

Appendix 10F

EclA Scoping Rationale



RWE Renewables UK Ltd

Eredine Wind Farm Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Appendix 10F: EclA Scoping Rationale



Report for

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1. Introduction

1.1 Scoping Rationale

1.1.1.1 The following section provides the rationale for the scope of the assessment and comprises two tables:

- **Table 1.1** describes and justifies the level of importance assigned to the ecological features identified during the data gathering exercise carried out to inform this assessment.
- **Table 1.2** determines and justifies whether those ecological features require further assessment as they have either sufficient legal protection for a breach in legislation to occur, or are of sufficient importance that a significant effect may occur as a result of the Proposed Development.

1.1.1.2 Within **Table 1.1**, consideration is given to both the importance of ecological features based on legislation and policy and importance with regard to the Proposed Development (refer to **Table 10.7** within **Chapter 10: Ecology**). The justification provided for the decision to scope in or out each ecological feature is based on information on its status both with regard to the Proposed Development, and the local, county, regional, national or international context, where available.

Table 1.1 Importance of Ecological Features

Ecological Feature	Importance – Legislation & Policy	Importance – Site	Rationale
Dalavich Oakwood SSSI	National	Less than Local	This SSSI is located approximately 5km north-west of the Development Site, on the northwestern side of Loch Awe and is designated for upland oak woodland and wet woodland. Given the distance between the Development Site and the SSSI, there is predicted to be no connectivity between the Proposed Development and the woodland communities for which this site is designated and is considered of less than local importance in the context of the Development Site.
Ardchylne Wood SSSI	National	Less than Local	This SSSI is located approximately 5.4km east of the Development Site, on the eastern side of Loch Fyne and is designated for upland oak woodland. Given the distance between the Site and the SSSI, there is predicted to be no connectivity between the proposed development and the woodland communities for which this site is designated, and is considered of less than local importance in the context of the Development Site.
Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park	National	Less than Local	The National Park is located approximately 7km east of the Site, on the eastern side of Loch Fyne. Given the distance between the Site and the SSSI, there is predicted to be no connectivity between the proposed development and the various woodland communities, upland and lowland landscapes for which this site supports, and is considered of less than local importance in the context of the Development Site.
Eredine and Brenchoillie Red Squirrel Stronghold	County	Local	The Development Site is located within a strategic priority area for red squirrel conservation in Scotland, the Eredine and Brenchoillie Red Squirrel Stronghold. The Development Site comprises commercial sitka spruce plantation with sub-optimal habitat for red squirrel. Suitable habitat is present in mixed stands of conifer and broadleaf woodland to the south of the Development Site (along Douglas Water) and the north of the Development Site (along Abhainn a Bhealaich). In light of the presence of the red squirrel within the Site and wider study area, the feature is considered of local importance.
Ancient Woodland	National	Local	Several small stands of ancient woodland are present on lower lying ground outside the Study Area to the far norther eastern corner of along the Douglas Water, and the Abhainn a Bhealaich to the western edge of the Development Site. In light of the value of these woodland corridors and the added association of the Red Squirrel Stronghold this feature which is recorded outside the Development Site is considered of local importance.
Broadleaved plantation woodland	Local	Less than Local	Small pockets of mixed woodland plantation are present within the Study Area. However, none of these stands are subject to potential direct or indirect effects as a result of the Proposed Development.

