin)	Within 2 km of the Proposed Development	-	Limited ecological connectivity as the closest AWI is 161 m from the LOD. No likely impact pathway identified that could result in significant effects.

3.1.2 There were no NNRs or LNRs within 5 km of the Proposed Development and no RSPB or SWT reserves within 2 km of the Proposed Development.

3.2 Deep Peat and Carbon Rich Soil

3.2.1 The Carbon and Peatland Map[26] identified:

- 'Class 1' peatland within the wider study area[41];
- 'Class 2' peatland within the wider study area;
- 'Class 3' peatland within the wider study area;

  'Class 4' peatland within the Proposed Development (S164-S160, S133-S132, S4-N91, N85, N82, N75-N72and N18-N17) and wider study area;
- 'Class 5' peatland within the Proposed Development (S167-S164, N86-N75, N45-N44, N41-N40, N35-N33, N14-N11 and N6) and wider study area; and
- Continuous 'Class 0' peatland within the Proposed Development and wider study area.

3.2.2 These classes are defined as follows:

- **Class 1:** Nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat. Areas likely to be of high conservation value;
- **Class 2:** Nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat. Areas of potentially high conservation value and restoration potential;
- **Class 3:** Dominant vegetation cover is not priority peatland habitat but is associated with wet and acidic type. Occasional peatland habitats can be found. Most soils are carbon-rich soils, with some areas of deep peat;
- **Class 4:** Area unlikely to be associated with peatland habitat or wet and acidic type. Are unlikely to include carbon-rich soils;
- **Class 5:** Soil information takes precedence over vegetation data. No peatland habitat recorded. May also include areas of bare soil. Soils are carbon-rich and deep peat; and
- **Class 0:** Mineral soil. Peatland habitats are not typically found on such soils.

3.2.3 Where areas of potential peat habitat overlapped with the Phase 1 habitat and National Vegetation Classification (NVC) surveys, consideration was given to the true ecological value of their habitats. Following completion of the peat surveys, the indicative data provided by the Carbon and Peatland Map was updated (see **Volume 2, Chapter 13: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils** of the EIAR and associated appendices). Detailed habitat survey results are presented in **Volume 5, Appendix 11.2: Habitats and Vegetation Survey Report**.

3.3 Protected and Notable Species

3.3.1 The total number of records for each protected and notable species, within 2 km and 5 km of the Proposed Development (and 10 km for bat species), are listed below in **Table 11.1.8: Protected and Notable Species Records**.

3.3.2 NESBReC[34] and NBN Atlas[27] records have been combined for each section of the alignment, and duplicate records have been removed.

[41] For 'study area' definitions, please refer to **Table 11.1.1: Features Targeted in Desk Study**.

Table 11.1.8: Protected and Notable Species Records

Species	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D	Section E	Section F	Total	Notes
European Protected Species within 10 km								
Bats (*Chiroptera*)	236 (2001-2023)	58 (2001-2023)	238 (2003-2023)	160 (2002-2023)	944 (2002-2024)	2,239 (2001-2024)	3,875	Bat records were located within 10 km of Sections A-F. Records were located within urban areas, woodlands or along watercourses. Several records were located within the Proposed Development: • One soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and one Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*) was recorded along the River South Esk, close to S142, in 2003. Thirteen records were located within Fetteresso Forest, and include common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle, unidentified *Pipistrellus* species, Daubenton's bat and an unidentified bat species (recorded as *Chiroptera*). The records were dated from 2004 to 2023. Fifteen bat records were located along various roads between N66 and N64, and adjacent to N60. The records were from 2020 and 2021 and were the result of two transect surveys undertaken from a vehicle. Records include common and soprano pipistrelle, and unidentified *Pipistrellus* species. A further five records, all soprano pipistrelle, were located on the road between N27 and N26. The records were from 2020 and 2022 and were the result of two transect surveys undertaken from a vehicle. • A single soprano pipistrelle was recorded between N34 and N33 in 2021.
European Protected Species within 5 km								
Beaver (*Castor fiber*)	896 (2012-2023)	519 (2012-2023)	0	0	0	0	1,415	Beaver records were present within 5 km of Sections A and B and comprised of a number of field signs including burrows, canal digging, scent mounds and feeding signs. No records of live individuals were returned by the desk study. Within Section A, there were numerous records along the Kerbet Water and Dean Water (part of the River Tay SAC). Records were directly adjacent to the Proposed Development between S170-S167 and S165-S164. Both watercourses will be oversailed by the Proposed Development. There were also several records along the Gairie Burn which is hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development. However,

