

Coille Beith Wind Farm

Technical Appendix 6.2: Protected Terrestrial Mammals

June 2025



Contents

| | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| 1. | Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 | Overview | 1 |
| 2. | Methodology | 1 |
| 2.1 | Desk Study | 1 |
| 2.2 | Field Surveys | 2 |
| 3. | Results | 3 |
| 3.1 | Desk Study | 3 |
| 3.2 | Field Surveys | 4 |
| | Annex 1 – Scientific Names | 1 |

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This Technical Appendix has been prepared to accompany **Chapter 6** (EIA Report Volume 2) and presents detailed methodologies and the results of desk study and field surveys completed to establish baseline conditions with regards to protected and notable faunal species to inform the design and assessment of the Proposed Development. Note, this excludes bats and fisheries which are considered separately in **Technical Appendix 6.3** and **Technical Appendix 6.4** (EIA Report Volume 4), respectively.
- 1.1.2 It should be read with reference to the following Figures, which are included within **Volume 3a** of the EIA Report:
- **Figure 6.1a: Statutory Designated Sites for Nature Conservation Ecological Interest;** and
 - **Figure 6.5: Protected Terrestrial Mammal Survey Plan and Results.**
- 1.1.3 The objective of the baseline studies was to establish the presence and spatial distribution of protected and notable faunal species which may be impacted by the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.4 Information pertaining to the locations of sensitive terrestrial mammal species and which are considered confidential are provided in **Confidential Technical Appendix 6.6** and **Confidential Figure 6.9: Protected Terrestrial Mammal Survey Plan and Results (Sensitive)** (EIA Report Volume 5).
- 1.1.5 Such information will not be made publicly available but will be provided to The Highland Council (THC) and NatureScot, and any other relevant consultees.
- 1.1.6 Only common species names are referred to within the main text of this Technical Appendix. Scientific names for all species referenced are supplied in **Annex 1**.

2. Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 The desk study has included a review of the following key sources, as summarised in **Table 2.1**.
- 2.1.2 Additional peer reviewed literature and industry guidance has also been reviewed and is referred to where relevant.

Table 2.1 – Desk Study Key Sources and Information Sought

| Key Source - incl. Date | Information Sought | Search Area |
|--|---|--|
| NatureScot's Sitelink (2025) ¹ | Proximity to statutory designated sites, with ecological interests. | Within 10 km of the Site (minus access routes) (as shown on Figure 6.1 , EIA Report Volume 3a). |
| Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels website ² | Red squirrel records. | Within 2 km of the Site (minus access routes). |
| NatureScot's Open Data Geoportal ³ | Proximity to Wildcat Priority Areas. | Within 5 km of the Site (minus access routes). |
| Highland Biological Recording Group (HBRG) – March 2025 | Existing records of protected species. Non-statutory designated sites. | Within 2 km of the Site (minus access routes). |
| Publicly available documentation for the consented Meall Buidhe Wind Farm (THC Ref: 20/02659/FUL). | Records of protected and notable species. | N/A |

¹ <https://sitelink.nature.scot/home>

² <https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/>

³ <https://opendata.nature.scot/datasets/wildcat-priority-areas/explore?location=57.609178%2C-4.583533%2C9.38>

2.2 Field Surveys

2.2.1 Detailed information regarding the presence or likely presence of protected and notable faunal species in proximity to the Proposed Development has been derived through field survey for the following species:

- Red squirrel;
- Water vole;
- Badger;
- Otter;
- Wildcat; and
- Pine marten.

2.2.2 The 'Mammal Study Area', is shown on **Figure 6.5** (EIA Report Volume 3a). This has comprised all suitable habitats for the target species within the Site (minus the western access route). The survey comprised an assessment of habitat suitability for terrestrial mammals and a systematic search of habitat features, to record the location and distribution of field signs identifying the presence and/or potential presence of the targeted protected terrestrial mammal species as summarised in **Table 2.2**.

