

A photograph of an offshore wind farm at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light blue, with a few wispy clouds. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm glow. In the foreground, dark, choppy waves are breaking, with white foam visible. Several wind turbines are visible in the mid-ground, their silhouettes dark against the bright sky. The overall mood is serene and powerful.

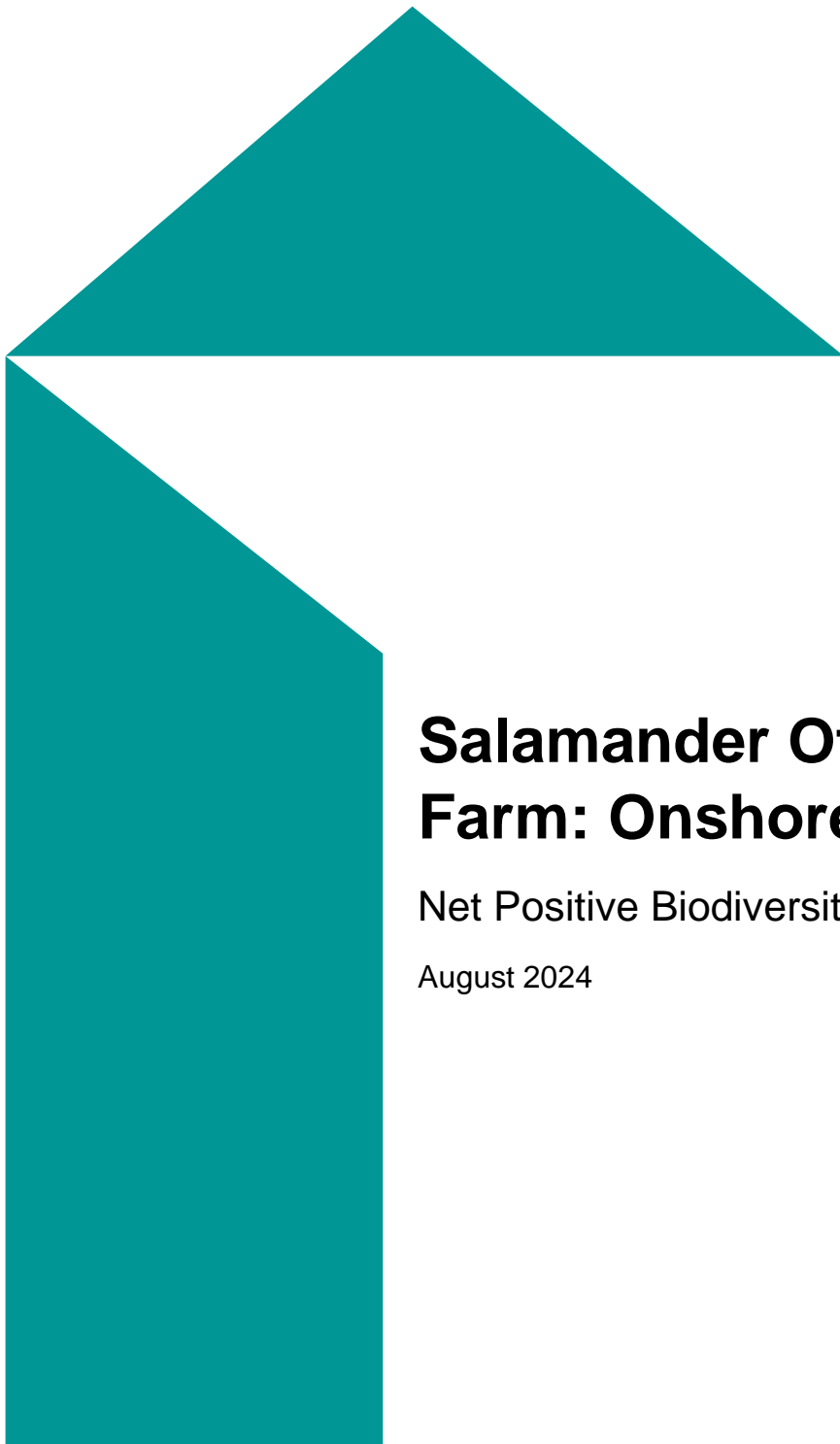
Salamander Offshore Wind Farm

Onshore Application Accompanying Reports

Volume RP.B.1 - Net Positive Biodiversity Strategy



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Salamander Offshore Wind Farm: Onshore Development

