

2022

Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development

Further Environmental Information

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Contents

Introduction 1

Correspondence 2

Email from Sian Haddon of NS to Stephen McFadden of the ECU dated 23/05/2022 2

Email from Blair Urquhart of NRP to Stephen McFadden of the ECU dated 26/05/2022, this email was a direct response to the email sent by Sian Haddon on 23/05/2022. 3

Email from Sian Haddon of NS to Stephen McFadden of the ECU dated 26/05/2022. 8

Email from Blair Urquhart of NRP to Stephen McFadden of the ECU dated 26/05/2022, this email was a direct response to the email sent by Sian Haddon on 26/05/2022. 9

HOLLANDMEY RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION – ORNITHOLOGY

Introduction

1. This report provides correspondence via email in May 2022 between Natural Research Projects (NRP) and NatureScot (NS) via the Energy Consents Unit (ECU). All correspondence via email between Blair Urquhart of NRP and Sian Haddon of NS between 23/05/2022 and 26/05/2022 is included. All correspondence was addressed to Stephen McFadden of the ECU.
2. An initial query was raised by Sian Haddon regarding clarification in relation to Table 2 of NRP's letter to NS dated 22/04/2022 and to Table 9.1.10 of Technical Appendix 9.1 of Chapter 9 – Ornithology of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA).
3. A further query was raised by Sian Haddon regarding potential impacts during the construction phase of the Hollandmey Renewable Energy Development to feeding geese and swans associated with the Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA).
4. The final, revised version of NRP's letter published on 26/05/2022 (original version dated 22/04/2022 is provided separately).

Correspondence

Email from Sian Haddon of NS to Stephen McFadden of the ECU dated 23/05/2022

Dear Stephen, cc. Robert and Alex for info.

I hope this e-mail finds you well.

Please accept my apologies for not asking this question sooner, this has been an oversight on our part. Please could I ask for some clarification in relation to Table 2 of the letter dated 22 April 2022 (attached). Its description states that this information has been taken from Table 9.1.10 of Technical Appendix 9.1, also represented in Figure 9.1.6. We can't seem to correlate some of the dates or numbers of birds with those in Table 9.1.10 and I was wondering if these had been included from another source perhaps? Also, the locations for some of these records seems to be incorrect e.g. the line '23/02/20, 1230, Greylag geese, 900, ND 296 500' seems to relate to an area near Wathegar/Acharin rather than Hollandmey.

I will continue updating our assessment in the meantime, but some clarification on this table would be very helpful to complete our response.

Many thanks and apologies again for the lateness of this request.

Kind regards,

Sian

Email from Blair Urquhart of NRP to Stephen McFadden of the ECU dated 26/05/2022, this email was a direct response to the email sent by Sian Haddon on 23/05/2022.

Hi Stephen and Sian

Robert passed your emails on to me as Alex is currently on paternity leave.

I have reviewed Sian's comments which have identified some errors in Table 2 of our response letter and Table 9.1.10 of the Technical Appendix.

Table 2 of our response letter (dated 22 April 2022)

All the northings presented in Table 2 are wrong. This was an error in the script we used to extract the grid references from the database. I have attached a revised response letter with the correct grid references. @Stephen.McFadden@gov.scot is this okay to resubmit our response? The attached supersedes the previously letter, which can be deleted.

The results of Winter Transect Surveys (WTS) were not reported on in Technical Appendix 9.1 (an oversight on our part). However, we have used them in Table 2 of our response. There weren't many wildfowl observations made but I have provided them below.

Date	Survey Type	Time	Species	Number	Behaviour	Location
01/11/2018	WTS	1420	Greylag goose	8	Feeding	ND 298 688
14/01/2019	WTS	1125	Pink-footed goose	60		ND 292 707
29/01/2020	WTS	0825	Pink-footed goose	16	Landed	Hollandmey
29/01/2020	WTS	0835	Pink-footed goose	1000	Landed	Hollandmey
29/01/2020	WTS	0836	Pink-footed goose	400	Landed	Hollandmey
29/01/2020	WTS	0840	Pink-footed goose	400	Landed. Same birds as above, just moved.	Hollandmey
23/02/2020	WTS	1230	Greylag goose	900	Feeding on stubble. Present throughout prior VP	ND 299 685
23/02/2020	WTS	1318	Whooper swan	6	Feeding on stubble	ND 296 712

Technical Appendix Table 9.1.10

There was a formatting error which amalgamated the dates of several surveys. As such, no data is missing it just that some data has been assigned to the wrong date in the table. I have attached a new Table 9.1.10 (**Included below**) showing, in red, the dates that were missed. As you can see there is no change to the information on species, numbers, behaviour and locations, the only change is the date when these data were gathered.