Species	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D	Section E	Section F	Total	Notes
								none of these records were located within the Proposed Development itself.
Otter	3 (2012-2014)	15 (2013-2024)	11 (2008-2021)	14 (2004-2022)	57 (2004-2023)	99 (2001-2023)	199	Otter records were located within 5 km of Sections A-F. The density of records generally increases as the alignment moves north. Otter records comprised live sightings, deceased individuals (roadkill) or field signs such as spraints, footprints and feeding remains. There were no records of holts or other resting sites. Otter records were found on a number of watercourses hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development, including the River Tay, River South Esk and River Dee. Several records were located within the Proposed Development itself: • A single otter spraint was located under a bridge near N86 in 2014. • Otter tracks were recorded next to the Cowie Water, adjacent to the proposed access track in Fetteresso Forest, in 2012. • An otter was recorded crossing the A93, adjacent to N60, in 2019. • Six otter records, from 2022, were located next to the B9119 (N30-N29). A single otter was recorded using the burn adjacent to the road on several occasions.
WCA Schedule 5 Species within 5 km								
Adder (*Vipera berus*)	0	0	0	0	1 (2009)	0	1	One record is located within 5 km of Section E and is of an individual sighting in Fetteresso Forest. The record is not located within the Proposed Development.
Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	There were no records within 5 km of the Proposed Development.
Mountain hare (*Lepus timidus*)	0	2 (2015-2021)	0	3 (2012-2021)	0	0	5	Mountain hare records were recorded within 5 km of Sections B and D. Records were comprised of live sightings. Records were largely located within or close to upland environments, including moorland west of Fetteresso Forest. No records were located within the Proposed Development.
Pine marten (*Martes martes*)	1 (2012)	0	75	40	282	69	467	Pine marten records were located within 5 km of Section A and Sections C-F. Pine marten records were comprised of live sightings,

Species	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D	Section E	Section F	Total	Notes
			(2012-2023)	(2010-2024)	(2002-2024)	(2007-2023)		deceased individuals (roadkill) or field signs such as tracks, scat, feeding remains or hair samples. A high concentration of records were located within woodland blocks north of Brechin and within Fetteresso Forest, both of which are connected to the Proposed Development via woodland corridors. Several records were located within the Proposed Development: • A hair sample was collected within coniferous woodland adjacent to S102 in 2023. • Nineteen records were located within Fetteresso Forest, along access tracks. Records were of individual sightings, from 2008 to 2023. • A single pine marten was recorded between N74 and N73 in 2014. • A single pine marten was recorded between N18 and N17 in 2017.
Red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)	965 (2001-2024)	1,827 (2002-2024)	1,935 (2002-2023)	185 (2002-2023)	984 (2001-2023)	3,395 (2001-2024)	9,291	Red squirrel records were located within 5 km of Sections A-F. Records were comprised of live sightings, deceased individuals (roadkill) or field signs such as feeding remains. Records were located within woodland blocks (broadleaved, mixed and coniferous) across the entire Route. Several records were located within the Proposed Development. The areas with the most concentrated records were as follows: • Fifteen records were located in mixed woodland between S93 and S88. Records were of individual sightings, from 2017 to 2023. • Fifty-five records were located within Durris Forest and woodland blocks west of Drumoak (between N68 and N45). Records were of individual sightings, from 2005 to 2023.
Water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*)	1 (2024)	0	0	2 (2012)	1 (2007)	4 (2010-2017)	8	Water vole records were located within 5 km of Section A and Sections D-F. Records were comprised of live sightings, burrows and feeding remains. Records were located on the embankments of the Carron Water, and the tributaries of the River Dee. Both watercourses are hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development. One record, from 2014, is located within the Loch of Park SSSI/LNCS. The Loch of Park SSSI/LNCS is ecologically connected