Net Positive Biodiversity Strategy

August 2024

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Salamander Offshore Wind Farm: Onshore Development

Net Positive Biodiversity Strategy

August 2024

Issue and Revision Record

Revision	Date	Originator	Checker	Approver	Description
A.1	16/8/24	Mott MacDonald	Mott MacDonald	Salamander	Final Draft

Document reference: 08829399 | 03 | A |

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Salamander Wind Project Company Limited (SWPC), a joint venture (JV) partnership between Ørsted, Simply Blue Group and Subsea7, is proposing the development of the Salamander Offshore Wind Farm (hereafter 'Salamander Project'). The Salamander Project will consist of the installation of a floating offshore wind farm (up to 100 megawatts (MW) capacity) approximately 35 kilometres (km) east of Peterhead. The project will comprise both offshore and onshore infrastructure, including an offshore generating station (wind farm), export cables to landfall, energy balancing infrastructure (EBI) and connection to the electricity transmission network.

The Salamander Project Onshore Development relates to all elements landward of Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS) which includes landfall and associated onshore infrastructure. It has been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA¹) in support of its key consent applications which are:

- Planning Permission in Principle (PPP) under the Town and County Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 for the development of the onshore works and infrastructure to MLWS; and
- Section 36 Consent under the Electricity Act 1989 for the for the EBI with battery storage ≥ 50 MW .

It is SWPC's ambition for the Onshore Development to achieve a net positive effect on biodiversity.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

In support of the Onshore Development consent applications and in accordance with the Scottish Governments National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)², the aim of this Net Positive Biodiversity Strategy is to set out SWPC's strategic approach to delivering a net positive effect on biodiversity for the Onshore Development of the Salamander Project.

The approach will utilise both quantitative and qualitative methods that are proportionate to the scale of the development.

The Net Positive Biodiversity Strategy is to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and Energy Consents Unit (ECU) of the Scottish Government in support of both the PPP and Section 36 Consent applications.

The objectives of this strategy document are to:

- Review and identify relevant policy drivers at an international, national and local level which form the foundation for delivery of net positive effects on biodiversity.
- Describe the engagement undertaken to-date by SWPC with statutory consultees on the approach for delivering net positive effects on biodiversity.
- Provide a list of sensitive biodiversity features relevant to the Onshore Development which include protected areas, priority habitats and species that could be strategically targeted for delivering net positive effects.

¹ SWPC (2024) Salamander Offshore Wind Farm Onshore Environmental Impact Assessment Report

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/>

- Highlight enhancement options for the sensitive biodiversity features, for both on and off-site areas, which will be developed at the detailed design stage to deliver net positive effects on biodiversity.
- Present a strategic approach to assessing and delivering net positive effects on biodiversity utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods, which will be developed at the detailed design stage.
- Detail the 'next steps' to be taken forward on receipt of PPP and S36 consents as part of the detailed design stage.

2 Foundations for Net Positive Effects on Biodiversity

2.1 Policy Background

2.1.1 International and National

To tackle the twin crises of the global climate emergency and nature emergency³, heads of state around the world launched the Leaders Pledge for Nature at the United Nations Assembly in 2020, and the '30by30' commitment to protect 30% of our land and seas for nature by 2030. The Scottish Government's Environment Strategy for Scotland⁴ sets out a strategy to contribute to this at a national level. The State of Nature Scotland Report⁵ recognises continued widespread declines in biodiversity in Scotland for several reasons including inappropriate development. In response, Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy⁶ sets ambitious targets for halting biodiversity loss and becoming Nature Positive by 2030, and restoring and regenerating biodiversity by 2045.