Ecological Feature	Importance – Legislation & Policy	Importance – Site	Rationale
Mixed plantation woodland	Local	Less than Local	Small pockets of mixed woodland plantation are present within the Study Area. However, none of these stands are subject to potential direct or indirect effects as a result of the Proposed Development and this feature is considered of less than local importance in the context of the Development Site.
Conifer plantation	Local	Local	Stands of mature coniferous plantation, comprised predominantly of Sitka spruce, are present throughout the Study Area. This habitat is widespread, extensive, temporary and often non-natural habitat across Scotland and very common in Argyll and Bute. Typically, of low ecological value compared to other woodland types. Area of habitat recorded was large in size area (1,632ha) species-poor and uneven habitat dominated by commercial, non-native species. While maturing coniferous plantation is generally considered to have limited ecological value, there is potential for this habitat to support protected species such as red squirrel and badger. This habitat is considered of local importance.
Recently felled woodland	Local	Less than Local	Recently felled woodland is of limited conservation interest due to its relatively low species diversity and this habitat has therefore been scoped out of further assessment.
Blanket bog communities (M1, M17, M18, M19)	National	Local M17 (County)	Blanket bog is an SBL Priority habitat, is included in both Argyll & Bute LBAP and includes habitats/vegetation communities listed on Annex I to the EC Habitats Directive. Blanket bog communities are present within the Study Area, covering ca. 384ha (ca. 16% of the total Development Site). These included potential priority peatland communities such as M17, M19 and M1 where impacts have the potential to raise issues of national interest.
Wet modified bog communities (M20, M25)	National	Local	The least modified blanket bog community, which was considered closest to 'Near-Natural' (albeit still modified), was the M18 community, however the coverage of this community was only 0.56ha. Most of the remaining blanket bog recorded was considered to be modified through forestry, drainage, grazing and possibly other historic management practices such as burning. This included much of the M17, M19 and M20 communities. Across the Study Area (focussing primarily on the open areas of blanket bog outside the forestry plantation) there are numerous hagg and gully complexes (both active and drained), as well as eroding gulleys and peat pipes which in some cases are contributing to further active erosion of the bog. These areas of active erosion are localised across the Site and are found in following communities M15, M17, M19 and M20. Using the 'Peatland Condition Assessment (PCA) support tool', the blanket bog in the Study Area was considered mostly to be of intermediate condition, with areas of 'bad quality' where the erosion was most

Ecological Feature	Importance – Legislation & Policy	Importance – Site	Rationale
			pronounced and small areas of 'good quality' where there was a higher water table and sphagnum carpets (but no surface water pools, hummocks or natural surface pattern). Using the evidence provided here, and the 'PCA Support Tool', much of the M19, M20 and M25 blanket mire across the Study Area could be judged to be inactive, and so is likely to be a carbon source rather than a carbon sink whilst areas of active bog were considered to be found within M17 and M18 communities. On this basis, given the widespread nature of this habitat and the modified nature across much of the Study Area, the Development Site has been evaluated as being of local importance for blanket bog (elevated to county level for M17 communities).
Wet dwarf-shrub heath communities (M15b,c,d)	National	Local	Wet heath contains vegetation communities listed on Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive, it is an SBL Priority habitat and is included within the Argyll & Bute LBAP. The habitat is widespread and common in Scotland, especially in the uplands where it dominates very large areas especially in the west coast¹. Upland heathland habitat has been estimated to cover between 1,700,000 and 2,500,000ha in Scotland¹. Wet heath communities were present within the Proposed Development, covering ca. 731ha (ca. 24% of the total Site). Wet heath occurs in mosaic with blanket bog communities in open ground to the South of, on damp, peaty substrate, although generally corresponding to relatively shallower deposits. It is connected to the wider landscape and forms an important part of the overall mosaic of upland habitats. The following categories of wet heath communities (NVC communities M15b, M15c and M15d) defined by SEPA as GWDTE are widespread in Scotland. Within the Development Site, wet dwarf shrub heath was considered to be approaching favourable condition in places, however the majority of this habitat was considered to be modified and/or eroding, through historic management practices. On this basis, given the widespread nature of this habitat and the modified nature across much of the Study Area, the Development Site has been evaluated as being of local importance for wet heath.

¹ NatureScot (2018) Upland Heathland (UK BAP Priority Habitat) [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2018-02/Priority%20Habitat%20-%20Upland%20Heathland.pdf> (Accessed 04/10/2023)