I hope this provides sufficient clarification to allow Sian to complete her response and apologies for the inconvenience caused.

Best wishes

Blair

Table 9.1.10. Records of wildfowl recorded during Goose and Swan Distribution surveys.

Date	Time	Species	No. birds	Location	Behaviour
06/10/2017	0930	Whooper swan	23	Loch Heilan	Feeding
	0935	Greylag goose	54	Loch Heilan	Birds remaining after 0931
	0935	Pink-footed goose	62	Loch Heilan	Birds remaining after 0931
	1130	Greylag goose	60	Rattar	Resting/feeding
	1130	Pink-footed goose	20	Rattar	Resting/feeding
	1130	Greylag goose	29	Rattar	Feeding
	1228	Whooper swan	41	St Johns Loch	Feeding
	1315	Pink-footed goose	245	Loch Heilan	2nd visit; Feeding
	1315	Greylag goose	27	Loch Heilan	2nd visit; Feeding
	1350	Greylag goose	210	Hollandmey Moss	2nd visit & count of geese; Feeding
1350	Pink-footed goose	30	Hollandmey Moss	2nd visit & count of geese; Feeding	
25/11/2017	0905	Greylag goose	580	ND 294 728	Feeding / Loafing, in stubble
	0927	Pink-footed goose	30	ND 290 733	Landed in stubble field
	0927	Whooper swan	30	ND 287 734	Feeding / Loafing, in stubble
	0927	Greylag goose	28	ND 287 734	Feeding / Loafing, in stubble
	0950	Pink-footed goose	350	ND 262 734	Feeding / Loafing, in stubble
	0950	Greylag goose	98	ND 262 734	Feeding / Loafing, in stubble
	1011	Whooper swan	50	ND 266 725	Feeding / Loafing, in stubble
	1011	Pink-footed goose	40	ND 266 725	Feeding / Loafing, in stubble
	1037	Greenland white-fronted goose	8	ND 280 727	Feeding in stubble
	1037	Pink-footed goose	6	ND 280 727	Feeding in stubble
	1053	Whooper swan	11	ND 246 713	Feeding / Loafing, in stubble
	1053	Pink-footed goose	400	ND 246 713	Feeding / Loafing, in stubble
	1115	Whooper swan	21	Loch Heilan	Feeding, Distant view, some may be mute swans
	1120	Greylag goose	100	ND 246 686	Feeding on grass
1130	Whooper swan	9	ND 240 675	Feeding / Loafing, in stubble	
11/01/2018	0909	Whooper swan	4	St Johns Loch	Feeding on loch prior to taking flight
	0916	Greylag goose	32	Killi Cairn	Feeding on grass
	0916	Greylag goose	50	Little Wester	Feeding on grass
	0935	Whooper swan	6	St Johns Loch	Feeding
	1025	Pink-footed goose	450	Rosegill	Feeding / Loafing
	1038	Greylag goose	9	Rosegill	Feeding on grass
	1046	Greylag goose	65	Rattar house	
	1115	Whooper swan	43	Charleston	
	1122	Greylag goose	2	Loch Mey	Feeding on loch
	1122	Pink-footed goose	2	Loch Mey	Feeding on loch
	1145	Mixed flock geese	400	Philips Mains	PG 60% GJ 40% feeding / loafing on grass field
	1145	Greylag goose	6	Philips Mains	Feeding on grass field
	1145	Pink-footed goose	12	Philips Mains	Feeding on grass field
	1145	Greylag goose	60	Philips Mains	Feeding / loafing on grass field
	1145	Pink-footed goose	8	ND 302 722	Feeding on grass field
	1226	Greenland white-fronted goose	53	West Lodge	Feeding / loafing on grass field
	1300	Whooper swan	42	Loch Hielan	Feeding
	1300	Pink-footed goose	11	Loch Hielan	Feeding
1300	Greylag goose	1	Loch Hielan	Feeding	
15/02/2018	0920	Pink-footed goose	500	Mey	Feeding
	0920	Greenland white-fronted goose	11	Mey	Feeding
	0935	Greylag goose	80	Mey	Feeding
	0945	Whooper swan	1	Loch of Mey	
	1110	Greylag goose	150	ND 245 725	Feeding
	1115	Greylag goose	40	ND 247 719	Feeding
	1120	Greylag goose	220	ND 231 717	Feeding
1130	Greylag goose	25	St Johns Loch		

Table 9.1.10. Records of wildfowl recorded during Goose and Swan Distribution surveys.