The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was adopted by Scottish Ministers on 13 February 2023 and provides a long-term plan to 2045. NPF4 aims to shift the existing position of minimising loss, to delivering net positive effects on biodiversity. It rebalances the planning system so that climate change and nature recovery are the primary guiding principles for all plans and decisions. NPF4 policies support development that helps to secure positive effects for biodiversity. Most notably, **Policy 3 Biodiversity** plays a critical role in ensuring that development seeks to reverse biodiversity loss and deliver nature positive effects. Other policies which also have supporting relevance to delivering net positive effects on biodiversity include **Policy 4 Natural Places** (particularly in relation to statutory and non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation), **Policy 5 Soils** (including carbon rich soils/peatlands), and **Policy 6 Forestry Woodland and Trees** (including focus on increased connectivity woodland cover).

The Scottish Government's Draft Planning Guidance: Biodiversity (2023b)⁷ provides more detail in relation to NPF4 for biodiversity. It highlights the importance of planning for biodiversity at an early stage of development proposals, including consultation with Local Planning Authorities and statutory consultees.

NPF4 does not specify how much enhancement or net positive should be delivered, though biodiversity should clearly be left in a '*demonstrably better state*' than without intervention. It does not require a particular assessment approach or methodology, and assessment may be qualitative or quantitative (i.e. use of a suitable metric), including the use of the (at the time) Defra Biodiversity Metric 4.0⁸. The guidance notes that while NatureScot are developing a biodiversity metric suitable for use for development in Scotland, a flexible approach to delivering net positive effects on biodiversity will be required.

The guidance prioritises on-site enhancement in the first instance, with off-site delivery where this is not possible. Where off-site delivery is required, it could entail enhancing existing habitat or

³ IPBES (2019): Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany.

⁴ The Environment Strategy for Scotland: Vision and Outcomes (Scottish Government 2020)

⁵ State of Nature Scotland (2023) State of Nature Partnership

⁶ The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045: Tackling Nature Emergency in Scotland

⁷ Scottish Government (2023b). Draft Planning Guidance: Biodiversity

⁸ [Natural England Archive Site for Legacy Biodiversity Metrics](#)

creating new habitats, strengthening the connectivity of nature networks, delivering larger landscape scale benefits, and enhancing the resilience of key habitats and species identified as a priority for action. Potential off-site projects may be identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), Local Development Plan or other strategies, and by local or national environmental NGOs.

Ørsted has published a Biodiversity Policy⁹ that sets out its ambition that all new renewable energy projects that are commissioned from 2030 onwards should deliver a Net Positive Biodiversity Impact, in doing so these projects will contribute to the relevant national targets.

2.1.2 Local

Aberdeenshire Council's Local Development Plan (Aberdeenshire Council, 2023)¹⁰ provides the commitments in relation to biodiversity, most notably within Policies **P1 Layout, Siting and Design**, **E1 Natural Heritage** and **E3 Forestry and Woodland**.

Aberdeenshire Council's Planning Advice: Securing Positive Effects for Biodiversity in New Development (PA2023-10) (2023c)¹¹ provides additional detail on development proposals in relation to biodiversity. The guidance highlights the importance of avoidance of harm to irreplaceable habitats. To assess the effects on biodiversity before and after development, Aberdeenshire Council highlight the need for '*a simple qualitative and quantitative system for assessing biodiversity loss and gains that is transparent, consistent and gives confidence that positive effects are being delivered*'. The Council guidance recommends the use of the Defra Biodiversity Metric, while other metrics and approaches should be agreed with the Council at the pre-application stage. The preference remains for biodiversity gains being delivered on-site in the first instance. Only where it can be clearly demonstrated that on-site delivery is not possible, should this be delivered off-site. The guidance also states an expectation for a minimum 20-year long-term management commitment, and features such as landscape planting to compensate for loss of forestry or screening must be designed for long-term benefits for biodiversity or climate change mitigation, to be accepted as part of net positive enhancement.