Ecological Feature	Importance – Legislation & Policy	Importance – Site	Rationale
Dry dwarf-shrub heath and montane heath communities (H12 and H14)	National	Local	Habitat included within the SBL and Habitats Directive. The habitat is widespread and common in Scotland, especially in the uplands where it dominates very large areas². Dry heath occurs scattered on drier slopes and hilltops in open ground to the south of the Development Site, totalling approximately 7.9ha. A smaller area (0.07ha) of montane heath was recorded to the south of the Site. These communities are connected via wet heath and bog habitats and form part of the overall mosaic of upland habitats with these communities. It is a functional example of an Annex 1 habitat, albeit one that is common in the landscape and which generally occurs on shallow peat deposits. The Site is considered to be of local level importance for these communities.
Acid flush communities (M6, M29)	National	Local	Habitat included within the Argyll and Bute LBAP and SBL (Included on the SBL as 'watching brief only', so of low conservation concern). This habitat type is scattered across the Site, largely in open areas to the south, where this community forms an important part of the mosaic of upland habitats. All examples of these mire communities were species poor and overall, the Development Site is considered to be of local importance for this habitat.
Base-rich flush communities (M10)	National	Local	Base rich flushes contain vegetation communities listed on Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive and is an SBL Priority habitat. The NVC community forms localised flushes often associated with small springs. This habitat has been confirmed to be GWDTE (see Chapter 12: Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology). The type of habitat is inherently scattered and not extensive (0.08ha in three locations), although it forms an important component of the upland habitat mosaic within the Site. As a functional Annex 1 habitat that is relatively uncommon in the wider landscape, however given the limited presence and presence outside a zone of influence the Site is considered to be of local importance for this habitat.
Marshy grassland communities (M23 and M25)	Local	Local	Habitat included within the SBL. M23 form associated with pasture and of low conservation importance as a result of related management. M25 form with dominance of purple moor-grass indicative of habitat degradation. In light of the above, the habitat is considered of less than local Importance.
Acid grassland communities (U4)	Local	Local	Habitat included within the SBL. This is a common and widespread habitat across Scotland. Acid grassland on-site totalled approximately 21ha and forms an important part of the mosaic of upland habitats. In light of the above, the habitat is considered of local Importance.

² NatureScot. Broad Habitat – Dwarf Shrub Heath [Online] Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/broad-habitat-dwarf-shrub-heath> (Accessed 04/10/2023)

Ecological Feature	Importance – Legislation & Policy	Importance – Site	Rationale
Swamp communities (M26, S4, S9, S8, S11)	Local	Local	Habitat included within the Argyll and Bute LBAP and SBL (Included on the SBL as 'watching brief only', so of low conservation concern). Several swamp communities were recorded on the fringes of lochs and lochans. S11 swamp was the commonest swamp community and had the greatest total cover (estimated at approximately 1ha). All communities recorded were outside any zone of influence of the proposed scheme and are considered of local importance to the Site.
Bats (Roosting)	International	Local	All bats in Scotland are classified as European Protected Species (EPS) and receive legal protection under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). They are also listed within the SBL as a species of principal importance for nature conservation. The Site does not support known bat roosting sites, and low potential roost status for the Site was determined for common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, pipistrellus <i>sp.</i>, myotis and brown long-eared bats. From the desk study assessments and in the absence of extensive evidence of bat roosts within the Site, it is likely that the Site is not of importance for bats beyond the local level.
Bats (Commuting and foraging)	International	Local	The Site is formed of coniferous plantation and open upland habitat (formed of wet heath, bog, and flush), with a network of watercourses and lochans distributed throughout. Tree lines and watercourses are likely to serve as linear commuting features and provide opportunities for foraging. The series of lochans present within the Study Area may also give rise to an increase in insect abundance, thus encouraging bats to commute across open habitat and forage over waterbodies. Linear features (particularly the Douglas Water and Abhainn a' Bhealaich watercourse and associated tributaries) may also provide connectivity to more suitable areas of roosting habitat within the wider area. Bat activity surveys identified at least five species of bat (including common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, <i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>, myotis bat species, and brown long-eared bat) utilising the Site. The Site is therefore considered to be of local importance for commuting/ foraging bats of these species.
Otter	European	Local	Otters are legally protected to the highest level by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 (as amended). This species is present within the Development Site although resources are generally limited to foraging and commuting which are important at the local scale. The potential effects on otter as a result of the Proposed Development are considered further due to its EPS status.
Water vole	National	Less than Local	Water vole is legally protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is a priority species in the SBL. Although the current UK population (132,000) is believed to have declined by 50% since 1998, and the species are in decline in both England and Wales, the Scottish population, which is largely genetically and phenotypically distinct, is increasing in size with a stable range. The species is listed on the IUCN Red list and 'near threatened' in Scotland, but 'endangered' elsewhere in the UK. Water vole were not recorded during surveys within the Study Area in 2020 or 2022, however water vole presence was recorded in May 2012 by FLS surveyors at three locations within the Study Area. Water vole

