

Appendix 11A

Ornithology Desk Study



RWE Renewables UK Limited

Eredine Wind Farm

Ornithology Desk Study



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1.1 WSP UK Ltd (WSP) was commissioned by RWE Renewables UK Limited to provide ecological consultancy services in relation to the proposed Eredine Wind Farm, herein after referred to as 'the Site'.
- 1.1.1.2 This report provides information relating to a desk-based ornithology study conducted in August 2023. This was necessary to update desk study work carried out to define the scope of field surveys in 2019. Details of the Proposed Development and the wider Development Site are provided, followed by a description of methods employed to obtain desk study information, presentation of results, and a summary of findings.
- 1.1.1.3 The results of the desk-based study provide an insight into the nature conservation interest of the Development Site and surroundings. It can be used to inform the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report.

1.2 Site Context

- 1.2.1.1 The Development Site is positioned on land managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), located approximately 4.5km west of Inveraray and approximately 17km to the north-east of Lochgilphead, within Argyll and Bute Council district (centred at coordinates (E)199418, (N) 704212).
- 1.2.1.2 The Development Site is situated within an area of land positioned between two large bodies of open water – Loch Awe to the north-west, and Loch Fyne to the south-east. Numerous fresh water lochans and ponds are present within the Site which are drained by a network of watercourses. Those to the north are drained by the Abhainn a' Bhealaich and associated tributaries (which eventually flow into Loch Awe) while those to the north-east are drained by and Douglas Water and those to the south are drained by the Abhainn Dubhann and Leacann Water (all of which flow into Loch Fyne). The far south-west of the Site is drained by the River Add. Habitats within the Site are comprised primarily of coniferous plantation woodland, with open upland habitat within the north-west and also within the south of the Site, stretching from north-east to south-west.
- 1.2.1.3 The elevation of the Site ranges from approximately 100 metres (m) Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at the Site entrance (OS Grid reference: NN 04451 04183), to 482m at Beinn Dearg (OS Grid reference: NN 02314 04934).

1.3 Proposed Development

- 1.3.1.1 The Proposed Development will include 22 turbines up to 200m to blade tip and associated infrastructure, including access tracks, control building and substation. Temporary development areas will also be required to facilitate a construction compound, concrete batching plant, and potential borrow pits.

2. Methodology

- 2.1.1.1 The desk-based study was carried out by WSP in August 2023, in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) best practice guidelines¹. Information was collected regarding statutory and non-statutory sites designated for nature conservation purposes, and protected or notable species, including those on the Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL)², Birds of Conservation Concern Red List³, and Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan⁴. The desk study features of interest are summarised in **Table 2.1** below.

Table 2.1 Statutory and non-statutory sites of nature conservation value, protected and notable species

Designation	Description
Statutory nature conservation sites	Sites of international importance of relevance to this ornithological study include designated Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Wetlands of International Importance (designated under the Ramsar Convention 1971 and more commonly known as Ramsar sites). Sites of national importance are designated as National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), with local sites designated as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). These statutory sites are relevant to the ornithological study when birds are a notified feature.
Non-Statutory nature conservation sites	These include Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCSSs) such as: Listed Wildlife Sites (LWSSs) and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). Non-statutory conservation sites also include Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) reserves such as Provisional Wildlife Sites. These non-statutory sites, which are designated due to the presence of notable species or important habitats, broadly constitute the most important wildlife sites that do not reach the criteria required for SSSI designation. These non-statutory sites are relevant to the ornithological study when birds are a notified feature.
Protected species	All wild bird species in the UK receive some form of legal protection. However, for the purposes of this study, 'protected species' refers to species included on Schedule 1 and/or 1A of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended).

¹ CIEEM, (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

² The Scottish Biodiversity List is a list of plants, animals and habitats that Scottish Ministers consider to be of principal importance to biological conservation. <https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/16118/Biodiversitylist/SBL>

³ Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D., and Win I. (2021). 'The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain'. British Birds 114: 723-747. Available online at <https://britishbirds.co.uk/content/status-our-bird-populations>

⁴ The Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan was first published in 2001 following guidance set out by government. It was refreshed under the Ecosystem Approach in 2010 and is currently being re-drafted as an interim refresh to align it with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2020. The 2010 -2015 LBAP is available at: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Unknown/AandB%20BAP%20Draft.pdf>

Designation	Description
Priority and notable species	These include Red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) together with bird species listed on the Scottish Biodiversity List, in Local Biodiversity Action Plans, and/or which are of some other conservation interest based on their status nationally, regionally or locally.

2.1.1.2 **Table 2.2** lists the organisations and other sources that have supplied desk study data, together with the nature of that data. Search areas are also provided. For designated sites, only those designated for birds were selected.

Table 2.2 Sources and search areas for desk study data

Source	Summary of information provided
Magic.gov.uk	Locations of statutory and non-statutory designated sites. International sites were sought within 20km of the Development Site, national sites within 10km, and local sites within 2km.
NatureScot interactive map facility at https://sitelink.nature.scot/home	Access to data and information on key protected areas across Scotland.
RSPB	All protected and notable bird species data within 2km of the Development Site, and eagle species data out to 6km.
Scottish Raptor Study Group (RSG) / Argyll RSG	All Annex I and Schedule 1 raptor/owl species data within 2km of the Development Site, and eagle species data out to 6km. Annual publications detailing population and productivity estimates based on monitored populations for raptor species at the national and regional level.
An Suidhe Wind Farm Planning Condition No. 19- Bird Surveys 2020, Bird Surveys 2021 and Bird Surveys 2022 reports	Breeding bird surveys undertaken to monitor the adjacent An Suidhe Wind Farm, together with contextual material regarding this consented wind farm.