2.2 The Defra Biodiversity Metric

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is not a term that is universally used or implemented in Scotland¹². The Defra statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation for England's mandatory BNG is for developers to demonstrate BNG, together with the other requirements for mandatory BNG. The Scottish Government evaluated use of metrics to measure biodiversity change, including the (at the time) Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.1¹³. It was noted that, with refinement, the Defra Biodiversity Metric 3.1 could be adapted for use in Scotland¹⁴. At the time of production of this strategy, NatureScot are in the process of designing and consulting on a standard biodiversity metric for Scotland's Net Positive policy. In the interim, the Defra statutory Biodiversity Metric¹⁵ can be used as a tool to quantify biodiversity loss/gain as part of a wider approach to demonstrate net positive effects on biodiversity have been achieved.

⁹ Ørsted Offshore Wind Biodiversity Policy

¹⁰ Aberdeenshire Council (2023a) Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan

¹¹ Aberdeenshire Council (2023b). Planning Advice: Securing Positive Effects For Biodiversity in New Development (PA2023-10)

¹² CIEEM, 2019. Biodiversity Net Gain in Scotland. CIEEM Scotland Policy Group.

¹³ S Panks, N White, A Newsome, M Nash, J Potter, M Heydon, E Mayhew, M Alvarez, T Russell, C Cashion, F Goddard, S Scott, Max Heaver, S Scott, J Treweek, B Butcher, D Stone 2022. Biodiversity metric 3.1: Auditing and accounting for biodiversity – User Guide. Natural England.

¹⁴ McVittie, A., Cole, L., McCarthy, J., Fisher, H., and Rudman, H. (2023) Research into Approaches to Measuring Biodiversity in Scotland, Final Report to Scottish Government.

¹⁵ Statutory Biodiversity Metric, released by Defra on 12th February 2024 and then updated in July 2024.

2.3 Engagement with Statutory Consultees

SWPC engaged a number of statutory consultees early in the development process for the Onshore Development. This included Aberdeenshire Council, the ECU and NatureScot. The intentions were to discuss and agree the proposed approach for delivery of net positive effects on biodiversity, to provide an opportunity for statutory consultees to identify any preferred strategic targets or initiatives for biodiversity enhancement, and to determine any specific expectations for delivering net positive effects.

Engagement with NatureScot was completed by email correspondence on 21 November 2023. While providing general guidance for biodiversity enhancement, NatureScot noted that their remit for advice on biodiversity enhancement measures relates to features where impacts are likely to raise issues of national interest. NatureScot recommended further engagement should be completed with Aberdeenshire Council.

Engagement with the ECU was carried out by email correspondence on 12 January 2024. The ECU indicated that it did not wish to participate in consultation relating to net positive effects on biodiversity.

A meeting was held between SWPC and Aberdeenshire Council on 8 March 2024. The Council welcomed the approach for using Defra's Biodiversity Metric together with other measures, as part of a package for net positive delivery. The Council advised that it currently has no specific targets, initiatives or preferred strategic approach for the delivery of biodiversity enhancement, and coastal zones are the only recognised Nature Network in the Local Authority Area. The Council noted a preference for on-site biodiversity enhancement, with off-site enhancement measures acceptable provided they were justified and have clear benefits, though would be expected to be as local as possible to the Onshore Development. The Council highlighted that a summary level of detail was required to demonstrate net positive effects on biodiversity (particularly for off-site measures) for PPP applications compared to the details required for applications for full planning permission. Finally, the Council indicated that it would be acceptable for biodiversity enhancement measures to be further developed and confirmed at detailed design stage in compliance with planning conditions. However, a statement of the proposed strategic approach to delivering net positive effects on biodiversity would be welcomed at the application stage (which is this document).

2.4 Identification of Sensitive Biodiversity Features

To inform the development of this strategy, numerous sources of data, reports and documents have been reviewed with the aim of identifying sensitive biodiversity features (i.e. protected areas, priority habitats and species) located both within the Onshore Development Area and within the wider Aberdeenshire geographic area. These are summarised in **Appendix A**. This provides an initial list of relevant potential ecological features which could be targeted to deliver net positive effects on biodiversity.

