

Netherton Hub 400 kV OHL Connection to New Deer and Peterhead: Tie-In

Environmental Appraisal Report Volume 3 Appendix 7.1: Habitats Baseline

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Table 3.1: UKHab Primary Habitats within the UKHab Survey Area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (hereafter referred to as 'SSEN Transmission'), operating under licence as Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc, is proposing to construct and install a permanent diversion, referred to as a 'Tie-In,' of the existing New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV Overhead Line (OHL) (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development') into a new 400 kV Alternating Current (AC) substation, proposed separately as part of the Netherton Hub Development.
- 1.1.2 The following has been undertaken to map the baseline habitats, to allow application of the mitigation hierarchy through optioneering and design stages, identify requirements to ensure legal compliance, and inform an Environmental Appraisal of the Proposed Development:
- UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) mapping within the Site; and
 - targeted National Vegetation Classification (NVC) mapping up to 250 m beyond the LoD associated with the alignment of the OHL.
- 1.1.3 UKHab primary habitat codes are provided in parentheses. The UKHab Survey Area predominantly comprised modified grassland (g4) and cropland (c1), typical of north east Scotland. Other neutral grassland (g3c) was mapped along field boundaries, along banksides of watercourses which were predominantly ditches and drainage channels (other rivers and streams; r2b), and at the perimeter and low-lying parts of grazing fields. Coniferous plantation woodland (other coniferous woodland; w2c) and other broadleaved woodland (w1g) was mapped, as well as two minor areas of wet woodland (w1d), one of which was found adjacent to a pond (other standing water; r1g).
- 1.1.4 Other habitat types which were identified within the UKHab Survey Area through the UKHab survey include: arable field margins- pollen and nectar (c1a6), native hedgerows (h2a), wet woodland (w1d) and lowland mixed deciduous woodland (w1f).
- 1.1.5 The following National Vegetation Classification (NVC) communities have been mapped within the Site and/ or surrounding 250 m area and may indicate a wetland is groundwater dependent, depending on the hydrogeological setting: MG10 and M23. Further hydrogeological assessment would be required to qualify the presence of Ground Water Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems and is beyond the scope of this report.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Proposed Development

- 2.1.1 Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission (hereafter referred to as 'SSEN Transmission'), operating under licence as Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission plc, is proposing to construct and install a permanent diversion, referred to as a 'Tie-In,' of the existing New Deer to Peterhead 400 kV Overhead Line (OHL) (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development') into a new 400 kV Alternating Current (AC) substation, proposed separately as part of the Netherton Hub.
- 2.1.2 The Tie-In is split into an 'In' leg, stemming from the existing New Deer – Peterhead OHL to the Hub substation (of which 12 redundant towers will be dismantled), and an 'Out' leg, connecting the substation back to the existing New Deer – Peterhead OHL. A second proposed connection considered in parallel to the Proposed Development comprises a connection from the Tie-In point of the 'Out' leg, back to the existing Peterhead Substation, referred to as the Netherton Hub 400kV OHL Connection to New Deer and Peterhead: Rebuild (hereafter referred to as 'the Rebuild'). The Rebuild does not form part of this report and will be delivered via a separate section 37 application.
- 2.1.3 The alignment of the OHL, associated infrastructure including access tracks and existing towers to be dismantled, plus a Limit of Deviation (LoD) which varies in distance depending on the works at certain points, is collectively referred to as the 'Site'.
- 2.1.4 The location of the Proposed Development is shown on **Figure 1.1: Site Location Plan (Volume 2)** and the layout of the Site is shown on **Figure 1.2: Site Layout Plan (Volume 2)**. For full details of the Proposed Development, please refer to **Chapter 2: Description of the Proposed Development (Volume 1)** of the Environmental Appraisal Report (EAR).

2.2 Scope of Report

- 2.2.1 WSP UK Ltd. (WSP) was commissioned to undertake ecological studies to identify the baseline of the Site, which would be used to inform **Chapter 7: Ecology (Volume 1)** of the EAR.
- 2.2.2 This report presents methods and baseline findings of studies relating to the habitats present within the Site and surrounding area. This included UK Habitat Classification¹ (UKHab) and targeted National Vegetation Classification² (NVC) surveys. The objectives of the surveys were to:
- Spatially map and describe the primary habitats present within the Site and apply relevant secondary codes using ukhab methods;
 - Identify primary habitats of elevated importance with reference to national and local biodiversity priority lists; and
 - Identify NVC communities within and surrounding the Site which could represent Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems³ (GWDTE) and/ or priority peatlands⁴, subject to further assessment.

¹ UKHab Ltd. (2023). UK Habitat Classification, Version 2.0. Available at: <https://www.ukhab.org>.

² Rodwell (1991-2006). NVC Volumes- British Plant Communities. Volumes 1-5. [NVC | Advisor to Government on Nature Conservation | JNCC](#)

³ SEPA (2024). Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Development on Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems. [guidance-on-assessing-the-impacts-of-developments-on-groundwater-dependent-terrestrial-ecosystems.docx](#)

⁴ NatureScot (2023). Advising on peatland, carbon-rich soils and priority peatland habitats in development management. Available: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/advising-peatland-carbon-rich-soils-and-priority-peatland-habitats-development-management>

- 2.2.3 This report is linked to the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment of the Proposed Development (**Appendix 7.4: Biodiversity Net Gain Report (Volume 3)**). This considers the condition, distinctiveness and spatial extent of habitats and demonstrates how positive effects for biodiversity will be achieved through habitat creation.