Ecological Feature	Importance – Legislation & Policy	Importance – Site	Rationale
			holes were recorded including the sighting of an animal at two locations on Loch Sidheannach, and also from the River Add, which drains from the Loch Sidheannach in a westerly direction. In light of the above, the species is considered to be of local Importance in the context of the Development Site.
Red squirrel	National	Local	Red squirrel (<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>) and their resting places (dreys) receive full protection under Schedules 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended in Scotland). The red squirrel is also listed as an SBL priority species. The Scottish red squirrel population is estimated as 120,000, approximately 75% of the UK population³. The wider forest area of Eredine & Brenchoillie is one of 19 areas in Scotland identified as a Red Squirrel Stronghold, and this designation emphasises management to benefit this species. No signs or sightings of red squirrel were recorded within the site during the Extended Phase 1 habitat survey and NVC survey in 2020. However, single record of red squirrel was recorded by the forestry track/main access route within the Development Site in 2020 and a single record was received from ABReC relating to red squirrel between years 2010 and 2020. The Site is extensively situated within continuous stands of sitka spruce, which is considered sub-optimal for this species. Due to the low suitability offered by sitka spruce plantation for red squirrels, the apparently low density of the population within and around the Development Site (based on surveys and desk study), this species is considered to be of local importance in the context of the Development Site
Badger	Local	Local	Legally protected species under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004). Badger is a common and widespread species whose protection is owing to past persecution rather than current rarity. Although still widespread within Argyll & Bute, populations are understood to be less dense than other parts of the country, largely due to the prevalence of upland and peatland habitats the species least favoured habitat. The species is listed on the IUCN Red list as of 'Least Concern' in mainland UK. The majority of the Development Site provides limited foraging and sett-building habitat however, active badger setts were recorded within the Study Area within drier areas of upland habitat. The Development Site has therefore been assessed as local importance for badger.
Pine marten	National	Local	Pine marten (<i>Martes martes</i>) is legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as Amended in Scotland). Pine marten is also a priority species in the SBL. Although the status of the species in England and Wales is poor, in Scotland the status of the species is favourable and can now be found in all regions with the exception of the central belt and the south-east coast⁴. The species is listed on the IUCN Red list and 'Least Concern' in Scotland, but 'Critically Endangered' elsewhere in the mainland UK. Scotland's

³ <https://www.nature.scot/plants-animals-and-fungi/mammals/land-mammals/red-squirrel>

⁴ <https://www.nature.scot/plants-animals-and-fungi/mammals/land-mammals/pine-marten#:~:text=Pine%20martens%20are%20once%20again,Borders%20and%20Dumfries%20and%20Galloway.>

Ecological Feature	Importance – Legislation & Policy	Importance – Site	Rationale
			population is estimated at 3,700 adult pine martens, which represent approximately 99% of the known UK population. Pine marten scat was recorded on two occasions during walkover surveys, evidence of this species was also identified through FLS records. The Development Site is considered to be of local importance to this species.
Common toad	National	Local	Common toad is listed on the SBL and is a Argyll & Bute LBAP species. Amphibian populations within the wider Study Area are widespread and common species across the region. The Site has been evaluated as being of local importance for common toad, common frog and palmate newt.
Common frog	Local	Local	
Palmate newt	Local	Local	
Reptiles (common lizard, slow worm and adder)	National	Local	Common lizard was recorded on occasion during field surveys and suitable habitat was identified on-site. This species is relatively common and widespread and given the abundance of similar habitat in the surrounding area, the Site is considered of local value for this species. Slow worm is described as being fairly common across Scotland. Limited suitable habitat was recorded across the Site, although suitable habitat is present in the wider area. On this basis the species is also considered of local value to the Site. Adder is also widespread across Scotland. The Site is also considered to be of local value for this species.
Freshwater fish – salmonids	National	Local	Fish species are afforded protection under one or more of the following conservation legislative frameworks; Conservation (Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended), Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act (Consolidation) (Scotland) 2003, Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2007, and Surface Waters (Fishlife) (Classification) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2007. Suitable salmonid habitat including suitable spawning habitat was recorded in the vicinity of the Proposed Development. Correspondence with the Argyll Fisheries Trust highlights that the lower reaches of Loch Awe and Loch Fyne (downstream of the site) are accessible to and used by Atlantic salmon for spawning. However, no salmon were recorded during the surveys, due to the presence of impassible natural barriers downstream of the electric-fishing sites. Brown trout were the only species recorded during electric fishing surveys, with only resident population considered likely due to the presence of downstream barriers. The Development Site has therefore been evaluated as being of less than local importance for migratory fish but considered to be of local importance for brown trout.
Freshwater pearl mussel	National	Less than Local	Freshwater pearl mussel is protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended in Scotland). It is also listed on Annexes II and V of the EC Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) (as referenced in The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations, 1994 – annexes in the Habitats