The data, reports and documents reviewed to identify sensitive biodiversity features were:

- Salamander Offshore Wind Farm Onshore Environmental Impact Assessment Report, SWPC, August 2024, including the following Technical Annexes:
 - ER.B.4.9.1 - Phase 1 Habitats.
 - ER.B.4.9.2 - Phase 2 Protected Species Breeding Bird Report.
 - ER.B.4.8.2 - Wintering/Migratory Waterfowl and Intertidal Report.
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) website (<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/>).
- NatureScot (<http://gateway.snh.gov.uk>).

- The National Biodiversity Network website (<http://data.nbn.org.uk/>) (NBN Gateway).
- Large-scale 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey (OS) maps in conjunction with colour 1:25,000 OS map (to determine the presence of wetlands and other features of nature conservation interest).
- UK Biodiversity Action Plans (UKBAP) (Maddock et al, 2008).
- Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL) (NatureScot, 2020).
- Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023.
- Planning Advice Document PA2023-10 Securing Positive Effects For Biodiversity
- Planning Advice Document PA2023-01 Aberdeenshire Forest and Woodland Strategy
- North East Scotland Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).
- North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC).
- Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report, Salamander Offshore Wind Farm, SBES, Revision 1, February 2023.
- Native Woodland Survey of Scotland.

Post-consent, the list of sensitive biodiversity features in **Appendix A** will be reviewed and further refined to produce a list of key Priority Biodiversity Features using criteria set out in **Table 2.1**. This will identify priorities for enhancement interventions as part of delivering a net positive effect for biodiversity for the Salamander Project.

Table 2.1: Criteria for determining Priority Biodiversity Features.

Criterion	Explanation
Quality of data	Government database, national or international protected habitat or species, documented stakeholder concern, risk of cumulative impact etc.
Presence at site	Public records, site surveys, expert opinion
Likelihood of impact	Impact registers from other projects, expert opinion
Feasibility of monitoring	Expected abundance, expert opinion
Responsive to change	Generation time for species, recovery time for habitats
Representative of wider biodiversity	Trophic level, habitats of importance to multiple species state
Threat or conservation status	IUCN and national red list status, stakeholder and expert opinion, species at risk of cumulative impacts.
Stakeholder concern	Stated/documented stakeholder views, culturally important species and habitats

3 Approach to Delivering Net Positive Effects on Biodiversity

3.1 Approach to Net Positive Effect on Biodiversity

SWPC's approach is to demonstrate net positive effects on biodiversity using quantitative and qualitative approaches. In the first instance, the Defra Biodiversity Metric will be utilised to quantify the baseline number of habitat units to inform application of the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, minimise, restore, offset) before quantifying loss of habitat units as a result of the Onshore Development. The Defra Biodiversity Metric shall then be used to inform the quantitative element of the approach to establish No Net Loss (NNL) as a minimum. The net positive biodiversity uplift will then be demonstrated by a combination of wider habitat creation and enhancement, and conservation initiatives. This will follow the hierarchical approach based on delivering solutions on-site before locally off-site.

The following sections outline the types of on-site (**Section 3.2** and **3.3**) and off-site (**Section 3.4**) biodiversity measures that will be considered and developed during detailed design for the Onshore Development to deliver net positive effects on biodiversity.

3.2 On-Site Biodiversity Measures (Habitats)

During detailed design, the following biodiversity measures for habitat creation and enhancement within the Onshore Development Area (i.e., on-site) will be considered for the proposed development to achieve a net positive effect on biodiversity. Options include:

- **Hedgerow planting.** Planting species-rich native hedgerow (including with trees) to increase biodiversity on site and provide ecological connectivity. This is relevant for the site and the wider agricultural landscape in this part of Aberdeenshire which has impoverished levels of hedgerow and other connective features of biodiversity value.
- **Woodland or scattered tree planting.** Mixed or broadleaved woodland planted within the wider Onshore Development Area. This would be designed to complement areas of broadleaved woodland that have been classified as 'near native' woodland in the Native Woodland Survey of Scotland. This would also be in line with NPF4 Policies 1, 3 and 6 and Aberdeenshire LDP Policy E3 'Forestry' and Woodland.
- **Broadleaved woodland planting or scrub buffers to commercial woodland edge.** Planting of broadleaved woodland or scrub which creates habitat and structural diversity, especially when planted within a natural arrangement and density.
- **Enhancement of sand dune habitats** (including slacks and fen habitats). Large swathes of coastal sand dunes are present to the east of the Onshore Development which are also located within the Rattray to Peterhead Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS).