2.2.3 The survey methodology followed industry standard guidance for the following species: red squirrel (Cresswell *et al.* (2012)⁴ and NatureScot (2024a)⁵; water vole (Cresswell *et al.* (2012)⁴, Dean *et al.* (2016)⁶, NatureScot (2024b)⁷; badger (Harris *et al.* (1989)⁸, NatureScot (SNH, 2018)⁹ and NatureScot (2024c)¹⁰; otter (Chanin (2003)¹¹, Cresswell *et al.* (2012)⁴ and NatureScot (2024d)¹²; wildcat (Cresswell *et al.* (2012)⁴ and NatureScot (2024e)¹³ and pine marten (Cresswell *et al.* (2012)⁴ and NatureScot (2024f)¹⁴). This meant that the species-specific survey buffers were incorporated from the Proposed Development, as per (NatureScot, 2024a- 2024f)^{5,7,10,12,13,14}. These are out to at least 50 m for red squirrel and water vole, 100 m for badger, 200 m for otter, 250 m for pine marten, and 500 m for Scottish wildcat, as access allowed.

Table 2.2 – Terrestrial Mammal Field Survey Methodology Summary

| Species | Survey Methodology Summary |
|--------------|---|
| Red squirrel | Walkover search of suitable habitats for feeding remains and potential dreys. |
| Water vole | Walkover search of suitable habitats for potential burrows, runs, footprints, feeding stations and feeding remains, droppings, and latrines. |
| Badger | Walkover search of suitable habitat for signs of badgers, such as footprints, hair, snuffle holes, dung pits/latrines, and sett entrances. Main setts are considered to be the most important sett within the territory of a badger group or clan, and are where breeding takes place. They tend to be large, with five or more entrances and large spoil heaps and to be used throughout the year. Annexe setts also have many well used entrances, and tend to be 50-150 m from the main sett, connected by well-worn paths, but may not be used all year round. Subsidiary setts are not usually connected to the main sett by obvious paths, and may have any number of entrances. Outlier setts tend to have only one or two holes and are used occasionally. There may be no obvious path to an outlier sett |
| Otter | Walkover search of suitable habitat for spraints, paw prints, paths, slides, food remains, and resting places (above-ground couches and underground holts), especially holts with the potential to be used for breeding. |
| Wildcat | Walkover search of suitable habitat for scats, paw prints, food remains, dens and places used for breeding and/or shelter. |
| Pine marten | Walkover search of suitable habitats for scats and potential den sites. |

2.2.4 The survey of the Mammal Study Area was undertaken in June and August 2021, on the following dates:

- 2nd, 3rd and 4th June 2021; and
- 17th and 18th August 2021.

2.2.5 In addition, an extended Phase 1 Habitat survey was carried out on 20th September 2021 which covered the Mammal Study Areas, during which signs of (or potential for) protected terrestrial mammals were also searched for.

⁴ Cresswell, W. J., Birks, J. D. S., Dean, M., Pacheco, M., Trehwella, W. J., Wells, D. and Wray, S. (2012). UK BAP Mammals Interim Guidance for Survey Methodologies. Impact Assessment and Mitigations. The Mammal Society, Southampton.

⁵ NatureScot (2024a). Standing Advice for Planning Consultations – Protected Species: Red squirrel. NatureScot, Inverness.

⁶ Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrew, R. (2016). The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series). Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. The Mammal Society, London.

⁷ NatureScot (2024b). Standing Advice for Planning Consultations – Protected Species: Water Vole. NatureScot, Inverness.

⁸ Harris S., Cresswell P. and Jefferies D. (1989). Surveying Badgers. Mammal Society. English Nature, Peterborough.

⁹ SNH (2018) Best Practice Badger Survey Guidance Note. SNH, Inverness.

¹⁰ NatureScot (2024c). Standing Advice for Planning Consultations – Protected Species: Badger. NatureScot, Inverness.

¹¹ Chanin, P. (2003). Monitoring the otter *Lutra lutra*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 10, English Nature, Peterborough.

¹² NatureScot (2024d). Standing Advice for Planning Consultations – Protected Species: Otter. NatureScot, Inverness.

¹³ NatureScot (2024e) Standing Advice for Planning Consultations – Protected Species: Wildcat. NatureScot, Inverness.

¹⁴ NatureScot (2024f). Standing Advice for Planning Consultations – Protected Species: Pine marten. NatureScot, Inverness.

