

WLC 22056 – Isleornsay

Protected Species Survey

01/12/2022

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Wildlife Consulting Ltd (WLC) was commissioned by Cnoclee Environmental Services to undertake a protected species survey in respect of the landfall of a proposed replacement cable between Skye and Isleornsay.

1.2 Site Location

The site is centred on British National Grid reference NG 70434 12272.

2 METHODS

2.1 Desktop Study

A desktop study was carried out at the start of the commission and ahead of the field survey. Information sources used for this study are described below:

- Google Earth (<http://earth.google.co.uk>) - aerial imagery was obtained and used to inform the field survey;
- SNH Website (protected areas) – the SNH website was used to inform on relevant legislation for protected species found to be present in the vicinity of the project; and
- SNH Sitelink (<http://gateway.snh.gov.uk/sitelink/>) - sitelink was used to determine the location of any sites designated for nature conservation and their qualifying features.

2.2 Field Survey

The field survey was undertaken with reference to guidance outlined by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)ⁱ. Species specific survey areas are described in Table 2-1 below. Surveys focused on recording any evidence of the presence of protected species and invasive species. The field survey methods undertaken centred on species with the potential to be present as derived from the habitats present and on our knowledge of the local area. Field survey methods are presented in Table 2-1 below. The survey was undertaken on 10th November, 2022.

Table 2-1: Field Survey Methods

Species/Guild	Survey Methods
Bats	Collins (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. The buildings, woodland areas and standard trees within the site were categorised (high, medium, low or negligible) for their potential to support roosting bats. The survey area for this receptor comprised accessible land within 50m of the site.
Otter	Chanin (2003) "Monitoring the Otter" and Liles (2003) "Conserving Otter Breeding Sites". The survey area for otter comprised accessible, suitable habitats within 200m of the site.
Reptiles	A watching brief was maintained throughout the survey for the presence of common reptile species.
Invasive Species	A walkover survey was undertaken to record the presence of any invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

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

3 RESULTS

3.1 Desktop Study

3.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

Statutory designated sites located within 1km of the development site are considered in this assessment. Statutory designated sites are protected by EU and UK legislation and include:

- Special Protected Areas (SPA);
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC);
- Ramsar sites;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- National Nature Reserves (NNR); and
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR).

There is a single statutory site designated for nature conservation within 1km of the site.

The Inner Hebrides and the Minches SAC is designated on account of its harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* population and lies approximately 80m north of the site at its closest point.

Additionally, there are no areas of woodland listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) within 1 km of the site.

3.2 Field Survey

The land within the site an area of shoreline dominated with tidal mud and shingle. The landfall. Beyond the intertidal zone to the west on mainland Skye lie a combination of an unnamed road and rural residential dwellings, which form the Isleornsay settlement, and moorland habitats. To the east on the island itself there are areas of moorland and mixed woodland.

3.3 Protected Species

3.3.1 Bats

Two buildings within in the survey area were considered to have potential to support roosting bats.

Building 1 is an open fronted storage building, of a wooden structure, and with a corrugated roof. It lies within a residential garden and access was not possible at the time of survey. It is considered to have low potential to support roosting bats (Appendix 1 – Target Note 12).

Building 2 comprises a stone construction, with a slate roof and contains a hole in the southern side allowing access into the building. This building is considered to have low potential to support roosting bats (Appendix 1 – Target Note 17). Similarly to Building 1, Building 2 also lies in a residential garden and direct access was not possible to this feature at the time of the survey.

Within the wider survey area a mature sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* tree was considered to have low suitability to support roosting bats, with minor cracks and some lifted bark present (Appendix 1 – Target Note 10).

Two beech *Fagus sylvatica* and one small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* trees were considered to have moderate potential for roosting bats, with cracks and minor rot holes present (Appendix 1 – Target Note 15).

The remaining trees and woodland habitats within the survey area were generally considered to be of limited suitability for bats have developed features such as cracks, splits, or rot holes as favoured by roosting bats.

The woodland areas are considered to offer some foraging and commuting opportunities for this group. However, roosting, foraging and commuting opportunities for bats are limited due to the exposed coastal setting of the site.

3.3.2 Otter

No otter places of rest were recorded within the survey area.

Otter are present however and spraints were recorded at five locations within the survey area (Appendix 1 – Target Notes 2, 3, 4, 5 and 9).

The coastal habitats and freshwater watercourses within the survey area offer good foraging and commuting opportunities for otter.

3.3.3 Reptiles

No evidence of the presence of reptiles was recorded during the survey visit. There is a mixed pile of stone slabs and wooden pallets located at Target Note 7 (and illustrated on Photograph 1), which offers potential as a hibernaculum for this group. Additionally, the moorland habitats beyond the landfall area have the potential to support common reptiles species.

3.3.4 Birds

The shoreline and saltmarsh areas were noted to be supporting foraging wintering geese and wader species. The moorland, and wooded areas beyond the landfall also have the potential to support nesting birds during the breeding season (April – August inclusive).