3.3 Additional On-Site Measures (Species)

NatureScot's Developing with Nature¹⁶ provides guidance on measures that could be implemented in support of biodiversity enhancement as part of NPF4. While published in support

¹⁶ NatureScot (2019) Developing with Nature: Guidance for People and Nature (NatureScot, 2019)
<https://www.nature.scot/doc/developing-nature-guidance>

of *Policy 3c) Local Development*, it is of equal use for delivering positive effects for developments of all scales. In addition to a package of habitat-based enhancement, additional (non-habitat) interventions for biodiversity in the net positive design, which are appropriate in the context of this proposed development could include:

- Provision of bat roost boxes. These could be either pole or tree mounted roost boxes located on woodland edge or along the Cuttie Burn or attached/integrated to buildings on site.
- Provision of hardwood construction bird boxes, for example with opening of 25mm, 28mm, 32mm and open fronted boxes.
- The provision of deer or otherwise herbivore fencing to reduce adverse grazing pressures on habitats present, leading to long-term benefits on habitat structure, species diversity and quality.
- Installation of an artificial otter holt along Cuttie Burn.
- Installation of other habitat features such as log pile or rubble piles to act as refugia/hibernacula for amphibians, reptile and invertebrates.

3.4 Off-Site Biodiversity Measures

During detailed design, the following measures for habitat creation and enhancement within the wider geographic context of the Onshore Development Area (i.e., off-site) will be considered for the proposed development to achieve a net positive effect on biodiversity, whilst complying with NPF4 and Aberdeenshire Council LDP policies.

Off-site measures will be as local as possible to the development to avoid incurring biodiversity losses in one place, while creating improvements in another. Delivery of net positive effects on biodiversity would be within the same Local Authority Area as the application (i.e., within Aberdeenshire). Where appropriate, consultation will be sought with statutory bodies and other agencies.

- **Woodland habitat creation, restoration and enhancement.** Significant areas of this part of northeast Aberdeenshire are identified as Areas for New Woodland Creation¹⁷ and Forest Strategy – Preferred Areas for Woodland Creation within the Aberdeenshire LDP. This approach also aligns with NPF4 Policy 1 in helping to tackle the climate and nature crisis.
- **Sand dune / coastal habitat management.** Coastal areas are recognised as a significant nature network within Aberdeenshire. The eastern section of the application area comprises an extensive complex of sand dunes which form part of the Rattray to Peterhead LNCS. Beyond the application area, Strathbeg to Rattray LNCS (the latter of which also form part of Strathbeg SSSI, SPAS and Ramsar), or Newburgh to Balmedie LNCS, or the Ythan Sands, Sands of Forvie, Meikle Loch SSSI/SPA/Ramsar complex.
- **Peatland restoration.** Lowland raised blanket bog is identified as a priority target for restoration and enhancement. Opportunities may exist for restoration of existing areas of lowland raised bog. Extensive areas of bog within the vicinity of the proposed development include Rora Moss (which is both an LNCS and SSSI), St Fergus Moss, Middlemuir and Turclossie Moss.
- **Improvement of habitat connectivity surrounding the Onshore Development Area.** This could be achieved through hedgerow, woodland strips and tree planting to provide better ecological connectivity within the wider landscape.

¹⁷ Planning Advice Document PA2023-01 Aberdeenshire Forest and Woodland Strategy

3.5 Next Steps

At detailed design stage, this Net Positive Biodiversity Strategy will form the basis for the assessment and design of net positive effects on biodiversity for the Onshore Development. Options for onsite and offsite biodiversity measures will be chosen considering a set of standard criteria as set out in **Table 3.1**:

Table 3.1 Evaluation criteria for net positive effects on biodiversity actions

Criterion	Consideration
Technical feasibility	Can the measure be implemented from a technical perspective?
Evidence for success	Is the measure likely to lead to reduction in pressure on identified Priority Biodiversity Features or an increase in the target species or habitat?
Ecological feasibility	Are the measures likely to provide the best ecological outcomes for the resources required?
Stakeholder alignment	Are relevant stakeholders in agreement that the measure is appropriate and the best use of resource?