Ecological Feature	Importance – Legislation & Policy	Importance – Site	Rationale
			Directive are correct as at 31/12/2020; thereafter any changes would need to be made/ agreed by the Scottish Government) and Appendix III of the Bern Convention. The nearest known population is the River Add is >4km downstream of Loch Sidheannach, which drains to the south-west outside the Development Site. No freshwater pearl mussel have been recorded within the Development Site (by FLS Environment team, or baseline surveys conducted in 2020) and in light of the fact that salmon were found to be absent due to impassible natural barriers downstream of the electric-fishing sites, Freshwater pearl mussel are unlikely to be present within the Site, which is considered to be of less than local value for this species.

Scoping of Ecological Features of Local or Above Importance and those Receiving Legal Protection are considered further in Table 1.2, where the following is provided:

- A description of the potential environmental change and associated effect (refer to **Section 10.7.9 – 10.7.14, Chapter 10: Ecology**);
- A description of the zone of influence for each ecological feature (refer to **Table 10.8, Chapter 10: Ecology**);
- Justification of the decision to scope in or out each ecological feature based on the likely scale of the potential effect, general working measures (i.e. those presented within **Table 10.9, Chapter 10: Ecology**) that negate the effect and relevant information on the features status within the local, county, regional, national or international context where that is available.

Table 1.2 Scoping of Ecological Features of Local or Above Importance and those Receiving Legal Protection

Ecological Feature	Environmental Change and potential effect	Zone of Influence	Scoped IN or OUT of the Assessment	Justification
Eredine and Brenchoillie Red Squirrel Stronghold	Direct loss and temporary damage to terrestrial habitats (construction, operation, decommissioning).	Within construction / maintenance / decommissioning areas	OUT	The Proposed Development is almost entirely situated within continuous stands of sitka spruce, which is considered sub-optimal for this species, and avoids both existing stands of mixed conifer and or broadleaf woodland found to the north of the Development Site. The northern extents of the Abhainn a' Bhealaich and the southerly extent of the Douglas Water, which provide higher quality habitat resource for red squirrels, will also be unaffected. Notwithstanding this, potential effects on red squirrel are considered.
Ancient Woodland	Direct loss and temporary damage to terrestrial habitats	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	Ancient woodland is only recorded within the far extents of the Abhainn a' Bhealaich and the southerly extent of the Douglas Water and a small inclusion of woodland at Brenachoille, however it is absent from within the Proposed Development areas. A small section of ancient woodland is present in proximity to the existing forestry track at the south east extent of the Development Site (which provides access to the An Suidhe substation) immediately north of the A83. However, the woodland is situated outside any construction or maintenance zones. This feature is therefore scoped out of further assessment.
Blanket bog communities (M1, M17, M18, M19)	Direct loss and temporary damage to terrestrial habitats	Within construction/ maintenance areas	IN	Blanket bog is listed as an Annex I habitat (as referenced in The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations, 1994 – annexes in the Habitats Directive). It is also listed within the SBL and Argyll & Bute LBAP. As such, it is considered a habitat of principal importance for biodiversity conservation. Approximately 16% of the Study Area is comprised of blanket bog, formed of M17, M18, M19 and M20 communities. Bog pools (M1) were also recorded within blanket bog habitat throughout the Site. Th Site is considered to support a blanket bog resource of Local and County importance (M17 community), Land take and land use during construction may lead to the loss or disturbance of this habitat within a 10m Zone of Influence
Wet modified bog (M20, M25)	Indirect disturbance and changes to composition of plant communities resulting from hydrological change	10 m beyond construction/ maintenance areas		

