



ESB Asset Development UK Limited

Millmoor Rig Wind Farm

Technical Appendix 8.5 - Outline Habitat Management Plan

2481817

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RSK GENERAL NOTES

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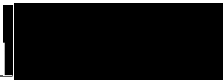
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Where field investigations have been carried out, these have been restricted to a level of detail required to achieve the stated objectives of the work.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 This outline habitat management plan (OHMP) has been prepared to provide guidance for the creation, enhancement and long-term management of habitats at the proposed Millmoor Rig Wind Farm (hereafter the 'Proposed Development'). This report should be read in conjunction with **Chapter 8: Ecology** and **Chapter 17: Forestry** of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA) Report with reference to **Figure 17.1** and **Figure 17.3**. The OHMP forms Technical Appendix 8.5 to the EIA Report.

1.1.2 The scope of the OHMP includes:

- description and evaluation of the habitat and other features to be created and managed;
- aims and objectives of habitat management; and,
- appropriate management options for achieving the aims and objectives.

1.2 Structure of the Outline Habitat Management Plan

1.2.1 Following a review of the wind farm forestry plan for the turbine area, including the felling plan¹ and the restocking plan², there are five main areas with opportunities for habitat enhancement including the wind farm forestry felling area near T8 and four of the natural reserve areas which are set out in the wind farm forestry plan.

1.2.2 Given that much of the Proposed Development infrastructure is located within commercial plantation, habitats due to be affected by the Proposed Development are generally of poor quality with the impacts being localised and discrete in nature. Furthermore, the wind farm forestry plan (see section 1.2.1) are focused on the felling and restocking of a commercial forest. Therefore, opportunities for habitat enhancement and creation are localised and will be proportionate to the level of impact. The EIA **Chapter 8: Ecology** has concluded that impacts on any adjacent habitats to the working areas are unlikely to occur and have therefore not been considered in this document.

1.2.3 Three aims and related objectives of the Proposed Development OHMP are proposed, comprising three habitat aims. These are to be achieved through the implementation of the habitat creation and management measures outlined within this OHMP.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

1.3.1 It is proposed that the aims, objectives and management prescriptions outlined in the OHMP will be further refined and prescribed in a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) to be agreed in consultation with NatureScot, and Scottish Borders Council (SBC)The

¹ Figure 17.1 Wind Farm Felling Plan Turbine Area

² Figure 17.3 Wind Farm Restock Plan Turbine Area

Scottish Borders Council Local Biodiversity Action Plan³ (BAP) contains aspirations to increase the cover of native broadleaved woodland and the aims and objectives set out below would make a contribution towards this local biodiversity priority..

- 1.3.2 **Section 8.14 of Chapter 8: Ecology** of the EIA Report has concluded that construction phase activities within the Proposed Development are not likely to have a significant impact on the habitats and animal species present. The majority of habitat to be lost comprises conifer plantation and clear fell and are of low ecological value. However, measures to mitigate these impacts will be required before construction commences in order to help assure that the Proposed Development contributes to an improvement in habitat extent and diversity across the site via the aims outlined below.

Aim 1: Enhancement of Long-Term Retention Area

Objective 1: Enhance habitats within the Long-Term Retention area (compartment 37A) (5.6 ha) adjacent to T8

- 1.3.3 Objective 1 will aim to enhance the habitats within the long term retention compartment immediately adjacent to the east of T8 outwith the wind protection zones highlighted in the wind farm felling plan⁴. This area would be an additional felling area owing to the potential wind blow risk resulting from felling of the Wind Protection Zone for T8. The existing forestry within this area currently comprises a commercial crop of Sitka Spruce. It is recommended that, after felling, this location is replanted with native broadleaved woodland to create a riparian woodland habitat and be managed over the long term as natural reserve. This would enhance site biodiversity and align with the Scottish Borders Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (in restoring native woodland in the Scottish Borders
- 1.3.4 The area to be felled to accommodate turbine T8 is larger than the immediate Wind Protection Zone around the turbine base and this is located adjacent to an area of the plantation set aside as natural reserve to the east, which will be enhanced as outlined below.

Aim 2: Enhancement of Natural Reserve Areas

Objective 2: Enhance habitats within the Natural Reserve Areas

- 1.3.5 There are four natural reserve areas including compartment 31A which lies adjacent to the felled area for turbine T7 and also three additional areas (compartment 28D, 41C and 47C) highlighted on the wind farm felling plan as natural reserve. Forestry baseline studies have indicated the potential for improvement in the quality of the existing forestry in line with the long-term forestry management aims and local BAP priorities. No additional felling will be undertaken in this area however, enrichment planting with native broadleaved species is recommended in order to promote species diversity.