20/03/2018	1210	Greenland white-fronted goose	160	ND 289 722	Feeding	
	1210	Pink-footed goose	60	ND 288 723	Feeding	
	1220	Greylag goose	15	Philips Mains	Feeding	
	1220	Pink-footed goose	250	ND 295 728	Feeding	
	1230	Greylag goose	120	Warse	Feeding	
	1240	Greylag goose	80	ND 328 708	Feeding	
	1410	Greylag goose	30	Loch Heilan		
	0955	Greylag goose	50	ND 246 688	Feeding	
	1005	Whooper swan	50	ND 247 707	Feeding	
	1045	Greylag goose	30	ND 247 707	Feeding	
	1025	Greylag goose	15	St Johns Loch		
	1025	Whooper swan	12	St Johns Loch		
	1040	Greylag goose	200	ND 233 725	Feeding	
	1105	Greylag goose	120	ND 263 726	Loafing in ploughed field	
	1115	Greylag goose	130	ND 288 733	Feeding	
	13/04/2018	1200	Greenland white-fronted goose	9	Loch of Mey	
		1200	Greylag goose	200	Loch of Mey	
1200		Whooper swan	1	Loch of Mey		
1210		Greenland white-fronted goose	45	Loch of Mey	Feeding	
1315		Pink-footed goose	1300	ND 298 724	Feeding	
1315		Greylag goose	50	ND 298 724	Feeding	
1430		Greylag goose	34	ND 323 692	Feeding	
1450		Greylag goose	300	ND 276 659	Feeding	
0815		Pink-footed goose	70	ND 319 695		
0855		Pink-footed goose	160	ND 304 728		
0910		Pink-footed goose	60	ND 297 724		
0920		Pink-footed goose	50	ND 289 708		
0940		Whooper swan	11	ND 265 723		
0940		Greylag goose	60	ND 270 724		
1210		Pink-footed goose	120	ND 244 719		
1210		Greylag goose	30	ND 244 719		
1220		Pink-footed goose	80	ND 253 696		
1320	Greylag goose	9	ND 264 678			
1330	Whooper swan	9	ND 253 702			
18/10/2018	0915	Whooper swan	410	ND 284 640		
	0915	Greylag goose	100	ND 284 640		
	0936	Pink-footed goose	150	ND 328 702		
	1020	Whooper swan	45	ND 285 732		
	1020	Greylag goose	50	ND 285 732		
	1130	Greylag goose	30	ND 298 724		
	1130	Pink-footed goose	80	ND 298 724		
	1215	Whooper swan	15	St Johns Loch		
19/11/2018	0910	Greylag goose	200	ND 227 717		
	1005	Whooper swan	1	ND 238 734		
	1045	Greylag goose	190	ND 281 728		
	1112	Greylag goose	8	ND 336 725		
	1215	Whooper swan	50	ND 294 336		
	1215	Greylag goose	140	ND 295 664		
	1253	Greylag goose	50	ND 242 682		
	1326	Greylag goose	100	ND 276 719		
	1400	Whooper swan	16	Loch of Mey		
1400	Greylag goose	11	Loch of Mey			
14/12/2018	0915	Greylag goose	90	ND 229 718		
	0937	Whooper swan	3	ND 238 734	Feeding	
	1100	Whooper swan	2	ND 258 680	Feeding	
	1145	Greylag goose	60	ND 251 690	Feeding	
	1250	Whooper swan	15	ND 271 735	Feeding	
	1250	Greylag goose	2	ND 271 734	Feeding	

Table 9.1.10. Records of wildfowl recorded during Goose and Swan Distribution surveys.