Ecological Feature	Environmental Change and potential effect	Zone of Influence	Scoped IN or OUT of the Assessment	Justification
				(Zol) of the construction zone. This habitat has therefore been considered for further assessment.
Wet dwarf-shrub heath communities (M15b, c, d)	Direct loss and temporary damage to terrestrial habitats	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	The NVC community M15 is classified as potentially moderately groundwater dependant, dependent on its hydrogeological setting, and may therefore be sensitive to damage during construction works within a 250m Zol. However, based on the assessment provided in Chapter 12: Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology, no wet heath communities within the Site were identified as actually being groundwater dependent. Construction and operational habitat losses will cause a direct adverse impact, but insufficient to affect the integrity of wet dwarf shrub heath communities. The magnitude of construction and operational impacts on habitats are therefore assessed as likely to be Low for wet heath, which is the most widespread habitat likely to be affected and consequently no significant effects would be predicted. This feature is therefore scoped out of further assessment.
	Indirect disturbance and changes to composition of plant communities resulting from hydrological change	10 m beyond construction/ maintenance areas		
Dry dwarf-shrub heath (H12) and Montane heath (H14) communities	Direct loss and temporary damage to terrestrial habitats	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	Dry dwarf shrub heath is listed as an Annex I habitat (as referenced in The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations, 1994). It is also listed within the SBL and Argyll & Bute LBAP. As such, it is considered a habitat of principal importance for biodiversity conservation. Dry dwarf shrub heath exists in patches throughout the Study Area. Communities were comprised of heather dominated H12 on dry ground, hillocks, and hillslopes, with a small area of montane heath H14 on a single hill summit at higher altitude. All dwarf shrub heath communities are recorded outside any zone of influence. Therefore, this feature is therefore scoped out of further assessment.
	Indirect disturbance and changes to composition of plant communities resulting from hydrological change	10 m beyond construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	
Acid flush (M6, M29)	Direct loss and temporary damage to terrestrial habitats	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	NVC communities (M6 and M29) are classified as potentially highly groundwater dependent, which may be

Ecological Feature	Environmental Change and potential effect	Zone of Influence	Scoped IN or OUT of the Assessment	Justification
	Indirect disturbance and changes to composition of plant communities resulting from hydrological change	10 m beyond construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	sensitive to damage during construction works within a 250m Zol. However, based on the assessment provided in Chapter 12: Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology, no acid flush communities within the Site were identified as actually being groundwater dependent. Any potential temporary changes to the local hydrology regime would be mitigated by the adoption of standard mitigation practices during construction (see Table 10.9 of the Chapter 10 Ecology) and it is considered that any potential change in the composition of the vegetation would not have a significant effect on the conservation status of these communities. Potential effects on M6 and M29 acid flush have therefore been scoped out of further assessment.
Base-rich flush	Direct loss and temporary damage to terrestrial habitats	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	NVC communities (M10) are classified as potentially highly groundwater dependent, which may be sensitive to damage during construction works within a 250m Zol. However, based on the assessment provided in Chapter 12: Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology, no base rich flush communities were recorded within a zone of influence. This feature is therefore scoped out of further assessment.
	Indirect disturbance and changes to composition of plant communities resulting from hydrological change	10 m beyond construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	
Marshy grassland communities (M23a/b and M25a/b)	Direct loss and temporary damage to terrestrial habitats	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	NVC communities M23 and M25 are classified as potentially high and moderately groundwater dependant respectively, depending on the hydrogeological setting, and may therefore be sensitive to damage during construction works within a 250m Zol. However, based on the assessment provided in Chapter 12: Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology, no marshy grassland communities within the Site were identified as actually being groundwater dependent. Any potential temporary changes to the local hydrology regime may cause some change in the composition of vegetation but this would not have a significant effect on the conservation status of these communities. Potential effects on M23/M25 marshy grassland plant communities have therefore been scoped out of further assessment.
	Indirect disturbance and changes to composition of plant communities resulting from hydrological change	10 m beyond construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	