³ https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/file/928/local_biodiversity_action_plan

⁴ Figure 17.1 Wind Farm Felling Plan Turbine Area

Aim 3: Management of Wind Protection Zone Felling Areas

Objective 3: Manage habitats inside the wind farm felling areas within the wind protection zones around each turbine (35.27 ha).

- 1.3.6 Objective 3 will aim to manage the habitats within the wind farm felling areas at the turbine bases as highlighted in **Figure 17.1**. It is recommended that these areas are allowed to regenerate naturally so that native vegetation establishes and a balance of 70% short vegetation (less than 1m tall) and 30% scrub regrowth is maintained. It is considered that natural regeneration will be sufficient to establish vegetation of biodiversity value and therefore no additional planting or seeding is required. Selective management and clearance out with the main bird breeding season (March – September inclusive) will be undertaken on a yearly basis in order to ensure continued availability of short vegetation and to prevent trees taking hold and in the scrub reaching a height and density which may cause an operational constraint. Management will maintain short vegetation and scrubby areas around turbine bases and will likely entail coppicing scrub to ground level on a rotational five-year cycle. Note that whilst small open pockets of land around turbines may attract bird species, potentially increasing the collision risk, it is considered that as the species present are small passerines generally considered to be at a low risk of collision the risk is negligible. Goshawks may also use the open areas, but goshawk are a specialist hunter of enclosed forest so again the risk is minimal. Overall, open areas may increase the diversity of the avifauna by providing suitable habitat for small passerine species such as meadow pipit and it is considered that the positive impact outweighs any negative effects.

1.4 Monitoring

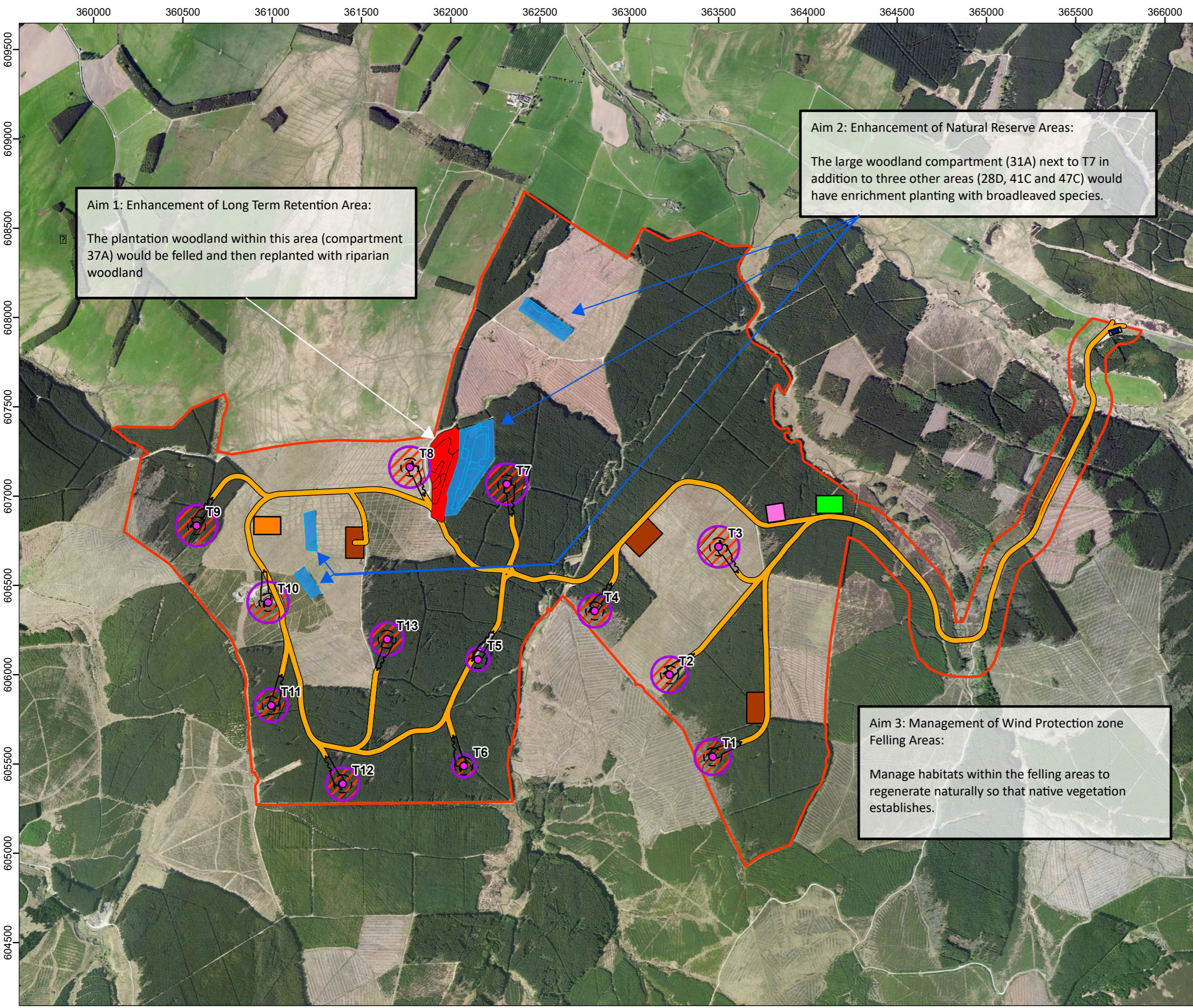
- 1.4.1 Habitats within the wind farm felling areas at turbine bases will be monitored to establish whether the approved HMP aims and objectives are being achieved and assess the effectiveness of such measures. This will inform adaptive management in order to refine the HMP strategy which will be established and agreed in consultation with NatureScot, and SBC.
- 1.4.2 Annually, in years one to five post-construction, the natural regeneration will be monitored at the end of the growing season by a simple visual inspection to ensure a suitable balance between short vegetation (70%) and scrub regrowth (30%) is present. From year five, an adaptive monitoring strategy will be implemented with future monitoring on an approximately five-yearly basis, as appropriate. If visual inspection indicates there is more than 70% scrub, or the scrub is at a height that may cause an operational constraint, then scrub regrowth will be coppiced to maintain a balance between short vegetation and scrub.
- 1.4.3 The HMP would run for the 35-year operational lifespan of the Proposed Development, with monitoring results being used to inform amendments to the HMP as required.
- 1.4.4 Habitat management aims and objectives over the decommissioning and restoration phase of the Proposed Development would be developed as part of the Decommissioning Strategy process (see **Chapter 2 Proposed Development**, Section 2.6).