- 2.2.6 A Peatland Condition Assessment (PCA) survey was also undertaken on the 1st and 2nd July 2024, which included a validation of habitats and species considered likely to be present following the 2021 surveys. The PCA also included a search for any protected terrestrial mammal signs.
- 2.2.7 On 8th and 9th April 2025, an updated terrestrial mammal survey of the Mammal Study Area was undertaken.
- 2.2.8 On 19th and 20th May 2025, during the habitat surveys of the western access route within the Site (see **Technical Appendix 6.1** (EIA Report Volume 4)) evidence of (or potential for) protected terrestrial mammals were searched for.
- 2.2.9 All surveys were undertaken in conditions conducive to the survey of terrestrial mammals, including normal flow conditions of on-site watercourses. Watercourses were not surveyed after periods of heavy rain, which may have washed field evidence away.

Personnel

- 2.2.10 Terrestrial mammal field surveys in 2021 and the extended habitat survey in 2021 were undertaken by M. Wood, whilst the PCA survey in 2024 was conducted by J. Morton. The updated terrestrial mammal survey in 2025 was carried out by J. Fairbairn, and habitat surveys of the western access route was carried out by A. McMullen. All four surveyors are highly experienced field ecologists with considerable experience in the survey and identification of field signs of protected mammal species in Scotland.

Limitations

- 2.2.11 The majority of the Site was accessible and included in the survey, however areas within the southern section of the Site, including the full 500 m survey buffer from the Proposed Development for wildcat, were not included in the survey. This is not considered to be a substantial limitation as this area and its adjoining habitats are not considered to be impacted by the Proposed Development. Note, the Study Area associated with the western access route was out to 250 m from the proposed route, and thus the Study Area did not extend out to 500 m for wildcat. This is not considered a constraint given those habitats on-site (and adjacent habitats) to be directly affected were appropriately surveyed, with areas off-site surveyed from within the Site itself, or where publicly accessible.

3. Results

3.1 Desk Study

Statutory Designated Sites for Nature Conservation

- 3.1.1 A review of NatureScot's Sitelink website identifies that the Site does not form part of any statutory designated sites for nature conservation with protected terrestrial mammal species qualifying features.
- 3.1.2 Nor are there any such designated site with protected terrestrial mammal species as qualifying interests within the Search Area.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites for Nature Conservation

- 3.1.3 There are no non-designated sites for nature conservation within the Search Area.

Existing Protected and Notable Faunal Species Records

- 3.1.4 The HBRG returned no records of protected or notable terrestrial mammals within the Search Area. A single record of a deer warble fly¹⁵ was returned however it was not possible to determine how close this was to the Site as only a two-figure grid reference was returned.
- 3.1.5 A review of the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels website revealed nine red squirrel records within the Search Area. The closest was located on the northern Site boundary.
- 3.1.6 The desk study found no Wildcat Priority Areas within the Search Area. The Site is c. 27 km from the nearest wildcat priority area (Strathpeffer).
- 3.1.7 A review of the publicly available documentation concerning ecological features for nearby wind farm schemes (the consented Meall Buidhe Wind Farm (THC Ref: 20/02659/FUL) and the consented Strath Oykel Wind Farm (ECU Ref: ECU00003246)), summarised the following:
- **Red squirrel:** No evidence of red squirrel was identified during field surveys for the Meall Buidhe Wind Farm or Strath Oykel Wind Farm;
 - **Water vole:** Evidence of water vole (including burrows) were recorded during field surveys for the Meall Buidhe Wind Farm and Strath Oykel Wind Farm;
 - **Badger:** No evidence of badger was identified during field surveys for the Meall Buidhe Wind Farm or Strath Oykel Wind Farm;

¹⁵ Taxa with small populations that are not at present Endangered or Vulnerable, but are at risk. In Great Britain, this was interpreted as species which exist in fifteen or fewer 10 km squares. Superseded by new IUCN categories in 1994, but still applicable to lists that have not been reviewed since 1994.