15/01/2019	1019	Whooper swan	4	ND 291 707	
	1039	Greylag goose	25	ND 238 734	
	1200	Whooper swan	11	ND 281 728	
	1225	Greylag goose	70	ND 251 685	
	1225	Pink-footed goose	1	ND 249 690	
	1330	Whooper swan	27	ND 250 690	
	1330	Greylag goose	1	ND 270 737	
03/03/2019	0935	Greylag goose	270	ND 270 736	
	0935	Pink-footed goose	1	ND 227 718	
	1005	Whooper swan	3	ND 238 732	
	1135	Pink-footed goose	180	ND 295 664	
	1225	Whooper swan	2	ND 258 680	
	1317	Greylag goose	250	ND 285 734	
	1409	Greylag goose	130	ND 271 736	
	1409	Whooper swan	3	ND 271 737	
15/03/2019	1115	Pink-footed goose	180	ND 291 649	
	1125	Pink-footed goose	15	Brabstermire	
	1140	Pink-footed goose	580	ND 350 718	
	1150	Greylag goose	230	ND 331 722	
	1220	Greenland white-fronted goose	135	ND 265 720	
	1220	Greylag goose	25	ND 265 721	
	1220	Whooper swan	1	ND 266 720	
	1230	Greylag goose	80	ND 244 723	
	1245	Pink-footed goose	40	ND 267 717	
	1315	Pink-footed goose	80	ND 285 733	Mixed flock
	1315	Greylag goose	360	ND 287 733	Mixed flock
	1320	Greylag goose	35	ND 283 736	
	1440	Greylag goose	10	ND 228 725	
	1525	Whooper swan	17	ND 254 704	
	1530	Pink-footed goose	120	ND 252 704	
1540	Pink-footed goose	240	ND 258 688		
05/04/2019	0908	Whooper swan	4	ND 226 720	Feeding
	0912	Greylag goose	12	ND 232 717	Feeding
	1016	Greylag goose	150	ND 319 733	Feeding
	1100	Greylag goose	2	ND 311 684	Feeding
	1109	Pink-footed goose	6	ND 298 663	Feeding
	1202	Greylag goose	10	ND 257 686	Feeding
	1205	Greylag goose	40	ND 248 679	Feeding
	1205	Whooper swan	1	ND239 684	Feeding
	1240	Greylag goose	2	ND 250 699	Feeding
	1330	Greylag goose	180	ND 271 731	Feeding
	1330	Greylag goose	100	ND 271 735	Feeding
	1330	Whooper swan	9	ND 270 736	Feeding
	1440	Greylag goose	240	ND 293 707	Feeding
15/10/2019	1015	Whooper swan	50	ND 225 723	
	1015	Greylag goose	10	ND 224 722	
	1120	Greylag goose	200	ND 259 730	
	1200	Whooper swan	12	ND 271 736	
	1240	Greylag goose	110	ND 253 736	
	1430	Whooper swan	9	ND 254 684	
	1520	Greylag goose	170	ND 248 689	
27/11/2019	0950	Greylag goose	200	ND 250 724	
	0950	Whooper swan	30	ND 251 725	
	1058	Greylag goose	60	ND 250 734	
	1058	Whooper swan	30	ND 251 735	
	1310	Whooper swan	9	ND 252 685	
11/12/2019	1005	Greylag goose	210	ND 251 735	
	1130	Greylag goose	20	ND 271 736	
	1130	Whooper swan	2	ND 270 735	
15/01/2020	0915	Whooper swan	5	ND 229 720	

Table 9.1.10. Records of wildfowl recorded during Goose and Swan Distribution surveys.