3. METHODS

3.1 UK Habitat Classification

- 3.1.1 UKHab surveys were undertaken during the Proposed Development's initial optioneering process in November 2024. More recently, field-based mapping was undertaken between 21 – 25 July and 29 September – 3 October 2025, to ground truth initial UKHab data and collect updated data.
- 3.1.2 All surveys have been undertaken by ecologists who are experienced at a 'capable'⁵ level of surveying similar habitat types encountered in the geographical region and land-use setting.
- 3.1.3 Habitat types have been recorded using the UKHab system¹. The UKHab system classifies habitats according to their vegetation types and structure, following a principal hierarchy of 'Primary Habitats'. Primary Habitats include ecosystems (level 1), broad habitat types (level 2 and 3); defined habitats, including UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats⁶ (level 4); and further defined habitats, including EU Habitats Directive **Annex 1 habitats** (level 5). Each Primary Habitat has an alpha-numeric code, unique to UKHab (i.e., different to other habitat survey methods such as Phase 1 and NVC).
- 3.1.4 A non-hierarchical system of numeric codes ('Secondary Codes') can then be used to provide more information on a habitat.
- 3.1.5 UKHab mapping has been presented for the full extent of the Site. The area of land which is now defined as the Site has evolved through the design and planning stages. In some places, the Site has been extended outwards of the area which was mapped in the field because these changes were identified after surveys were completed for the purposes of informing the EAR. The land which has been mapped in the field is hereafter referred to as the 'UKHab Survey Area', which was based off the Provisional LoD. The land which falls between the UKHab Survey Area and the current outer Site boundary has been mapped as a desk-based exercise by extending habitat cover from the adjacent polygons. This is discussed further under '**Section 3.4**' of this report.
- 3.1.6 A Primary Habitat and any relevant Secondary Codes were assigned to each area-based polygon, point or linear feature mapped from the UKHab Survey Area. Habitats were marked on a handheld mapping device using Geographical Information System (GIS) software. The smallest area to be mapped was 0.01 hectare (ha), which was selected as a suitable scale to sample the range of different vegetation types present.
- 3.1.7 Text descriptions to qualify habitat assignment, including plant species, were also recorded for distinct examples of habitat types. The scientific names for plant species follow those in New Flora of the British Isles⁷ and Mosses and Liverworts of the British Isles⁸.
- 3.1.8 The UKHab system allows for identification of priority habitats by aligning certain Primary Habitat definitions to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan⁹ (UKBAP), which can be considered against the Scottish Biodiversity List^{10,11} (SBL). It also considers EU Habitats Directive **Annex A habitat types**¹². A review of the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership (NESBiP) statements on Important

⁵ CIEEM (2024). Competency Framework [online]. Available at <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Competency-Framework-2024-V7-Web.pdf>

⁶ Where UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats have been identified, these have been assessed against the relevance within the Scottish Biodiversity List.

⁷ Stace C. A. (2019). New Flora of the British Isles. Fourth Edition. C&M Floristics, Suffolk.

⁸ Atherton, I., Bosanquet, S., Lawley, M. eds. (2010). Mosses and Liverworts of the British Isles: a field guide. British Bryological Society.

⁹ JNCC (2012). UK Biodiversity Action Plan. <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap>

¹⁰ Scottish Ministers (2012). Scottish Biodiversity List. Available: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/scottish-biodiversity-list>

¹¹ It should be noted that the SBL has reduced prominence in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045. Notwithstanding, the SBL can still be referred to as a useful indicator of species and habitat importance.

¹² Annex 1 habitat types which occur in the UK are listed here: <https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/habitat/>

Habitats for Biodiversity¹³ has also been reviewed to help identify priority habitats. Irreplaceable¹⁴ habitats have also been considered.

- 3.1.9 Additional data on habitat condition for area-based habitats and linear features were also recorded during the UKHab surveys using the system presented in Natural England Biodiversity Metric V3.1¹⁵. This has been used to inform a separate BNG assessment (**Appendix 7.4: Biodiversity Net Gain Report (Volume 3)**).

3.2 National Vegetation Classification

- 3.2.1 An NVC survey was undertaken between 29 September – 3 October 2025, comprising targeted mapping of plant communities up to 250 m either side of the Provisional LoD which could indicate:

- A wetland is groundwater dependent (depending on the hydrogeological setting) with reference to guidance from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency³ (SEPA), i.e., GWDTE;
- Priority peatland with reference to guidance from naturescot⁴; and/ or
- Other habitats of elevated importance (e.g., EU Habitats Directive **Annex A habitats**¹²).

- 3.2.2 The UKHab data gathered during the optioneering process, as well as historical and current aerial and Ordnance Survey mapping, were used to inform key areas in which to undertake an NVC survey in the field. The ecologists covered up to 250 m either side of the Provisional LoD during the field survey, only mapping NVC communities of interest for subsequent assessment.

- 3.2.3 The field survey classification methods followed industry standard guidelines¹⁶. At the targeted areas, homogenous stands and mosaics of vegetation were mapped as polygons on field survey maps. These polygons were surveyed quantitatively with dominant and constant species, sub-dominant species and other species present across homogenous stands and mosaics. Quadrat sampling was not applied as it is not always necessary if vegetation types can be reliably identified in the field using sufficient qualitative data where most NVC communities and sub-communities are defined by inter-stand frequency, not by the abundance of the constituent species. Species frequency was recorded for each targeted area providing an overall qualitative sample. Furthermore, qualitative information can be vital for understanding the dynamics and trends in vegetation patterns.

- 3.2.4 Vegetative data gathered within each stand in the field were considered against published floristic tables² using surveyor experience to determine NVC communities. Wherever possible, communities were classified to sub-community level, although in some cases a sub-community level classification was not possible due to species-richness not being sufficient to allow meaningful sub-community determination.

3.3 Invasive and Non-native Species

- 3.3.1 A full survey for invasive and non-native plant species has not been undertaken, however any occurrences were recorded as target notes, where incidentally encountered. Primary focus was given to noting occurrences of the four invasive plants which cause the most damage in Scotland¹⁷:

¹³ NESBiP (online). Important Habitats for Biodiversity. Available: <https://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/biodiversity-information-for-developers/important-habitats-for-biodiversity-in-the-north-east-of-scotland/>

¹⁴ A habitat which would be very difficult (or takes a very long time) to restore, create or replace once it has been destroyed (e.g., ancient woodland, blanket bog, sand dunes).

¹⁵ Natural England (2023). Biodiversity Metric 3.1 (JP039). Technical Annex 1 - Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology. Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5850908674228224>.

¹⁶ Rodwell, J.S. (2006). NVC Users' Handbook, JNCC, Peterborough. Available: <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/a407ebfc-2859-49cf-9710-1bde9c8e28c7/JNCC-NVC-UsersHandbook-2006.pdf>

¹⁷ NatureScot (online). Invasive non-native plants. Available: <https://www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/protected-species/invasive-non-native-species/invasive-non-native-plants>

rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*, Japanese knotweed *Reynoutria japonica*, giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, and Himalayan (Indian) balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*.