Ecological Feature	Environmental Change and potential effect	Zone of Influence	Scoped IN or OUT of the Assessment	Justification
Swamp communities (M26, S4, S9, S8, S11)	Direct loss and temporary damage to terrestrial habitats	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	A number of discrete areas of emergent vegetation were recorded in areas of open, standing water habitat. No areas of open water were identified within a zone of influence and potential effects on these communities have therefore been scoped out of further assessment.
	Indirect disturbance and changes to composition of plant communities resulting from hydrological change	10 m beyond construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	
Bats (roosting)	Direct effect in the form of injury/ mortality resulting from damage/disturbance to roosts during the construction phase	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	No bat roosts were identified within the Development Site and conifer (sitka spruce) plantation woodland generally offers few roosting opportunities. Bats are unlikely to be impacted through the direct loss of bat roosts, or via direct harm or indirect disturbance to roosts as a result of felling activities and the associated noise and vibration. Felling during the construction of the Proposed Development may result in the removal of a very small number of unrecorded, isolated features with bat roost potential. However, such losses of roosting habitat would result in a change of very low magnitude
	Indirect effect in the form of disturbance and/ or displacement of roosting bats resulting from elevated levels of activity during construction phase	Up to 50m from construction activities.	OUT	
Bats (Commuting and foraging)	Loss or damage to commuting and foraging habitat	Within the turbine envelope	IN	Bat activity surveys carried out during 2020 identified at least five species/groups of bat (including common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, <i>Pipistrellus sp.</i> , Myotis bat species, and brown long-eared bat) that utilise the Site. The highest levels of activity were recorded at static detector units positioned close to watercourses within the Site. Based on levels of activity recorded, the Site is considered to support a locally important population of bat species. Ecobat output data indicated that the Site may pose a moderate to high collision risk for common pipistrelle and a low to moderate collision risk for soprano pipistrelle bats.
	Direct effect in the form of injury/ mortality from collision with turbines during the operational phase.	Within the turbine envelope	IN	
Otter	Damage to resting sites and disturbance to individuals using resting sites due to elevated levels of disturbance (such as	Non-breeding resting sites: 30m from the proposed construction/ maintenance/	IN	Otter is a European protected species (EPS) and an SBL Priority species. The Proposed Development footprint is within the home range of otters and therefore construction activity may give rise to the disturbance to the local otter

Ecological Feature	Environmental Change and potential effect	Zone of Influence	Scoped IN or OUT of the Assessment	Justification
	increased, lighting and human disturbance) during construction/operation and decommissioning related works.	decommissioning area (based on NatureScot protected species advice)		population and there may be impacts to their prey species – either from the placement of infrastructure or due to noise disturbance.
		Up to 200m beyond construction/ maintenance/ decommissioning area (based on SNH protected species advice)	IN	The Proposed Development has the potential to lead to temporary habitat severance and fragmentation of territories during construction or decommissioning phases, particularly during the construction of water crossings and could lead to could lead to an increase in mortality as a result of traffic collision during construction or decommissioning phases.
	Temporary severance of otter habitats and commuting routes	Within the construction/ maintenance/ decommissioning area	IN	Given the level of legal protection otter receive, their presence within the Proposed Development area and the potential for effects on this species up to 30 m from the proposed development works, this species requires further assessment within this chapter.
	Direct mortality due to construction related activities	Within the construction/ maintenance/ decommissioning area	IN	
	Reduction in habitat quality as a result of hydrological connectivity and pollution incidents and impacts on prey.	Up to 10 km downstream for hydrological connectivity.	IN	
Water vole	Direct mortality due to construction related activities	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	No water vole field signs were identified within the Study Area during surveys in 2020 and 2022. However, historical presence from 2012 identified water vole presence at Loch Sidheannach and further west on a tributary of the River Add. Whilst no colonies were recorded within the Proposed Development footprint, water vole populations are highly dynamic with the potential for individual water voles to establish or abandon territories in relatively short spaces of time. Inclusion of good practice protection measures within a Species Protection Plan (SPP) (See Table 10.9, Chapter
	Disturbance/ displacement of water vole during construction and operation		OUT	
	Temporary and/or permanent severance of water vole habitat and commuting routes		OUT	