3.3.5 Invasive species

Six established stands of rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* were observed within the survey area (Appendix 1 - Target Notes 1, 8, 11, 13, 14 and 16) (Photograph 2).

4 Appraisal and Mitigation

4.1 Designated Sites

The works lies 80m south of the Inner Hebrides and the Minches SAC and works will only be undertaken during low tide, in a non-inundated zone and over the course of a single day. The mole plough which will excavate the cable trench will be thoroughly checked prior to use to ensure there are no leaks, or burst hoses present and that there is minimal risk of any contamination of the bay from the introduction of any hydrocarbons. On this basis it is considered that the SAC, its qualifying harbour porpoise population and its conservation objectives will be unaffected by the works and that a formal Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) is not required to support this conclusion.

4.2 Bats

None of the features with the potential to support roosting bats lie within 20m of the works. As such it is considered that there is no need for a derogation licence for the destruction or disturbance of a bat roost. The nearby wooded areas do have some suitability for foraging and commuting bats and, as such, it is advised night-time works are minimised and any artificial light spill is directed away from wooded areas and linear navigation features favoured by bats.

4.3 Other Mammals

There was no evidence of the presence of any other protected mammal species recorded during the survey work. Common mammal species such as red deer and field vole are likely to be present, however. As such, standard mitigation is advised, such as covering any excavations (or providing mammal ramps), sealing and safely storing any COSHH materials and (similarly to bats above) minimising light spill and night-time works.

4.4 Reptiles

It is recommended that the potential hibernaculum (Target Note 7 – Photograph 1), which lies adjacent to the cable route is left in-situ during the works. Additionally, it is advised a watching brief is maintained for the presence of any reptile species during the works, and that should any reptile be present within the works area, it should be relocated to an area of safety.

4.5 Breeding Birds

The woodland, and scrub habitats within the wider survey area provide nesting opportunities for birds. The bird breeding season runs from April to August inclusive.

It is recommended that any clearance of woodland and scrub is timed to either avoid the breeding season altogether, or scheduled to start before the breeding season starts (ideally before mid-March) so that birds returning to the area to breed can choose a territory/nest location away from potentially disturbing activities. In the event this is not possible, prior to the commencement of clearance works, all suitable nesting habitat should first be checked by an experienced ecological clerk of works (ECoW). If an active nest is confirmed to be present, an exclusion zone should be erected around the nest until all dependent young have fledged, or if the ECoW confirms that the nest is no longer active.

Should works take place during the winter period (September - March inclusive) the wintering birds using the saltmarsh and tidal mud areas, would only be locally displaced for a very short period of time and accordingly any effects on the local wintering bird populations using the coastline are considered to be negligible.

4.6 Invasive species

The Proposed Works should seek to avoid rhododendron by marking an exclusion zone around identified stands of this species; this should be implemented or supervised by an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW).

Site contractors should be made aware of how to identify rhododendron, and legislation on invasive non-native species (INNS) through a toolbox talk (TBT) prior to commencement of construction activities; this should be delivered by an ECoW.

5 REFERENCES

- Chanin P (2003).Monitoring the Otter *Lutra lutra*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No. 10, English Nature, Peterborough
- Collins (2016). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- JNCC (2010) Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey A Technique for Environmental Audit .
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J, & McLeish, A.P. Ed., (2004), 3rd Edition Bat Workers' Manual, 178 pages b/w photos, softback, ISBN 1 86107 558 8

6 Appendix 1 – Target Notes

Target Note Number	Easting	Northing	Feature
1	170438	812103	Rhododendron.
2	170616	812147	Otter spraint.
3	170609	812237	Otter spraint.
4	170648	812293	Otter spraint.
5	170645	812596	Otter spraint.
6	170722	812680	Goose feeding and roosting throughout entire coastal area above high tide line.
7	170667	812586	Potential reptile hibernaculum.
8	170715	812519	Rhododendron.
9	170664	812133	Otter spraint.
10	170222	812004	Low bat potential tree.
11	170194	812004	Rhododendron.
12	170117	812086	Low bat potential building.
13	170261	812306	Rhododendron.
14	170205	812316	Rhododendron.
15	170182	812495	Two Beech and one Lime of moderate potential for roosting bats
16	170192	812483	Rhododendron.
17	170273	812567	Building with low potential to host roosting bats.
1	170438	812103	Rhododendron.
2	170616	812147	Otter spraint.
3	170609	812237	Otter spraint.
4	170648	812293	Otter spraint.

7 Appendix 2 Photographs

Photograph 1 – Potential Reptile Hibernaculum



Photograph 2 - Rhododendron



Photograph 3 - Eastern Landfall



Photograph 4 - Western Landfall





LEGEND

- Indicative Cable Route
- Target Note
- Inner Hebrides and the Minches SAC

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Cnoclee Environmental Services

Isleornsay Cable

Protected species survey

Figure 1 - Target Notes and Designated Site

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Scale: 1:4,000