3.4 Limitations

- 3.4.1 The results of the habitat surveys are likely to be valid for up to 18 months following best practice guidance¹⁸. It may be possible to consider the broad UKHab data from modified/ managed land would remain valid for longer (up to three years), if there is no change to the land management/ use (e.g., agricultural areas, commercial forestry).
- 3.4.2 Access to the UKHab Survey Area was restricted in multiple areas, due to constraints such as presence of livestock, agricultural operations and landowner refusal at the early stages of survey planning. For full transparency, these areas are shown as 'Access Constraints' on **Figure 7.1.1: Habitat Survey Results**. Assumptions were made on the likely habitat suitability within these areas, by surveying at a distance using binoculars if access had not been granted.
- 3.4.3 The area of land which is now defined as the Site has evolved through the design and planning stages to incorporate access tracks and changes to the LoD. In some places, the Site has been extended outwards of the UKHab Survey Area which was mapped in the field because these changes were identified after surveys were completed for the purposes of informing the EAR. The UKHab Survey Area was based off the Provisional LoD. The land which falls between the UKHab Survey Area and the current outer Site boundary has been mapped as a desk-based exercise by extending habitat cover from the adjacent polygons. This does not substantially limit the baseline dataset, as these areas tend to be in the periphery of the Site and are an extension of modified and arable fields. For full transparency, the area which has been mapped in the field is shown on **Figure 7.1.1: Habitat Survey Results** as the UKHab Survey Area, to differentiate it from desk mapped data.

¹⁸ CIEEM (2019). Advice Note: On the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys. Available at: <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Advice-Note.pdf>

4. RESULTS

4.1 UK Habitat Classification

- 4.1.1 The spatial extents of the UKHab Primary Habitats within the Site are shown on **Figure 7.1.1: Habitat Survey Results (Annex A)**, a vascular plant species list is provided in **Annex B** and some representative photos in **Annex C**.
- 4.1.2 A description of each Primary Habitat mapped in the field from the UKHab Survey Area is listed in **Table 4.1:**, including identification of priority habitats. The same habitat types were also mapped from the periphery of the wider Site, where the Site extends beyond the UKHab Survey Area (these areas were mapped at the desk; see **Section 3.4: Limitations** of this report).

Table 4.1: UKHab Primary Habitats within the UKHab Survey Area

Primary Habitat	Description	Priority habitat
c1 – arable and horticulture	This habitat was found throughout the Site and reflective of the typical land use in North East Scotland. Throughout the survey period depending on the time of visit, fields varied between cereal crops (c1c and c1c7) (including barley), non-cereal crops (c1d) (including legumes), recently ploughed soil, and winter stubble (c1c7) – but for the purposes of this assessment, all were grouped under the broad level 2 primary habitat c1.	No These are actively managed fields which are common and widespread in the region. This does not qualify as a priority habitat.
c1a6 – arable field margins – pollen and nectar	Arable field margin with pollen and nectar mix was recorded in one location to the centre of the Site. Species such as <i>Phacelia</i> , chamomile and red clover were recorded.	Potentially Margins sown with wild flowers or agricultural legumes and likely managed to allow flowering to provide pollen and nectar resources for invertebrates qualify as a UKBAP priority habitat ¹⁹ .
f2d – aquatic marginal vegetation	Aquatic marginal vegetation was recorded along the sloping banks of a slow flowing ditch to the west of the Site. Species recorded included reed canary-grass, common nettle and creeping thistle.	No This example would not represent priority habitat or important habitats described by NESBiP ²⁰ .
f2f – other wetland	Other wetland was recorded within the northern half of one low lying field area, and was found to be dominated by soft rush. The water table was found to be at	No This area is listed as Class I ²¹ peat soils on the Carbon and Peatland Map ²² . This example would not

¹⁹ UK BAP Priority Habitat Descriptions (Arable & Horticultural) (2008). Available: <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/529a621b-e1a6-4283-ba82-408744d079b4/UKBAP-BAPHabitats-02-ArableFieldMargins.pdf>

²⁰ NESBiP (online). Important Habitats for Biodiversity – Freshwater Habitats. Available: <https://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/FreshwaterHabitatsv1.pdf>

²¹ Class 1 - Nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat. Areas likely to be of high conservation value

²² Carbon and Peatland 2016 Map. Available: <https://soils.environment.gov.scot/maps/thematic-maps/carbon-and-peatland-2016-map/>

Primary Habitat	Description	Priority habitat
	the surface of this habitat. Species recorded at the ground layer included mosses, common sorrel, spear thistle, creeping bent, <i>Veronica</i> sp. and marsh bedstraw.	represent important peatland habitats described by NESBiP ²⁰ due to the agricultural modification - drainage, ploughing, historical seeding and the presence of a limited species composition not representative of actively peat forming habitats.
g4 – modified grassland	This habitat was dominant within the UKHab Survey Area and wider landscape. Some fields were grazed by livestock (cattle, sheep and horses). Species diversity was relatively poor, dominated by perennial rye-grass, white clover, creeping buttercup and common nettle.	No This is a modified habitat of relatively low species diversity, which is common and widespread in the region. This does not qualify as a priority habitat. NESBiP acknowledges that improved grasslands are the least botanically rich of the grassland habitats ²³ .
g3c – other neutral grassland	Other neutral grassland was mapped along field margins, between hedgerows, and by watercourses. Species included creeping buttercup, cock's-foot, umbellifers, common nettle, cleavers, daisy, clover, vetch, ribwort plantain, creeping thistle, tufted hair-grass, and meadowsweet. Some smaller pockets of neutral grassland were found to be damp, and comprised a sward dominated by soft rush and Yorkshire-fog. They were often located in fields, at the perimeter or in low-lying areas. These areas have been subject to NVC survey and more detailed botanical assessment is recorded in Section 3.2 below.	No These grasslands do not qualify as priority habitats or match examples of the species-rich neutral grasslands described as being most valuable in the region ²³ .
g3c8 – Holcus-Juncus neutral grassland	Holcus-Juncus was mapped along low lying, poorly drained damp agricultural fields, and by watercourses. This habitat comprised of a sward dominated by soft rush and Yorkshire-fog, with frequent creeping buttercup and creeping thistle. These areas have been subject to NVC survey and more detailed botanical	No These grasslands do not qualify as priority habitats or match examples of the species-rich neutral grasslands described as being most valuable in the region ²³ .

