



Species Protection Plan: Water Vole

Tangy IV Wind Farm

Report Versions

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Glossary

The following defines some of the terms used throughout this document:

The Development – All aspects of the Tangy IV Wind Farm construction project, including decommissioning of Tangy I and II Wind Farms.

The Employer – The wind farm developer (i.e., SSE Renewables).

The Contractor/Principal Contractor – The Contractor responsible for Civil Infrastructure and the Principal Contractor as defined in the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2015.

Aftercare – The definition of aftercare is considered largely synonymous with Restoration, although relates specifically to the requirement for further management effort as informed by post-restoration monitoring. For example, where seeding has been undertaken although subsequent monitoring has determined failure and requirement for additional effort to achieve restoration targets.

Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) – The document submitted in support of the wind farm planning application which comprehensively describes the site, baseline environmental conditions, potential impacts of the development and prescribed mitigation. The principles outlined in this document form part of the conditions of the Planning Consent.

Decommissioning – Decommissioning is a process including the partial removal of the wind farm components and infrastructure. Decommissioning may extend to the entire wind farm after its natural operational phase or relate to discrete areas of one or more turbines as part of upgrade / replacement works. Decommissioning works will involve similar tasks / impacts as construction works and will be subject to additional detailed proposals to be submitted to the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the decommissioning works.

Development Run-Off – Run-off from site infrastructure that may contain suspended solids, silt or other organic matter that requires treatment before discharge to the environment.

ECoW – The Environmental/Ecological Clerk of Works is an independent specialist appointed by the Employer. The ECoW monitors compliance of works with regard to environmental and ecological aspects in accordance with relevant planning conditions, applicable regulations, current best practice and prescribed works methods. The ECoW provides advice to the Employer.

Reinstatement – Reinstatement works undertaken during decommissioning aiming to address any development of landscape and habitats as part of the decommissioning works. Reinstatement is undertaken as soon as practical following the decommissioning works in each area, such as the redressing of road and tracks where applicable, turbine bases (and other areas that may be disturbed as a result of the decommissioning process). Re-seeding (conventional or hydroseeding) may be part of reinstatement measures where redressing proves unsuccessful.

Restoration – Restoration works are generally defined as long-term measures aimed to restore the ecological status (comparable to pre-commencement / baseline) of the development, through species and / or habitat management.

1. Introduction

SSE Renewables plan to repower the existing Tangy Wind Farm, Kintyre, Scotland. The 'Works' to facilitate 'Tangy Wind Farm IV' will include construction 16 new wind turbines, the decommissioning of 22 existing turbines, reinstatement, aftercare and restoration works.

Tangy Wind Farm IV will be located on land 9 km north-west of Campbeltown, Kintyre, Scotland, hereafter referred to as the "Site", and is shown on a site layout plan produced for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); **Figure 1**. The Site comprises areas of commercial forestry in the north and agricultural grazing in the south, in addition to the existing wind farm. Several small watercourses are present within the Site, many of which have hydrological connectivity to Tangy Loch, located approximately 230 m south-east of the Site at its closest point.

There are no nationally or internationally designated sites within the Site. Tangy Loch and Lussa Loch are part of the Kintyre Goose Roosts Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site, both of which are located within 1 km of the Site. Tangy Loch Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) extends across adjacent terrestrial habitat to the Loch directly adjacent to the Site. Lussa Loch SSSI and Tangy Gorse SSSI are within 1 km east and south-west of the Site. None of these designated sites are designated for the presence of water vole.

In 2013, a full suite of ecological surveys was undertaken in support of Tangy III, a wind farm within the Site for which planning permission was granted. In 2018, an updated extended Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken to confirm ecological conditions at the Site. Update ecology surveys were undertaken in 2023. No evidence of water vole was recorded, however suitable habitat was found to be present (**Figure 2**).

This Species Protection Plan (SPP) has been prepared by WSP UK Ltd. (WSP) on behalf of SSE Renewables to ensure the welfare of water vole and minimise (as far as reasonable possible) potential disturbances to water vole during the construction.' The SPP will be referred to before and during the works by all personnel on Site, with the intention of ensuring legal compliance to legislation afforded to this species (outlined below).

2. Legislative Context

This SPP should be interpreted in cognisance of wildlife legislation relating to the protection of water vole. Water voles are afforded legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which covers the water vole's place of shelter (burrow). This means that it is an offence to deliberately or recklessly:

- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that water voles use for shelter or protection; and
- Disturb a water vole while it is using any such place of shelter or protection.

3. Ecology and Field Signs

Water voles typically live beside bodies of water including slow-flowing burns, small backwaters, canals, ditch systems and overgrown field drains. They feed on grasses and herbs and dig burrows into the banks. Steep or stepped bank profiles are preferred with soft soil where they create nest chambers (burrows) above the water table. American mink *Neovison vison* prey on water vole and have had a dramatic impact on populations across Britain.