Species	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D	Section E	Section F	Total	Notes
								to the Proposed Development as it is directly adjacent to the LOD (see **Table 11.1.7: Designated Sites: Section F**).
Notable Species (eg SBL, LBAP) within 5 km								
Atlantic salmon (Also Included in the Tayside LBAP[19] and the NESBiP LBAP[23])	1 (2002)	0	2 (2008-2021)	1 (2008)	135 (2001-2010)	30 (2001-2010)	169	Atlantic salmon records were located within 5 km of Section A and Sections C-F. Records were concentrated along the River Dee and its tributaries within Sections E-F. No records were located within the Proposed Development.
Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) (Also Included in the NESBiP LBAP[23])	28 (2005-2023)	21 (2007-2024)	57 (2003-2024)	66 (2004-2023)	67 (2006-2024)	54 (2001-2023)	293	Brown hare records were located within 5 km of Sections A-F. Records were comprised of live sightings and deceased individuals (roadkill). Records were located within woodland blocks and agricultural habitats throughout the length of the Route. Several records were located within the Proposed Development: • A single brown hare was recorded within woodland adjacent to S64 in 2022. • A single brown hare was recorded within agricultural lowland adjacent to S9 in 2013. • A single brown hare was recorded within Fetteresso, along the proposed access track. The record is from 2023.
Brown/sea trout (*Salmo trutta*)	1 (2002)	0	0	12 (2002-2006)	254 (2001-2010)	172 (2001-2010)	439	Brown/sea trout records were located within 5 km of Section A and Sections D-F. Records were concentrated along the River Dee and its tributaries, which are hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development. However, no records were located within the Proposed Development.
European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*)	3 (2002)	0	0	2 (2002-2006)	75 (2001-2010)	55 (2001-2021)	135	European eel records were located within 5 km of Section A and Sections D-F. Records were concentrated along the River Dee and its tributaries, as well as the Carron Water. Both watercourses are hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development. However, no records were located within the Proposed Development.

Species	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D	Section E	Section F	Total	Notes
Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)	1 (2023)	8 (2012-2023)	15 (2005-2023)	17 (2006-2023)	17 (2002-2023)	66 (2001-2013)	124	Hedgehog records were located along the length of the Route. Records were comprised of live sightings and deceased individuals (roadkill). Records were located within woodland blocks and lowland habitats throughout the length of the Route, including urban areas. No records were located within the Proposed Development.
Common frog (*Rana temporaria*)	0	1 (2023)	0	0	0	0	1	The Tayside and NESBiP LBAPs[23,19] list common frog as a priority species. One record is located within 5 km of Section B, north-east of Tannadice, and is comprised on an individual sighting. The record is not located within the Proposed Development.
Common toad (*Bufo bufo*)	2 (2016-2020)	0	1 (2010)	3 (2014-2023)	15 (2020-2023)	47 (2001-2024)	68	The Tayside and NESBiP LBAPs[23,19] list common toad as a priority species. Records were located within 5 km of Section A and Sections C-F. Records were comprised of live sightings, deceased individuals (roadkill), toad spawn and toadlets. Records were typically located on, or in close proximity to, wetlands and watercourses. Records are concentrated around Durris Forest and the tributaries of the River Dee. One record is located within the Proposed Development: • Toad spawn was recorded in 2021, along a proposed access track which will lead to N75 and N76.
Palmate newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	The Tayside and NESBiP LBAPs[23,19] list palmate newt as a priority species. There were no records within 5 km of the Proposed Development.
Common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*)	0	0	0	6 (2005-2020)	23 (2005-2021)	33 (2007-2023)	62	The Tayside and NESBiP LBAPs[23,19] list common lizard as a priority species. Records were located within 5 km of Sections D-F and comprised live sightings. Records were largely located within or close to upland environments, including moorland west of Fetteresso Forest. Records were also present within moorland north of Banchory. Some records were located within the Proposed Development: • A single common lizard was recorded in 2011 within Fetteresso Forest, along the proposed access track. • A single common lizard was recorded in 2010 within Fetteresso Forest, close to S1.