²³ NESBiP (online). Important Habitats for Biodiversity – Grasslands. Available: <https://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Grasslandsv1.pdf>

Primary Habitat	Description	Priority habitat
	assessment is recorded in Section 3.2 below.	
h2a – native hedgerows h2a6 – other native hedgerow	Hedgerows were mapped along field boundaries within the UKHab Survey Area. These were largely dominated by hawthorn, with occasional hazel and blackthorn.	Yes Irrespective of their condition or management, these hedgerows have been considered priority habitat because they comprise predominantly at least one woody UK native species and are of a suitable extent ²⁴ . NESBiP also acknowledges hedgerows as highly valuable features for biodiversity ²⁵ .
h3h – mixed scrub	Mixed scrub was mapped on the outer perimeter of disused agricultural land and formed a transition zone between grassland and fencelines. This habitat was largely dominated by raspberry, bramble and abundant rosebay willowherb.	No This example would not represent priority habitat or important habitats described by NESBiP ²⁵ , which lists dense scrub, and juniper scrub.
u1b – developed land, sealed surface u1b5 – buildings u1c – artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface u1d – suburban mosaic of develop and natural surface u1e – built linear features	Minor roads and tracks were mapped throughout the UKHab Survey Area as primary habitat u1e. Buildings and developed land with a sealed surface were mapped in several locations, along with areas of developed land with shelter planting, and scattered trees. These relate to private properties on the periphery of the UKHab Survey Area.	These areas of developed land do not qualify as priority habitats.
w1d – wet woodland	One area of wet woodland was mapped within the Site, located around a small pond, within a fenced area between agricultural fields to the west of Site. It was assumed to be of plantation origin given	Yes This habitat type is typically recognised as a local priority habitat.

²⁴ This accords with the UKHab and UK Biodiversity Action Plan definitions, carried forward to the SBL.

²⁵ NESBiP (online). Important Habitats for Biodiversity – Woodlands. Available: <https://www.nesbiodiversity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Woodlandsv1-1.pdf>.

Primary Habitat	Description	Priority habitat
	the setting and species composition. Species included dominant alder with frequent ash, with relatively rarer willow species. The example within the UKHab Survey Area has been planted within the last 30 years, and covers a minor area. The ground flora reflected more of a damp grassy understory rather than a wetland.	Whilst species-poor, it does represent a locally important habitat for biodiversity described by NESBiP²⁰ and, could continue to establish into a semi-natural wet woodland and is distinct from the other woodland in the area. It has therefore been precautionarily valued as a priority habitat.
w1f – lowland mixed deciduous woodland	A narrow strip of lowland mixed deciduous woodland was recorded to the north west of the UKHab Survey Area, between two modified grassland pastures. The canopy of this habitat was dominated by native species such as beech, with an understory characteristic of woodland comprising of male fern, bramble, wood sorrel and foxglove. This habitat was found to be part of a wider network of sheltered planting, connecting the woodland strip to other mature beech woodland in the wider area. The example within the UKHab Survey Area had likely been created as shelter planting between two agricultural boundaries.	Yes This habitat type is typically recognised as a priority habitat. Whilst relatively species-poor, it does align to the UKHab description and does represent an important habitat for biodiversity described by NESBiP²⁰. On the condition this area remains free of modification, it could continue to establish into a naturalistic woodland and forms part of a woodland corridor providing connectivity to further areas of woodland in the wider landscape. It has therefore been precautionarily valued as a priority habitat.
w1g – other broadleaved woodland	Three areas of other broadleaved woodland were mapped as with the secondary code 33 – Line of Trees. These linear features were mainly found along the boundary of agricultural fields, or along burns. Species included frequent rowan, ash, hazel, field maple and male fern.	No This example would not represent priority habitat or important habitats described by NESBiP²⁵.
w1h – other woodland mixed	A relatively minor area of other woodland - mixed was mapped around, and as part of, a private residential property to the centre of Site. It was assumed to be of plantation origin given the setting and species composition. Species included non-native trees such as abundant sycamore, Sitka spruce and also frequent ash.	No This example would not represent priority habitat or important habitats described by NESBiP²⁵.
w2c – other coniferous woodland	Non-native coniferous woodland of plantation origin was mapped within the Site. It was predominantly recorded to the east of the Site and was found to contain Sitka spruce.	No The blocks of coniferous woodland do not qualify as priority habitat, as a non-native and managed/ planted habitat.

Primary Habitat	Description	Priority habitat
r1g – other standing water	Two areas of other standing water were recorded within the UKHab Survey Area. This included a small pond surrounded by wet woodland to the centre of the Site, and a second pond surrounded by grassland and coniferous woodland to the west of the UKHab Survey Area. Ponds were found to contain aquatic marginal vegetation such as bulrush. Another two areas of standing water were mapped at the desk – central to the existing OHL subject to dismantling.	No These ponds do not qualify under the UKBAP ²⁶ criterion for priority pond classification as they did not meet the necessary qualifying thresholds for priority species and plant assemblages. NESBiP acknowledges that smaller water bodies and ponds are important habitats for a range of species including amphinians ²⁰
r2b – other rivers and streams	The majority of watercourses mapped as this primary habitat were ditches and drainage channels. These drainage channels were found to primarily modified, with straightened channels and evidence of influence from agricultural activities such as sediment run off and poaching. Burn of Ludquham and other unnamed burns and numerous drainage ditches were recorded within the UKHab Survey Area, some of which appear to have been straightened.	No These would not qualify as priority river habitat on the basis that NESBiP acknowledges that straightened watercourses for agricultural drainage have impacted ecology ²⁰ .

4.2 National Vegetation Classification

4.2.1 **Figure 7.1.1: Habitat Survey Results (Annex A)** shows the spatial extent of targeted NVC mapping prepared to help identify potential GWDTEs and priority peatlands. The following section describes the NVC communities which have been mapped, starting with those which have been targeted for their potential to be GWDTEs. Additional hydrogeological assessment would be required to qualify the presence of GWDTEs and that is beyond the scope of this report. Further information on GWDTEs is presented in **Chapter 9: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils (Volume 1)** of the EAR.

MG10 Holcus lanatus-Juncus effusus rush-pasture

- 4.2.2 This community was mapped in pockets from areas of lowland fields with grazing livestock. The species composition tended to be poor and indicative of modified conditions; soft rush, Yorkshire-fog, creeping buttercup, common nettle, ragwort, broadleaved dock, creeping bent and creeping thistle. Willowherb was occasionally present. Some examples were particularly wet underfoot with the water table visible at time of survey.
- 4.2.3 This community can indicate a wetland is groundwater dependent, depending on the hydrogeological setting^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}.

²⁶ UK BAP Priority Habitat Descriptions (Ponds) (2008) <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/dec49c52-a86c-4483-90f2-f43957e560bb/UKBAP-BAPHabitats-42-Ponds.pdf>

- 4.2.4 It is a typical community for the geographical setting and land use; species are common and widespread. The examples do not represent habitat of elevated conservation importance (e.g., irreplaceable, Annex 1 or SBL habitat).