2.1.1.3 Analysis of species data focused only on records made within the last ten years as older records may give an inaccurate picture of the current ecological interest within the Development Site and the surrounding area.

3. Results

3.1 Nature Conservation Designations

International designated sites

3.1.1.1 The following two internationally designated statutory nature conservation sites are present within 20km of the Development Site:

- Glen Fyne and Glen Etive SPA (~10 km north-east of the Development Site), which is designated for:
 - ▶ golden eagle (19 active territories).
- Knapdale Lochs SPA (~18km south-west of the Development Site), which is designated for:
 - ▶ black-throated diver (four breeding pairs).

3.1.1.2 The locations of these are displayed in EIA Report **Figure 11.1**.

National designated sites

12.1.1 No statutory nature conservation sites designated for ornithology under national conventions were recorded within 10km of the Development Site boundary.

Non-statutory designated sites

3.1.1.3 The only non-statutory designated sites identified within 2km of the Development Site boundary comprise ancient woodland sites. No non-statutory designated sites selected for bird interest were identified.

Legally protected and notable species

3.1.1.4 Records obtained from the RSPB and Argyll RSG relating to legally protected and/or notable birds within 2km of the Development Site boundary are presented in **Table 3.1** (only records within the last 10 years have been included).

Table 3.1 Records of legally protected/notable species obtained (2013 – 2023)

Species	Number of records	Year of most recent record	Conservation designation*
Black grouse <i>Lyrurus tetrix</i>	41**	2022	SBL, BoCC5 Red List, AB LBAP
White-tailed eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicollis</i>	1	2015	Annex 1 Birds Directive, WCA Schedule 1/1A, SBL, BoCC5 Amber List, AB LBAP
Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	2	2022	SBL, BoCC5 Red List, AB LBAP

*WCA – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); SBL – Scottish Biodiversity List; BOCC5 – Birds of Conservation Concern 5; AB LBAP – Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan;

** – includes 18 records of lekking displays from the Site, centred at nine locations.

3.1.1.5 In addition to data obtained from the RSPB and RSGs, data relating to legally protected/priority species from the An Suidhe Wind Farm reports is presented in **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2 Records of legally protected/notable species (An Suidhe Wind Farm, 2013 – 2021)

Species	Number of records	Details	Conservation designation*
Black grouse	1	Mentioned as a key bird interest at An Suidhe Wind Farm and in the surrounding uplands.	SBL, BoCC5 Red List, AB LBAP
Black-throated diver <i>Gavia arctica</i>	16**	Four to five successful breeding attempts reported between 2014 and 2021. Five unsuccessful breeding attempts (2013, 2015-17, 2022). One pair in flight in June 2022.	Annex 1 Birds Directive, Schedule 1, SBL, BOCC5 Amber List, AB LBAP
Red-throated diver <i>Gavia stellata</i>	22**	Successful breeding attempt by a pair in 2016, 2017 and 2022. Five to seven unsuccessful breeding attempts between 2014 and 2021. Occasional flights, individuals and pairs seen between 2015 and 2021.	Annex 1 Birds Directive, Schedule 1, SBL, AB LBAP
Golden eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	1	Mentioned as a key bird interest at An Suidhe Wind Farm and in the surrounding uplands.	Annex 1 Birds Directive, Schedule 1/1A, SBL, AB LBAP
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	1	Mentioned as a key bird interest at An Suidhe Wind Farm and in the surrounding uplands.	Annex 1 Birds Directive, Schedule 1, SBL, AB LBAP
Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	1	Mentioned as a key bird interest at An Suidhe Wind Farm and in the surrounding uplands.	Annex 1 Birds Directive, SBL, AB LBAP

*WCA –Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); SBL – Scottish Biodiversity List; BOCC5 – Birds of Conservation Concern 5; AB LBAP – Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan;

** – includes breeding records from the Site.

3.1.1.6 Information regarding golden eagle nest sites and territories is provided in Confidential **Appendices 11D** (Ornithological Surveys Final Report) and **11F** (Golden Eagle Territory Modelling Report).

4. Summary

4.1.1.1 This desk-based ornithological study has been carried out to identify any potential ornithological constraints to the proposed Eredine Wind Farm. A summary of the findings is provided below:

- Two internationally designated sites have been identified within 20km of the Development Site. Glen Fyne and Glen Etive SPA is designated for territory-holding golden eagle, while Knapdale Lochs SPA is designated for breeding black-throated diver.
- No nationally or locally designated statutory sites selected for bird interest were identified within 10km of the Development Site boundary. No non-statutory sites selected for bird interest were identified within 2km of the Development Site boundary.
- Based on ecological data provided by RSPB, the local Raptor Study Group and reports from the adjacent An Suidhe Wind Farm, there is potential that white-tailed eagle, golden eagle, osprey and golden plover may occur at or within the vicinity of the Development Site.
- Black grouse, black-throated diver and red-throated diver are known to breed within the Development Site.