Species	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D	Section E	Section F	Total	Notes
Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*)	0	0	0	0	0	2 (2021-2023)	2	The Tayside LBAP[19] lists slow worm as a priority species. Slow worm records were located within 5 km of Section F and comprised live sightings. The two records were located along the embankments of the River Dee, south of Banchory. The records were not located within the Proposed Development.
Water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*)	0	0	0	0	7 (2001-2018)	15 (2011-2021)	22	The Tayside LBAP[19] lists water shrew as a local priority species. Records were located within 5 km of Sections E and F, and comprised live sightings and deceased individuals (roadkill). Records were typically located on, or in close proximity to, wetlands and watercourses. Records were concentrated around Durris Forest and the tributaries of the River Dee. One record is located within the Proposed Development: • A single water shrew was recorded on land adjacent to N4, in 2015.
Invasive Non-Native Species within 5 km								
American mink (*Neogale vison*)	1 (2014)	6 (2015)	1 (2014)	0	4 (2014-2015)	0	12	The Tayside LBAP[19] lists the American mink as a non-native invasive species. Records were located within 5 km of Sections A-C and Section E. Records comprised sightings of live individuals. Records were isolated and scattered throughout the route, primarily in blocks of woodland or riparian woodland corridors. There were no records within the Proposed Development.
American skunk cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*)	1 (2023)	0	0	0	32 (2008-2021)	61 (2005-2023)	94	Records were located within 5 km of Section A and Sections D-F. A large number of records were located along the embankments of the River Dee which is hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development. However, there were no records within the Proposed Development itself.
Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*)	0	26 (2013-2023)	20 (2004-2019)	3 (2019-2022)	184 (2010-2021)	132 (2005-2023)	365	Records were located within 5 km of Sections B-F. A large number of records were located along the embankments of the River South Esk, River North Esk and River Dee, which are all hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development. Giant hogweed is located within the Proposed Development, between N62 and N61, along the embankments of the River Dee.

Species	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D	Section E	Section F	Total	Notes
Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)	2 (2023-2024)	8 (2012-2018)	33 (2009-2019)	4 (2015-2018)	5 (2010-2023)	26 (2005-2023)	78	Records were located within 5 km of Sections A-F. Numerous records were located along the embankments of the River South Esk, Noran Water, River North Esk, Dowrie Burn, Bervie Water, River Dee and River Don, all of which are hydrologically connected to the Site. However, there were no records within the Proposed Development itself.
Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)	0	0	6 (2013-2022)	9 (2010-2021)	26 (2005-2021)	69 (2005-2023)	110	Records were located within 5 km of Sections C-F. A large number of records were located along the Bervie Water, Carron Water and River Dee which are hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development. One stand of Japanese knotweed was recorded within the Proposed Development, on land adjacent to N47, in 2005.
Piri-piri bur (*Acaena novae-zelandiae*)	0	0	0	3 (2009)	3 (2011-2017)	0	6	Records were located within 5 km of Sections D and E. Isolated records exist in Laurencekirk, Auchenblae and Durris Forest. Records were also present along the River Dee, which is hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development. However, there were no records within the Proposed Development itself.
Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*)	0	0	25 (2010-2012)	35 (2009-2014)	63 (2006-2015)	93 (2005-2012)	216	Records were located within 5 km of Sections C-F. A concentration of records were located east of Banchory, along the embankments of the River Dee which is hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development. Four records, from 2010, were located within the Loch of Park SSSI/LNCS. The Loch of Park SSSI/LNCS is ecologically connected to the Proposed Development and lies directly adjacent to the LOD (see **Table 11.1.7: Designated Sites: Section F**).
White butterbur (*Petasites albus*)	0	0	0	11 (2009-2012)	12 (2010-2020)	3 (2005-2012)	26	Records were located within 5 km of Sections D-F along the Luther Water, Bervie Water, Carron Water and tributaries of the River Dee. All of these watercourses are hydrologically connected to the Proposed Development. However, there were no records within the Proposed Development itself.
Nationally Rare/Scarce Plants within 2 km								
Coralroot orchid (*Corallorhiza trifida*)	0	0	0	4 (2010-2014)	0	0	4	Records were located within 2 km of Section D. Three of the four records, from 2010, were located within the Loch of Park SSSI/LNCS. The Loch of Park SSSI/LNCS is ecologically connected to the Proposed Development as it lies directly adjacent to the LOD

Species	Section A	Section B	Section C	Section D	Section E	Section F	Total	Notes
								(see **Table 11.1.7: Designated Sites: Section F**). However, none of the records were located within the Proposed Development itself.