The outputs will include a report detailing the assessments undertaken, the evidence and justification for the final approach adopted to achieve net positive, as well as the design-related deliverables (such as the on-site post development landscape drawing) and a detailed plan for remaining actions (for example, stakeholder engagement on off-site measures). It is expected that these shall be submitted to address consent Conditions.

4 APPENDICES

A. Appendix A: List of Sensitive Biodiversity Features

Sensitive Biodiversity Features	Legal Protection / Conservation Importance	Justification	Policy Relevance
Sensitive Biodiversity Features - Onshore Development Area			
<p>Non-statutory designation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rattray to Peterhead LNCS 	<p>Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS) receive some level of legal/policy protection in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.</p> <p>Forms part of coastal habitats which are the only identified Nature Network in Aberdeenshire to date.</p>	<p>Proximity of non-statutory designation within Onshore Development Area.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 1 Sustainable Places, NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c,4/4d – Natural Places). Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1/E1.4, E1.9.</p>
<p>Priority Habitats: Sand Dunes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humid dune slacks Embryonic shifting dunes Shifting dunes with marram Dune grassland 	<p>Annex 1 habitats of community importance under the Habitat Directive, Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL) and LBAP Priority Habitats present within Onshore Development Area.</p> <p>Recognised as forming the only identified Nature Network in Aberdeenshire to date.</p> <p>Humid dune slacks (s3a3) present within the Onshore Development Area are high dependency ground water dependant terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTE).</p> <p>Described within the Defra Biodiversity Metric as High Distinctiveness Habitats.</p>	<p>Located directly adjacent to Onshore Development Area. Forms major area of priority habitat within Onshore Development Area and is part of Rattray to Peterhead LNCS, forming part of a nature network of coastal habitats along the Aberdeenshire coastline.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 1 Sustainable Places NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c,4 – Natural Places)</p> <p>NPF4 Policy 4 Natural Places (Policy 4d), NPF4 Policy 1 Sustainable Places, NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity</p> <p>Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1/E1.4, E1.9.</p>

Sensitive Biodiversity Features	Legal Protection / Conservation Importance	Justification	Policy Relevance
<p>Priority Habitat: Lowland Fen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowland fen 	<p>SBL and LBAP Priority Habitats present within Onshore Development Area.</p> <p>Described within the Biodiversity Metric as an irreplaceable habitat and a very high distinctiveness habitat.</p>	<p>Located within Rattray to Peterhead LNCS, downstream of Onshore Development Area by Cuttie Burn. Very high sensitivity habitat.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 1 Sustainable Places NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c,4 – Natural Places) Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1/E1.4.</p>
<p>Priority Habitat: Woodland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadleaved Mixed Conifer 	<p>Woodland is recognised as a LBAP priority habitat.</p> <p>Areas of woodland within Onshore Development Boundary part of Native Woodland Survey of Scotland woodland.</p>	<p>Areas of woodland habitat loss within scheme footprint.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 1 Sustainable Places NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c,4 – Natural Places,6 Forestry, Woodland and Trees) Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1/E1.4, E1.9, E3.2, E3.3, E3.4.</p>
<p>Priority Habitat: Hedgerow</p>	<p>LBAP Priority Habitat present within Onshore Development Area.</p> <p>Hedgerow supports some species of breeding birds, including smaller passerine species. Hedgerows also provide habitat/ecological connectivity.</p>	<p>Within the Biodiversity Metric, hedgerows are their own distinct habitat group, therefore, present creation/enhancement opportunity for the scheme.</p> <p>Require trading rules to be achieved within the Biodiversity Metric 4.0.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 1 Sustainable Places NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c) Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1, E1.9 E3.2.</p>
<p>Priority Habitat: Watercourses Including Cuttie Burn</p>	<p>SBL and LBAP Priority Habitat present within Onshore Development Area.</p>	<p>Within the Biodiversity Metric, watercourses are their own distinct habitat group, therefore, present creation/enhancement opportunity for the scheme.</p> <p>Require trading rules to be achieved within the Biodiversity Metric 4.0.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 1 Sustainable Places NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c,4 – Natural Places) Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1, E1.9.</p>
<p>Breeding Birds Assemblage: Including –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skylark Meadow Pipit 	<p>All wild birds in Great Britain are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).</p> <p>Skylark and meadow pipit territories frequently recorded during Breeding Bird Survey (ERM, 2023). Both species are included on Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (BoCC5) – skylark (red listed), meadow pipit (amber listed).</p>	<p>Skylark and meadow pipit most abundant territories identified within Onshore Development Area.</p> <p>Habitats within Onshore Development Area, including woodland and grassland habitats offer suitability to support breeding and foraging birds.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c) Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1.</p>
<p>Protected Species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Badger 	<p>Species protected under the Habitat Regulations 1994 (as amended) and 'Schedule 5', and 'Schedule 6' species</p>	<p>Badgers identified during Protected Species Surveys (ERM, 2023) within zone of influence of the scheme. Badgers are legally protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c)</p>