M23b Juncus effusus / acutiflorus-Galium palustre rush-pasture

- 4.2.5 An area of M23b *Juncus effusus* sub-community was mapped from between blocks of coniferous plantation, to the west of the Site, mapped as a mosaic with MG10. The species composition was found to include tussocks of soft rush, with mosses, common sorrel, spear thistle, marsh willowherb, creeping bent, speedwell species and marsh bedstraw was occasional.
- 4.2.6 This community can indicate a wetland is groundwater dependent, depending on the hydrogeological setting^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}.
- 4.2.7 It is a typical community for the geographical setting and land use; species are common and widespread. The examples do not represent habitat of elevated conservation importance (e.g., irreplaceable, Annex I or SBL habitat).

4.3 Invasive and non-native species

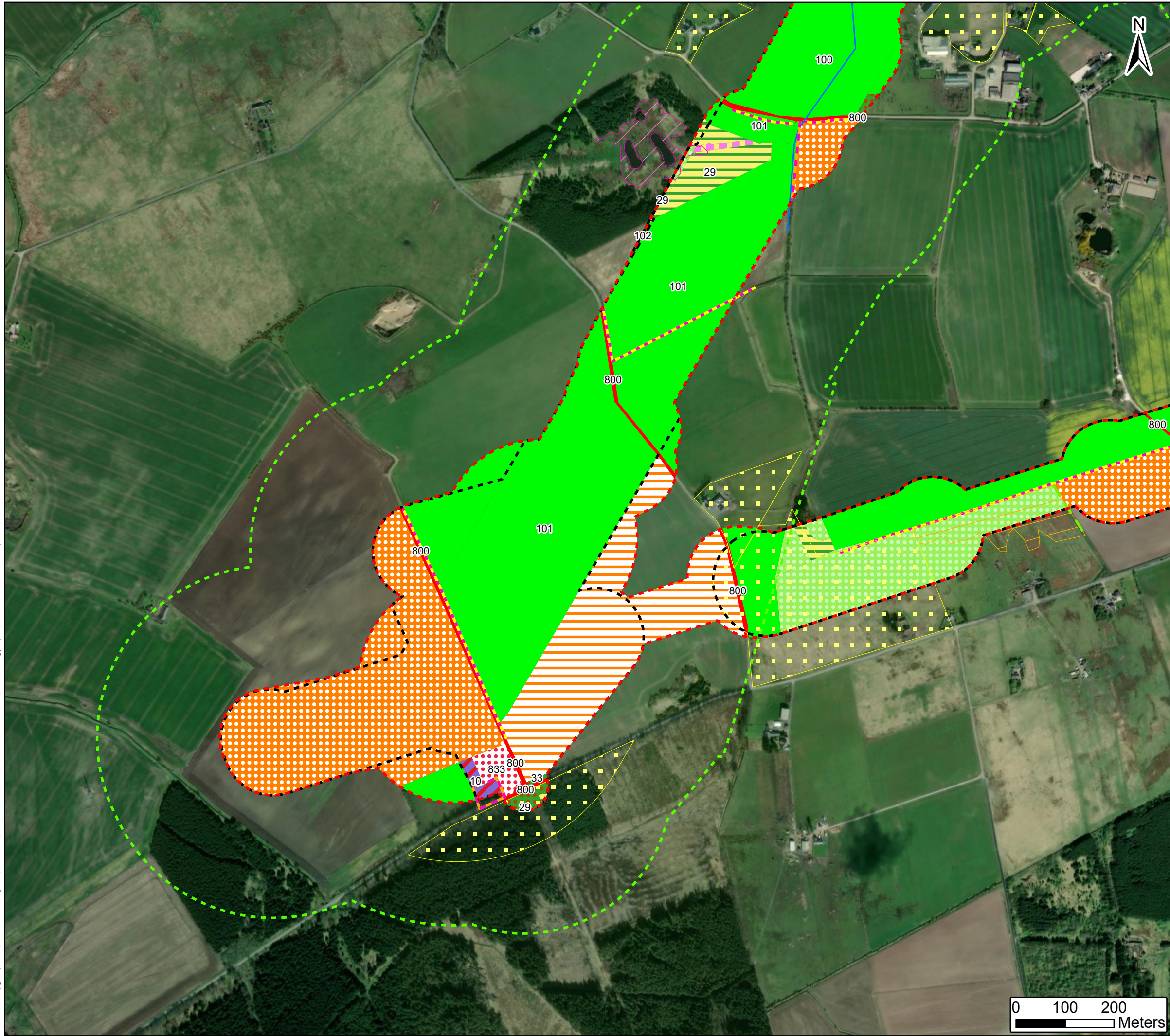
- 4.3.1 Incidental records of non-native plants such as fuchsia, phacelia, Pott's montbretia, Sitka spruce and snowberry was recorded within the UKHab Survey Area, commonly in association with gardens, roadsides, and within unmanaged land adjacent to residential properties.
- 4.3.2 No evidence was recorded of the four key invasive non-native plants which cause most damage (Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed, rhododendron) within the UKHab Survey Area itself. This does not preclude their presence entirely or the presence of incidental occurrences of more obscured invasive and non-native plant species within the UKHab Survey Area.
- 4.3.3 Within the wider landscape, one record of Japanese Knotweed (**INNS1, Figure 7.1.1: Habitat Survey Results (Annex A)**), was recorded 65 m east of the UKHab Survey Area.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1.1 UKHab and targeted NVC surveys have been undertaken across the majority of the Site and wider area. The surveys focussed on identifying potential GWDTEs, priority peatland and other priority habitat types.
- 5.1.2 The following NVC communities have been mapped within the Provisional LoD and/ or surrounding 250 m area and *may* indicate a wetland is groundwater dependent, depending on the hydrogeological setting (i.e., potential GWDTE): MG10 and M23b. Further hydrogeological assessment would be required to qualify the presence of GWDTE and is beyond the scope of this report.
- 5.1.3 Desk based data identified the presence of priority peat soils. Following habitat surveys, no priority peatland habitats were recorded within the UKHab Survey Area.
- 5.1.4 Other priority habitat types which were identified within the UKHab Survey Area through the UKHab survey include: arable field margin with pollen and nectar mix, hedgerows, wet woodland and lowland mixed deciduous woodland.