- 1.4.5 Monitoring of riparian woodland planting within the long term retention area adjacent to T8 and broadleaved planting in natural reserve areas will be undertaken annually for first five years to ensure trees are establishing well. Any failures will be replanted and allowed to establish naturally. Monitoring by visual search will inform if remedial forestry management is required such as thinning. Any management will be in line within the wind farm forestry plan.

Figure 1: Proposed Habitat Enhancement and Creation Measures



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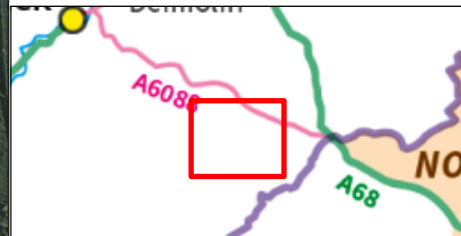


Aim 1: Enhancement of Long Term Retention Area:
 The plantation woodland within this area (compartment 37A) would be felled and then replanted with riparian woodland

Aim 2: Enhancement of Natural Reserve Areas:
 The large woodland compartment (31A) next to T7 in addition to three other areas (28D, 41C and 47C) would have enrichment planting with broadleaved species.

Aim 3: Management of Wind Protection zone Felling Areas:
 Manage habitats within the felling areas to regenerate naturally so that native vegetation establishes.

- Legend:**
- Application Boundary
 - Turbine Locations
 - 50m Turbine Buffer
 - Access Tracks
 - Hardstands
 - Borrow Pit Search Areas
 - Temporary Turbine Layover Area
 - Mobilisation Compound (70m x 30m)
 - Construction Compound (100m x 100m)
- Substation (150m x 100m)**
- Preferred Substation Option
 - Alternate Substation Option
 - Wind Protection Zone (WPZ)
 - Felling Areas within WPZ
 - Felling Areas to be Enhanced
 - Natural Reserve Areas



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TITLE: Figure 8.5.1:
 Technical Appendix 8.5
 Proposed Habitat Enhancement
 and Creation Measures