	1025	Greylag goose	460	ND 281 736	
	1025	Greenland white-fronted goose	2	ND 280 736	
	1030	Greylag goose	40	ND 282 729	
	1040	Greenland white-fronted goose	6	ND 281 728	
	1040	Pink-footed goose	3	ND 282 728	
	1145	Greylag goose	8	ND 271 736	
	1325	Whooper swan	1	ND 256 681	
	1420	Greylag goose	110	ND 249 687	
08/02/2020	1105	Greylag goose	250	ND 276 735	
	1130	Whooper swan	3	ND 272 736	
	1246	Whooper swan	14	ND 259 680	
	1246	Greylag goose	400	ND 263 680	
	1315	Greylag goose	450	ND 238 683	
	1335	Greylag goose	10	ND 249 687	
	1350	Whooper swan	26	ND 270 712	
	1350	Greylag goose	180	ND 269 711	
08/03/2020	0910	Greylag goose	70	ND217683	
	1005	Greylag goose	30	ND275746	
	1010	Greylag goose	5	Scorrie Moss	
	1030	Greylag goose	5	ND271736	
	1030	Whooper swan	6	ND271735	
	1225	Pink-footed goose	360	ND306682	
	1240	Whooper swan	3	Slickly	
	1330	Whooper swan	70	ND 251 685	
	1345	Greylag goose	25	ND 267 692	
	1350	Greylag goose	60	ND 261 685	
	1355	Greylag goose	15	ND 264 676	
	1410	Greylag goose	50	ND 248 689	
	1415	Whooper swan	130	ND 250 701	
1415	Whooper swan	16	ND 261 693		

Email from Sian Haddon of NS to Stephen McFadden of the ECU dated 26/05/2022.

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your acknowledgement of the information request below. Please may we add the following to this request:

We welcome the information provided to date by Natural Research Project Ltd. in their letter dated 22 April 2022. This has addressed some of the points raised in our response of 04 March 2022 to the application. However, on review of this information, we would like to request further details in relation to assessment of potential impacts during the construction phase to feeding geese and swans associated with the Caithness Lochs SPA.

The information provided to-date does not appear to include an assessment of potential impacts to feeding geese and swans from construction works. Survey work undertaken for the proposal shows SPA birds feeding within and close to the proposal boundary, including the main access route. In particular, the entrance to the site will lie opposite known favoured feeding fields for Greenland white-fronted geese (i.e. near West Mey as identified in Francis et al, 2011). Given their small population size and restricted feeding regime, impacts to feeding birds could be significant. While we acknowledge these birds currently feed adjacent to the minor road and will likely be habituated to a certain level of disturbance, this will increase significantly during construction of the proposed development. In addition, as the construction phase is expected to take 22 months, impacts could occur over multiple winters and result in displacement of the birds from this part of their favoured feeding area.

We also note that Section 9.6.4.3 (Icelandic greylag goose) of the EIA report makes reference to construction of the solar array being undertaken outwith the wintering period to avoid disturbance to regularly used goose feeding areas. However, there is no further assessment in relation to disturbance/displacement from construction traffic using the main access route, which also runs adjacent to (and between) these fields at Phillips Mains/Hollandmey.

We therefore advise that further information in relation to this matter is provided to inform a Habitats Regulation Appraisal for the SPA. Such an assessment could be brief (if appropriate) and informed by survey information and desk-based study results. We would also find it useful for the assessment to be made in context of the conservation objectives for the SPA, which can be found on SiteLink.

I hope the above is clear, but please do not hesitate to contact me if you or the Applicant have any queries on the points raised. I will be on annual leave next week (30 May – 03 June) and happy to discuss the case before and/or after this time.

Kind regards,

Sian

Email from Blair Urquhart of NRP to Stephen McFadden of the ECU dated 26/05/2022, this email was a direct response to the email sent by Sian Haddon on 26/05/2022.

Hi Stephen and Sian

In response to Sian's query;

Effects of disturbance/displacement by construction traffic

The possible effects of this short-term loss in suitable feeding habitat would likely be compensated by birds exploiting suitable habitats elsewhere in their foraging range. Given the small area of potentially suitable foraging habitat affected, it seems highly unlikely that short-term displacement would elevate mortality rates or reduce productivity rates of whooper swan, greylag goose or Greenland white-fronted goose populations to the extent that the population trajectories of these species in the SPA would be affected. This conclusion is supported by empirical evidence gathered in and around the Proposed Development where it is evident (see Figure 9.1.6) that the feeding distribution of whooper swan and greylag goose is wide spread and the majority of preferred feeding fields of Greenland white-fronted goose are greater than 500m from the site entrance and north of the A836. Therefore, conservation objective 1 ("Ensure for the qualifying species no significant disturbance of the species") would not be compromised for whooper swan, greylag goose and Greenland white-fronted goose.

I hope the above is sufficient for your purpose. However, if you wish or require me to respond to this query in a formal letter to Scottish Government then please let me know.

Best wishes

Blair