Sensitive Biodiversity Features	Legal Protection / Conservation Importance	Justification	Policy Relevance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bats ● Otter ● Pine Marten ● Hedgehog ● Brown Hare 	under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).	Woodland edge habitats may offer suitable foraging and commuting opportunity to bats. Habitat suitability remains for other species including otter, pine marten, hedgehog and brown hare.	Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1.
Sensitive Biodiversity Features - Wider Geographic Study Area: North East Aberdeenshire			
Wintering, migratory and breeding birds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Includes ex situ species of Internationally and Nationally protected sites 	Annex 1 Species of the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC). Numerous BoCC, SBL species.	Internationally and nationally important statutory designations within the surrounding 20km which have qualifying features of ornithological interest.	NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c) Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1/E1.4, E1.9.
Important Bird Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Loch of Strathbeg Special Protection Area (SPA) /Ramsar/Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) ● Buchanan Ness to Collieston Coast SPA ● Bullers of Buchan Coast SSSI ● Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA ● Sands of Forvie and Ythan Estuary SSSI ● RSPB Strathbeg Reserve ● SWT Longhaven Cliff's Reserve 	Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, Wildlife, Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.	An abundance of designated sites and reserves also underlines the importance of the coastal and intertidal habitats within this area of Aberdeenshire, and the vast numbers of migratory, overwintering and breeding birds it supports.	NPF4 Policy 1 Sustainable Places NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c,4 – Natural Places) Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1/E1.4.
Woodlands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aberdeenshire LDP Preferred Areas for Woodland Creation 	Aberdeenshire LDP identified suitable or preferred areas within the Aberdeenshire Region for the establishment of new woodland areas.	Significant areas of this part of northeast Aberdeenshire are identified as Areas for New Woodland Creation and Forest Strategy – Preferred Areas for Woodland Creation within the Aberdeenshire LDP.	NPF4 Policy 1 Sustainable Places NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a,3b,3c,4 – Natural Places,6 Forestry, Woodland and Trees) Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1, E1.1, E1.9, E3.2, E3.3., E3.4.

Sensitive Biodiversity Features	Legal Protection / Conservation Importance	Justification	Policy Relevance
<p>Peatland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rora Moss SSSI/LNCS ● St Fergus Moss ● Middlemuir Moss ● Turcrossie Moss 	<p>Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) for National Designations (e.g., SSSIs).</p> <p>Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS) receive some level of protection in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan. The Scottish Government – Peatland Action Programme and the National Peatland Plan.</p>	<p>Lowland raised blanket bog is identified as a priority target for restoration and enhancement. This approach would fully align itself NPF4 Policy 1 in helping to tackle both the climate (carbon sequestration) and nature crises.</p>	<p>NPF4 Policy 1 Sustainable Places</p> <p>NPF4 Policy 3 Biodiversity (Policies 3a, 3b,3c,5 – Soils)</p> <p>Aberdeenshire LDP: P1.7, E1.1, E1.4.</p>



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