- **Otter:** During the field surveys for the Meall Buidhe Wind Farm, a single otter holt and a potential couch were recorded (features treated as sensitive and thus not publicly available). During the field surveys for the Strath Oykel Wind Farm, no evidence of otter was recorded within the wind farm site itself, but otter signs were recorded along the River Oykel;
- **Wildcat:** No evidence of wildcat was identified during field surveys for the Meall Buidhe Wind Farm or Strath Oykel Wind Farm; and
- **Pine marten:** During the field surveys for the Meall Buidhe Wind Farm no evidence of pine marten was recorded. During field surveys for the Strath Oykel Wind Farm several pine marten scats were recorded along existing access tracks and plantation edge. This included several scats in clusters indicative of a territory boundary.

3.2 Field Surveys

Terrestrial Mammal Survey

3.2.1 This section provides an overview of protected and notable terrestrial mammal observations recorded during terrestrial mammal surveys. The survey results are displayed on **Figure 6.5** (EIA Report Volume 3a), with confidential records presented on **Confidential Figure 6.9** (EIA Report Volume 5). Results are summarised in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1 – Protected Terrestrial Mammal Survey Results

| Species | Results |
|---------------|---|
| Red squirrel | - Cone feeding remains (squirrel) at NH40672 99891. |
| Water vole | - Latrines, burrows and runs at NH41504 98077. - Latrines, burrows and runs at NH41105 97720. - Latrines and runs at NH40978 97732. - Burrow (possible water vole) at NH41025 97729. - Burrow (possible water vole) at NH40877 97677 (with signs of fox digging). - Old droppings (may have been washed downstream), at NH40710 97619. - Burrows (possible water vole) at NH41448 98372. - Possible water vole burrows and old feeding signs at NH41411 98370. - Possible water vole burrows, runs and old feeding signs at NH41256 98270. - Possible water vole burrows and feeding signs at NH41136 98179. - Possible water vole burrow at NH40046 98646. |
| Badger | - Sett (see Confidential Technical Appendix 6.6 , and Confidential Figure 6.9 , EIA Report Volume 5). - Print at NC41030 00025. |
| Otter | - Old spraint at NH42615 97482. - Old spraint at NH42074 99513. - Old spraint (pile) at NH42428 99451. - Old spraint at NH42967 99706. - Old spraint at NC43409 00082. - Fresh spraint at NC43436 00092. - Couch, plus fresh spraint and slide (see Confidential Technical Appendix 6.6 , and Confidential Figure 6.9 , EIA Report Volume 5). |
| Wildcat | - No evidence of wildcat nor were any suitable den sites identified. |
| Pine marten | - Scats located adjacent to western edge of Beinn Chreagach Wood (NH41180 99541). - Scat at NH40949 98013. - Old scat at NH41576 97776. - Old suspected pine marten scat at NH41621 98468. - Old suspected pine marten scat at NH41891 98928. - Old suspected pine marten scat at NH42440 99087. - Suspected pine marten scat at NC41625 00037. - Scat on mammal path at NH40874 99978. - Scat at NH40811 99940. - Scat at NH40709 99901. - Scat at NH39850 98815. - Old scat at NH39918 98409. |
| Other mammals | Other mammal species recorded included roe deer, red deer, sika deer, and brown hare. Roe and sika deer were noted on both mammal survey visits, whilst red deer were only recorded in the June 2021 survey. Brown hare were recorded in the north of the Site on one survey in June 2021. |

3.2.2 No evidence of any other protected and/or notable terrestrial mammal species was recorded during the surveys. However, it was considered that on-site habitats (e.g. woodland, western access route and/or watercourses) were potentially suitable for red squirrel, badger, otter and wildcat (if present).

The extended habitat and PCA survey identified no further signs of notable mammal within the Site (minus the western access route), with the PCA survey confirming habitats to remain similar since 2021. The extended habitat survey of the western access route in 2025 did not identify any further signs of notable mammals.

Annex 1 – Scientific Names

Table A1.1 – Common and Scientific Names

| Common Name | Specific Name |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Otter | <i>Lutra lutra</i> |
| Badger | <i>Meles meles</i> |
| Pine marten | <i>Martes martes</i> |
| Red squirrel | <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i> |
| Water vole | <i>Arvicola amphibius</i> |
| Roe deer | <i>Capreolus capreolus</i> |
| Red deer | <i>Cervus elaphus</i> |
| Sika deer | <i>Cervus nippon</i> |
| Brown hare | <i>Lepus europaeus</i> |
| Deer warble fly | <i>Hypoderma diana</i> |