ANNEX A: FIGURES

- **Figure 7.1.1: Habitat Survey Results**



Key

- Site
- Field_survey_area_263003
- 250m NVC Buffer
- Access Constraints

National Vegetation Classification (NVC)

Survey Results

- MG10 Holcus lanatus – Juncus effusus rush-pasture
- MG10 / M23a Holcus lanatus – Juncus effusus rush-pasture / Holcus lanatus – Juncus effusus rush-pasture

UKHab Classification Linear

- h2a - native hedgerow
- h2a6 - other native hedgerow
- r2b - other rivers and streams
- w1g - other broadleaved woodland

UKHab Classification Area

- c1c - cereal crops
- c1d - non-cereal crops
- f2d - aquatic marginal vegetation
- g3c8 - Holcus-Juncus neutral grassland
- g4 - modified grassland
- h3h - mixed scrub
- u1b5 - buildings
- u1e - built linear features
- w1g - other woodland, broadleaved
- w2c - other coniferous woodland

00 - Secondary code

- 10 - scattered scrub
- 11 - hedgerow with trees
- 14 - scattered rushes
- 15 - rushes dominate
- 29 - plantation
- 33 - line of trees
- 42 - pond
- 50 - ditch
- 100 - grazed
- 101 - cattle grazed
- 102 - sheep grazed
- 116 - failed hedgerow
- 800 - road
- 818 - residential building
- 833 - barn
- 839 - track

Client: **Scottish & Southern**
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

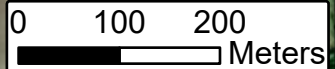
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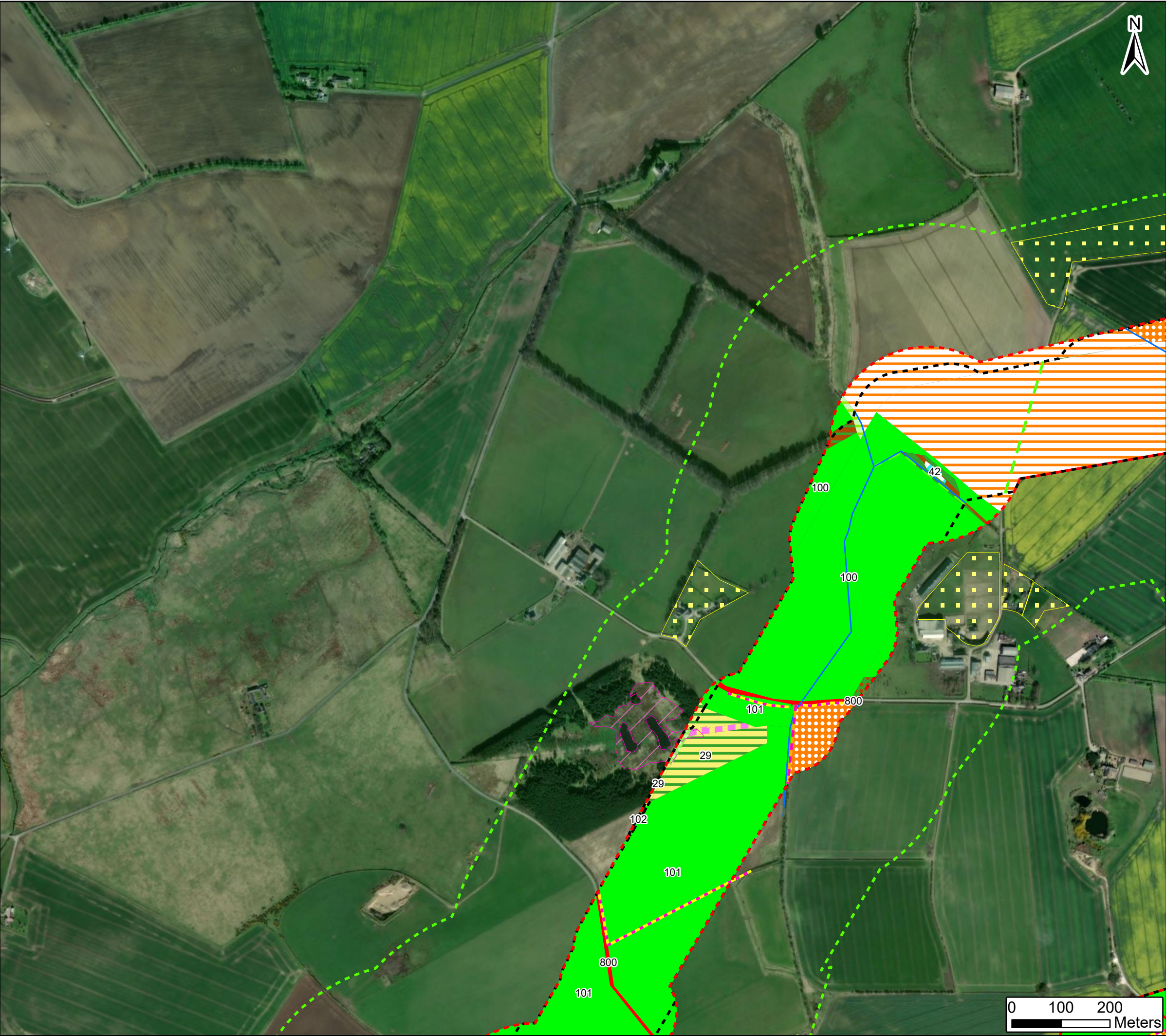
New Deer to Peterhead Overhead Line
Tie - In

Title

Figure 7.1.1 – Habitat Survey Results
Page 1 of 6

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Key

- Site
- Field_survey_area_263003
- 250m NVC Buffer
- Access Constraints

National Vegetation Classification (NVC)

Survey Results

MG10 / M23a *Holcus lanatus* – *Juncus effusus*
rush-pasture / *Holcus lanatus* – *Juncus effusus*
rush-pasture

UKHab Classification Linear

- h2a - native hedgerow
- h2a6 - other native hedgerow
- r2b - other rivers and streams
- w1g - other broadleaved woodland

UKHab Classification Area

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- c1d - non-cereal crops
- f2d - aquatic marginal vegetation
- g3c - other neutral grassland
- g3c8 - *Holcus*-*Juncus* neutral grassland
- g4 - modified grassland
- r1g - other standing water
- u1e - built linear features
- w1d - wet woodland
- w1f - lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- w1g - other woodland, broadleaved
- w2c - other coniferous woodland

00 - Secondary code

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Client: **Scottish & Southern**
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

Project:

New Deer to Peterhead Overhead Line
Tie - In

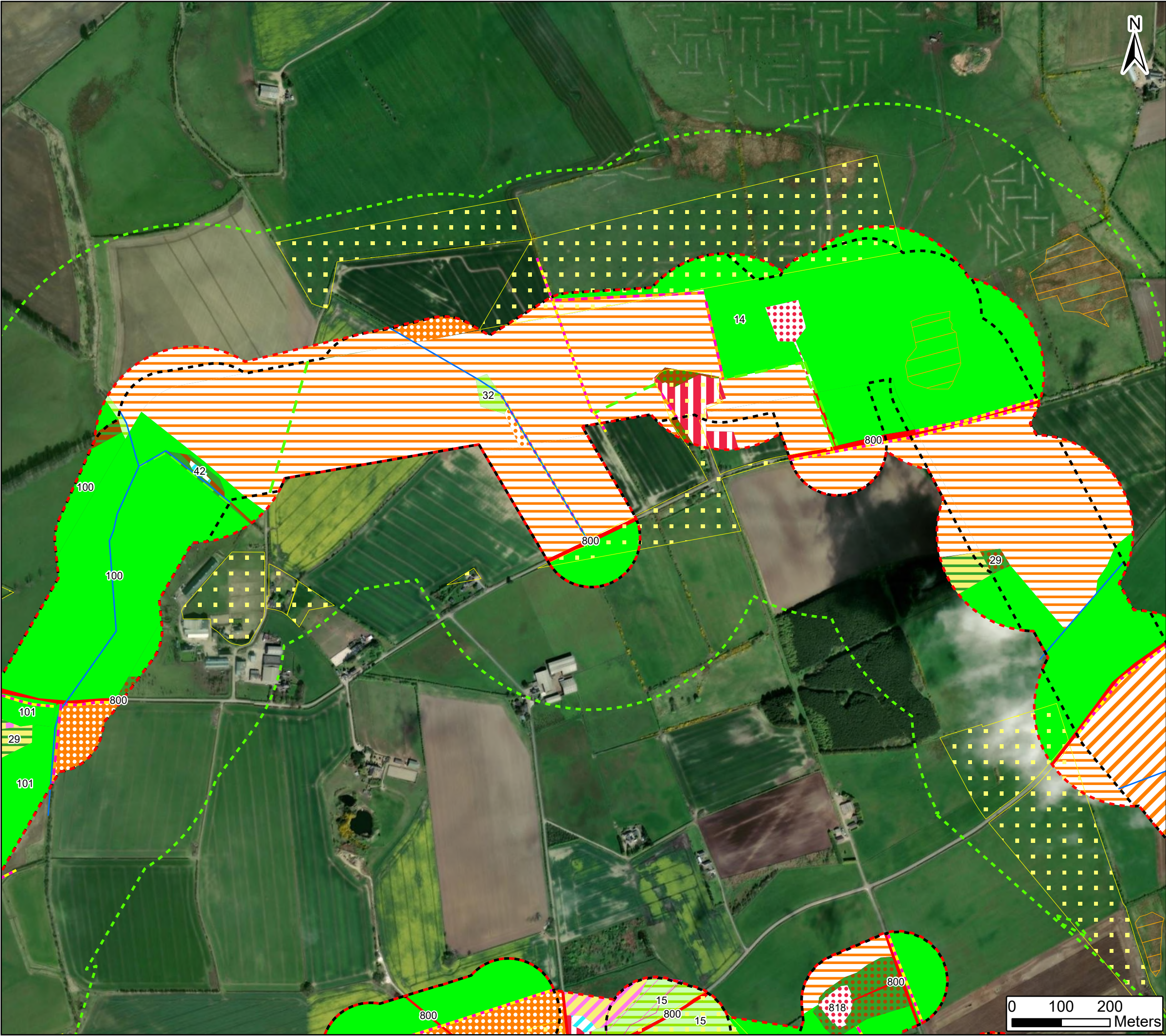
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Figure 7.1.1 – Habitat Survey Results
Page 2 of 6

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Drawing Number: NEW-DEER-HABITAT-SURVEY-RESULTS



Key

- Site
- Field_survey_area_263003
- 250m NVC Buffer
- Access Constraints

National Vegetation Classification (NVC)

Survey Results

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- MG10 / M23a Holcus lanatus – Juncus effusus rush-pasture / Holcus lanatus – Juncus effusus rush-pasture

UKHab Classification Linear

- h2a - native hedgerow
- h2a6 - other native hedgerow
- r2b - other rivers and streams
- w1g - other broadleaved woodland

UKHab Classification Area

- c1 - arable and horticulture
- c1a - arable field margins
- c1c - cereal crops
- c1d - non-cereal crops
- f2f - other wetlands
- f2d - aquatic marginal vegetation
- g3c - other neutral grassland
- g4 - modified grassland
- r1g - other standing water
- u1b - developed land, sealed surface
- u1b5 - buildings
- u1e - built linear features
- w1d - wet woodland
- w1f - lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- w1g - other woodland, broadleaved
- w1h - other woodland, mixed
- w2c - other coniferous woodland

00 - Secondary code

- 10 - scattered scrub
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Client:

Project:

New Deer to Peterhead Overhead Line Tie - In

Title

Figure 7.1.1 – Habitat Survey Results
Page 3 of 6

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Key

- Site
- Field_survey_area_263003
- 250m NVC Buffer
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National Vegetation Classification (NVC)
Survey Results

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- r2b - other rivers and streams
- w1f - lowland mixed deciduous woodland

UKHab Classification Area

- c1 - arable and horticulture
- c1c - cereal crops
- g4 - modified grassland
- u1b5 - buildings
- u1e - built linear features
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- w2c - other coniferous woodland

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Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

TRANSMISSION

Client:

New Deer to Peterhead Overhead Line Tie - In

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Figure 7.1.1 – Habitat Survey Results
Page 4 of 6