Ecological Feature	Environmental Change and potential effect	Zone of Influence	Scoped IN or OUT of the Assessment	Justification
	Reduction in habitat quality due to diffuse pollution during construction	River catchments that intersect the Site.	OUT	10: Ecology) and pre-construction surveys will ensure avoidance of any significant impacts to these species.
Red squirrel	Direct mortality as a result of construction related activities	Drey ~30m from construction/ maintenance area	IN	The Site is located within the wider Eredine & Brenchoillie red squirrel stronghold. Whilst the Site itself supports primarily lower quality sitka spruce plantation, suitable habitat for squirrel foraging and drey creation is present within stands of mature coniferous and mixed woodland distributed throughout the Study Area. There is potential for disturbance and/ or displacement of squirrel populations exists during the construction phase due to elevated levels of noise, vibration, lighting and human presence. There is also potential for squirrel mortality and direct damage to resting places within proposed felling areas during the construction phase.
Badger	Direct damage to setts and increased disturbance to due to elevated levels of noise, lighting, and human presence during construction/ operation related works.	Sett ~30m from construction/ maintenance area	OUT	While this species is highly mobile and setting habitat is available, the foraging resource within the Site is considered sub-optimal. Inclusion of badger protection measures within a Site Species Protection Plan (SPP) (See Table 10.9, Chapter 10: Ecology) will cover the potential for future presence. Though there is potential for their presence in the future, based on the survey results and habitat assessment, badger has been scoped out of further assessment.
Pine marten	Direct mortality as a result of construction related activities	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	Two records of pine marten scat were recorded indicating presence within the Study Area. However, the commercial forestry habitat is not considered a high-value resource for pine marten as it lacks the structural complexity favoured by this species, which is present in woodland habitat outside the Development Site; and the more open, predominantly wet heath and boggier landscapes which dominate the rest of the Study Area provide very limited suitable habitat for foraging, commuting or dens. The inclusion of standard protection measures within a Site Species Protection Plan (SPP) will address potential for future presence of this species. Though there is potential for their presence in the future albeit in low density, based

Ecological Feature	Environmental Change and potential effect	Zone of Influence	Scoped IN or OUT of the Assessment	Justification
				on the survey results and habitat assessment, this species is scoped out of further assessment.
Reptiles (common lizard, slow worm and adder)	Direct injury/ mortality as a result of construction related activities	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	Given the widespread presence of heath habitat throughout the Study Area (which may serve as suitable reptile habitat) it is considered that populations of adder, slow worm and common lizard could occur within working areas. Inclusion of good practice protection measures within a Species Protection Plan (SPP) and pre-construction surveys will ensure avoidance of any significant impacts to these species. Reptiles are therefore scoped out of further assessment.
	Disturbance/ displacement during construction		OUT	
Amphibians	Direct injury/ mortality as a result of construction related activities	Within construction/ maintenance areas	OUT	Given the widespread presence of suitable habitat throughout the Study Area (which may serve as suitable amphibian habitat) it is considered that populations of common frog, common toad and palmate newt could occur within working areas. Inclusion of good practice protection measures within a Species Protection Plan (SPP) and pre-construction surveys will ensure avoidance of any significant impacts to these species. Amphibians are therefore scoped out of further assessment.
	Disturbance/ displacement during construction		OUT	
Brown trout / Atlantic Salmon	Deterioration in fish populations due to: loss of, or damage to, degradation of fish habitats due to pollution/siltation during construction.	River catchments that intersect the Site	OUT	No migratory salmonids (sea trout or Atlantic salmon) are known to be present within the Site boundary. However, brown trout (non-migratory salmonids) are likely to be present in all watercourses. Given that brown trout are widespread and are not currently considered to be in decline throughout much of their normal range, this species has been scoped out of further assessment.

Ecological Feature	Environmental Change and potential effect	Zone of Influence	Scoped IN or OUT of the Assessment	Justification
Freshwater pearl mussel	Indirect effects due to effects on host fish species (salmonids) as set out above; and degradation of habitats due to pollution/siltation.	River catchments that intersect the Development Site	OUT	This species has not been recorded within the Site and nearest records indicate that they are present >4km downstream the River Add. The source of the River Add is Loch Sidheannach, which drains outside the Development Site to the south west. The inclusion of standard protection measures are detailed in Table 10.9 (Chapter 10) and additional measures to minimise the risk of pollution sediment release to watercourses are set out in detail in Chapter 12: Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology. Pollution prevention measures would be detailed within the CEMP and would be implemented as part of the CAR licensing requirements. With the inclusion of these measures, this species has been scoped out of further assessment.

