Technical Appendix 8.2: Ornithology Confidential Results

Technical Appendix 8.2: Ornithology Confidential Results

8.2.1 Introduction

8.2.1.1 Some of the data collected during the desk study and recorded during the vantage point (VP) surveys, breeding raptor surveys and black grouse surveys for the Proposed Development could be used to determine the nest location of Schedule 1 (1A, A1) species or other raptor species, as well as black grouse and capercaillie lek sites. The baseline data for golden eagle *Aquila chryasetos*, hen harrier *Circus cyaneus,* peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus,* black grouse *Lyrurus tetrix* and capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* are discussed here and shown on confidential figures mentioned below.

8.2.1.2 Confidential ornithological records were requested from the Highlands Raptor Study Group (HRSG) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) to inform the assessment. Data was requested within species-appropriate desk study search areas of 6 km from the Site for HRSG records and 10 km from the Site for RSPB records. The locations of relevant confidential records returned during the desk study are detailed below and shown in **Figure 8.3: Desk Study Results (CONFIDENTIAL)**.

8.2.2 Current Baseline

Golden Eagle

8.2.2.1 Desk study data was purchased from RSPB to inform the baseline for breeding raptors. RSPB records confirm one golden eagle territory recorded within the Study Area. [redacted].

8.2.2.2 Desk study data was also purchased from HRSG to inform the baseline for breeding raptors. HRSG records confirm one golden eagle territory within the Study Area. [redacted]

8.2.2.3 There were 23 golden eagle flights recorded, involving 27 individuals during the two-year VP survey period within the ornithology study area. The highest activity was recorded north – northwest of the Site, in the area between Loch Morie and Loch Glass. A juvenile bird was recorded in July 2024, and male bird displaying in February and May 2025. The golden eagle flights are shown in **Figure 8.4a: Vantage Point Survey results (2023-2025) Golden eagle (EIAR Volume 5)**. Adult behaviour and the presence of juvenile species indicatives of breeding and an established golden eagle territory within the ornithology field survey area (FSA). The established golden eagle territory was confirmed [redacted] and is shown in **Confidential Figure 8.6: Breeding Raptor Survey Results (2024) (EIAR Volume 5)**. [redacted]

Hen Harrier

8.2.2.4 HRSG records confirm two hen harrier breeding locations within the Study Area. [redacted]

8.2.2.5 Thirteen flights of hen harrier were recorded during the two-year VP survey period. All flights occurred within the immediate vicinity of the Site, within and outside the boundary. The hen harrier flights are shown in **Figure 8.4c: Vantage Point Survey Results (2023-2025)-Other Target Species (EIAR Volume 3a)**. [redacted] During breeding raptor surveys, between April and June 2024, two flights of single birds were recorded including a long flight crossing Loch Morie in a north-south direction and one flight in the same area, between the loch and the Site. These flights occurred in the same area where possible breeding territory for hen harrier was identified during MBBS surveys. A hen harrier territory was confirmed with an identified nest location during breeding raptor surveys. The confirmed hen harrier breeding territory with nest location is shown in **Confidential Figure 8.6: Breeding Raptor Survey Results (2024) (EIAR Volume 5)**. This nest was recorded [redacted] The nest is at located [redacted]
The precautionary approach uses the upper limit of the disturbance buffer, and therefore the hen harrier territory lies outside the disturbance buffer.

Peregrine Falcon

8.2.2.6 HRSG records confirm one peregrine falcon breeding location within the Study Area. [redacted] A successful breeding attempt was recorded in 2022, whilst a single adult was recorded in 2024; no birds were recorded at this location in 2025. [redacted] The breeding site falls within the recommended disturbance buffer during the breeding season and has therefore been treated as a confidential sensitive receptor within the assessment. However no significant impacts on the peregrine next are predicted due to the lack of a line of sight between the nest and the access track, due to terrain. It is considered that peregrine would be habituated to vehicle traffic on the access track and would not be disturbed by increased noise from traffic.

Black Grouse

8.2.2.7 Black grouse surveys were undertaken to inform the baseline data for the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA). [redacted] The Black Grouse Survey results are

[1] NatureScot Disturbance Distances (2022). Available at: https://www.nature.scot/doc/disturbance-distances-selected-scottish-bird-species-naturescot-guidance . [accessed May 2026].

detailed in Table 8.2.1 and shown in **Confidential Figure 8.7: Black Grouse Survey Results (EIAR Volume 5)**.

8.2.2.8 [redacted] Disturbance buffers are guidance only and observing minimum or maximum buffers does not guarantee that black grouse will not be disturbed. Species specific embedded mitigation measures that should be taken to avoid significant effects on black grouse are detailed within the DCEMP. Black grouse surveys conducted as part of the ornithological assessment are considered sufficient to locate active leks within the ornithology study area to inform best practice mitigation measures to avoid/minimise impacts on black grouse.

Table 8.2.1: Black Grouse Results

Record	Date	OS Grid Reference	Distance from Site
2 males heard singing	09/04/2024	[redacted]	[redacted]
3 males seen actively lekking	03/05/2024	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 male on sideline	03/05/2024	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 male on sideline	03/05/2024	[redacted]	[redacted]
5 males seen and then heard lekking	10/04/2024	[redacted]	[redacted]
4 males disturbed and stopped lekking	06/05/2024	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 female	06/05/2024	[redacted]	[redacted]

Capercaillie

8.2.2.9 Capercaillie data was requested from RSPB during the desk study to inform the baseline for capercaillie. Two confirmed active capercaillie lek sites were recorded overlapping with the proposed access route within the Site boundary. These leks occur within the Novar SPA and are associated with its qualifying population. There are additional signs of capercaillie presence within the Site including one male, one non-breeding female individual and droppings.[redacted] Due to the high vulnerability and protected status of capercaillie, exact locations of the capercaillie records are spatially buffered by RSPB. The capercaillie desk study records are detailed in Table 8.2.2 and shown in **Figure 8.3: Desk Study Results (CONFIDENTIAL)**.

8.2.2.10 [redacted] Species specific embedded and additional mitigation measures should be taken to avoid significant effects on capercaillie are detailed within the DCEMP and **Technical Appendix 8.5 Outline Capercaillie Species Protection Plan (EIAR Volume 5)**.

Table 8.2.2: Capercaillie Desk Study Records

Record	Date	OS Grid Reference	Distance from Site
1 singing/ displaying male	16/03/2016	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 male observed in suitable habitats. Possible breeding.	16/04/2016	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 non-breeding female	24/11/2020	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 male observed in suitable nesting habitats.	29/04/2018	[redacted]	[redacted]
Droppings	17/12/2015	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 non-breeding female	17/12/2025	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 non-breeding male	16/03/2016	[redacted]	[redacted]
Droppings	28/03/2017	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 non-breeding male	27/10/2016	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 male, possible breeding in suitable nesting habitat	16/04/2015	[redacted]	[redacted]
1 male, possible breeding in suitable nesting habitat.	16/04/2015	[redacted]	[redacted]

8.2.3 Conclusion

8.2.3.1 The Proposed Development has the potential to impact upon the identified peregrine falcon breeding territory and capercaillie lek sites. These impacts have been assessed within **Chapter 8: Ornithology (EIAR Volume 2)**, without the information provided here having been displayed. A Species Protection Plan (SPP) for capercaillie has been prepared and is provided in **Technical Appendix 8.5 (EIAR Volume 5)**.

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