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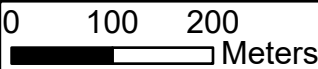
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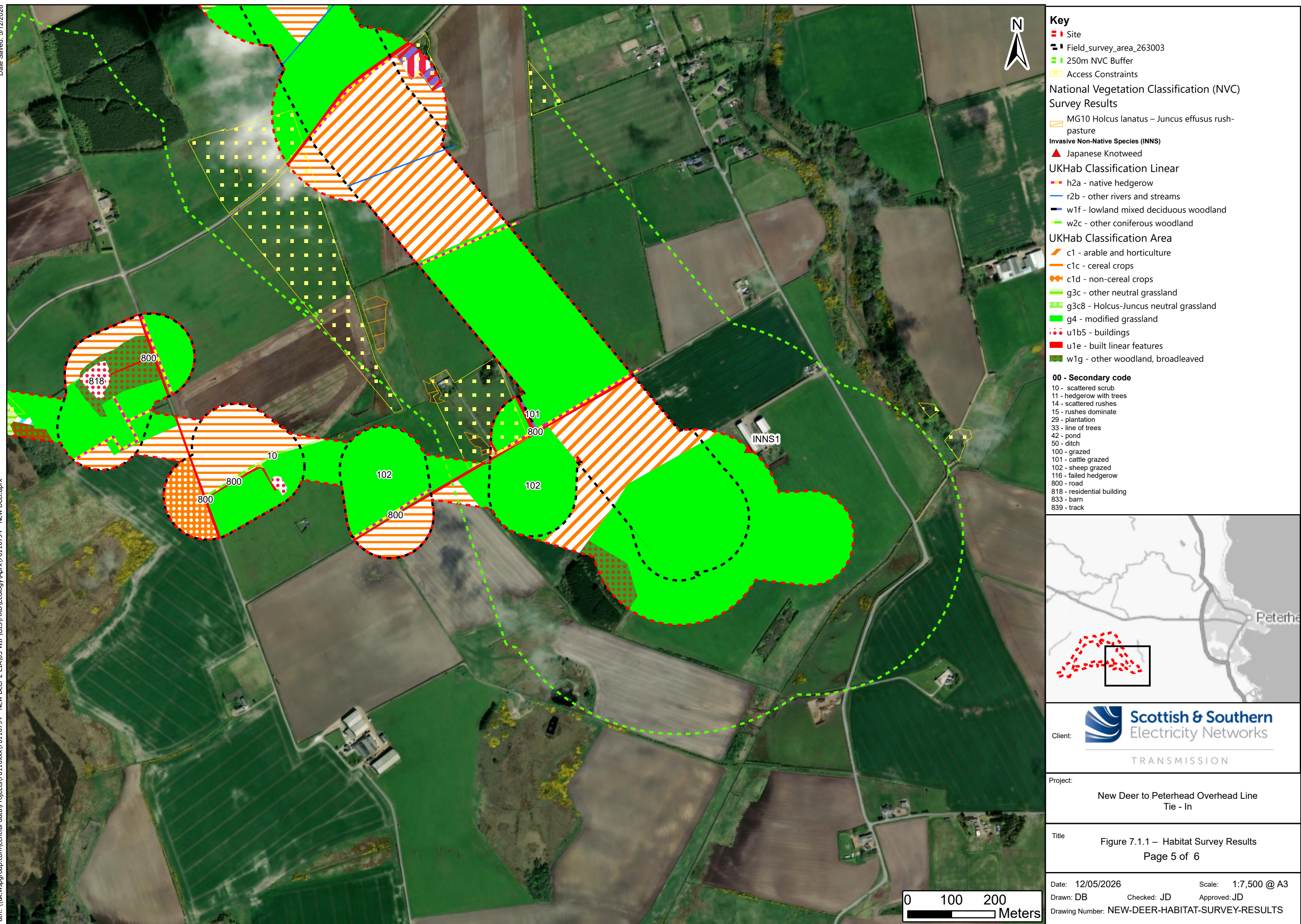
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Key

- Site
- Field_survey_area_263003
- 250m NVC Buffer
- Access Constraints

National Vegetation Classification (NVC) Survey Results

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UKHab Classification Area

- c1 - arable and horticulture
- c1c - cereal crops
- c1d - non-cereal crops
- f2f - other wetlands
- f2d - aquatic marginal vegetation
- g3c - other neutral grassland
- g3c8 - Holcus-Juncus neutral grassland
- g4 - modified grassland
- u1b5 - buildings
- u1d - suburban mosaic of developed/natural surfaces
- u1e - built linear features
- w1g - other woodland, broadleaved
- w2c - other coniferous woodland

00 - Secondary code

- 10 - scattered scrub
- 11 - hedgerow with trees
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Client: Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks

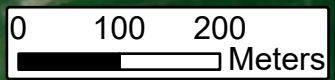
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Page 6 of 6

Date: 12/05/2026
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Approved: JD



ANNEX B: SPECIES LIST

English name	Scientific name
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Annual meadow-grass	<i>Poa annua</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.
Bread wheat	<i>Triticum aestivum</i>
Broad-leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
Buckwheat	<i>Fagopyrum esculentum</i>
Bulrush	<i>Typha latifolia</i>
Bush vetch	<i>Vicia sepium</i>
Chamomile	<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i>
Cherry species	<i>Prunus</i> sp.
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Clover species	<i>Trofolium</i> sp.
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Common couch	<i>Elymus repens</i>
Common hemp-nettle	<i>Galeopsis tetrahit</i>
Common knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>
Common nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Common ragwort	<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>
Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Cow parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
Creeping bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>
Creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Creeping soft-grass	<i>Holcus mollis</i>
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>

English name	Scientific name
Curled dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Dog-rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
False oat-grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Field woundwort	<i>Stachys arvensis</i>
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
Great willowherb	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>
Greater plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>
Grey willow	<i>Salix cinerea</i>
Ground-elder	<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Hedge woundwort	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Male fern	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>
Marsh foxtail	<i>Alopecurus geniculatus</i>
Marsh woundwort	<i>Stachys palustris</i>
Meadow foxtail	<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>
Meadow vetchling	<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>
Oat	<i>Avena sativa</i>
Perennial rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Pineappleweed	<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>
Raspberry	<i>Rubus idaeus</i>
Red campion	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Red clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>

English name	Scientific name
Redcurrant	<i>Ribes rubrum</i>
Reed canary-grass	<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>
Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Rose species	<i>Rosa sp.</i>
Rosebay willowherb	<i>Chamaenerion angustifolium</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Rush species	<i>Juncus sp.</i>
Sea-buckthorn	<i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>
Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Silverweed	<i>Potentilla anserina</i>
Soft rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>
Sorrel species	<i>Rumex sp.</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Timothy	<i>Phleum pratense</i>
Tufted hair-grass	<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>
Tufted vetch	<i>Vicia cracca</i>
White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Wild angelica	<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Wild plum	<i>Prunus domestica</i>
Willow species	<i>Salix sp.</i>
Wood sorrel	<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>
Wych elm	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Yorkshire-fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>
Non- native species	
Fuchsia	<i>Fuchsia magellanica</i>

English name	Scientific name
Phacelia ²⁷	<i>Phacelia tanacetifolia</i>
Pott's montbretia	<i>Crocasmia pottsii</i>
Sitka spruce	<i>Picea sitchensis</i>
Snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>

²⁷ Widely planted as a green manure, non-native but of value to wildlife as an annual nectar source

ANNEX C: SITE PHOTOS



Photo 1 – Planted wet woodland



Photo 2 – Other neutral grassland at field boundary



Photo 3 – Native hawthorn hedgerows



Photo 4 – Other standing water – pond



Photo 5 – Other cereal crops



Photo 6 – Arable field margins – pollen and nectar



Photo 7 – *Juncus effusus / acutiflorus-Galium palustre* rush-pasture (M23b)



Photo 8 – *Holcus-Juncus* grassland (MG10)