Water vole presence can be indicated from the following evidence:

- Burrows – usually wider than high with a diameter of 4-8 cm;
- Faeces - recognisable by their size, shape and content. If not too dried out, these are also distinguishable from rat droppings by their smell;
- Latrines – faeces deposited at discrete locations such as sand banks along watercourses;
- Runways and pathways - discreet pathways and corridors amongst vegetation;
- Feeding stations – recognisable neat piles of food items of lengths up to 10cm, often found on pathways;
- Lawns – grazed vegetation may be present around the entrance of burrows;
- Footprints – on bare earth; and
- Nests – woven nests may be found in vegetation where burrows are not present.



Water vole feeding station (Credit: WSP)



Water vole burrow (Credit: WSP)



Water vole latrine (Credit: WSP)

4. Works with Potential to Impact Water Vole

Works on site will include geotechnical investigations (GI), clear felling of forestry areas (including timber removal), construction phases and existing wind farm decommissioning phases. It is anticipated that Works will require the creation of temporary construction compounds, borrow pits and welfare facilities. The hours of work will be between the hours of 7am and 7pm.

If present the Works have potential for the following impacts on water vole (which in the absence of mitigation would contravene legislation afforded to them):

- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that water voles use for shelter or protection; and
- Disturbance from noise and vibration disturbance could occur during all stages of the Works.
- Disturbance effects will have a short-term, temporary impact on water vole in the vicinity of the Works.

5. Mitigation

5.1. Pre-Construction

An ecologist/ Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be appointed to oversee the Works. The appointed ecologist will be of at least 'Capable' level in surveying for and advising mitigation for water vole, as per the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) competency framework (CIEEM, 2019). The appointed ecologist will then undertake and oversee the measures detailed below.

Prior to commencement of any works, the following will be undertaken:

- The appointed ecologist will do a pre-construction survey of the Site, particularly the watercourses/wetland habitat (**Figure 2**), for any evidence of water vole including burrows, latrines or feeding stations and to highlight the most suitable water vole habitat;
- This SPP will be made available to all works personnel, with a hard copy available on Site;
- The appointed ecologist will present the information held within this SPP and any other supporting information to works personnel; and
- An avoidance buffer (which will be determined depending on the nature of works in the area at the time) will be physically marked out on Site by the appointed ecologist surrounding any identified burrows/habitat identified through the pre-construction survey. No works should take place and no works personnel should enter without prior consent from appointed ecologist.

5.2. During Construction

The following precautionary methods will be adhered to during all construction works to avoid/minimise disturbance impacts on water vole (if present):

- The appointed ecologist will check working areas and up to 10m buffer for signs of water voles (within suitable habitat only);
- After these areas have been checked they will be subject to a two-phase cut, firstly to a height of 40 cm and then to a height of 20 cm (a strimmer would be suitable for this task);
- After each cut, a search will be repeated within the Site and up to 10 m from the Site;
- Construction areas will be clearly marked out after the appointed ecologist has checked them and confirmed likely absence of water vole;
- All debris, other than those re-used on Site, will be removed from Site upon completion of works;

- Works adjacent to watercourses will comply with best practice guidelines as presented in the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPP) series – in particular GPP5 referencing working in/near water (Netregs, undated);
- All plant and materials will be stored in a designated location, away from watercourses or waterbodies and approved by the appointed ecologist. All plant and materials will be stored appropriately; and
- All plant and machinery will not be left idling when not in use.

Should water vole or evidence of water vole (e.g. burrows, latrines) be discovered (or suspected) at any time during works, the work must stop immediately, and the appointed ecologist informed. Contact information for the appointed ecologist will be readily available to all personnel and is listed in Table 5-1 below.

Table 5-1 – Contact information for appointed ecologist

Name	Contact number	Email address
Helen Simmons	07393 008681	Helen.simmons@wsp.com
Tracy Kerr	07908 010334	Tracy.Kerr@wsp.com

5.3. Alignment with Project ECoW

It is assumed that the appointed ecologist role will be undertaken by the project ECoW where appropriate, to ensure resource efficiency, and allow a holistic approach to management of environmental/ecological issues on the Site.

5.4. Post-Construction

No post-construction mitigation is anticipated as part of this Development. This will be reviewed throughout the Development by the appointed ecologist.

6. References

CIEEM (2019). Competency Framework [online]. Available at <https://cieem.net/resource/competency-framework/> [Accessed 19/07/2023].

Netregs (undated). Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPPs) - Full list [online]. Available at: <http://www.netregs.org.uk/environmental-topics/pollution-prevention-guidelines-pgps-and-replacement-series/guidance-for-pollution-prevention-gpps-full-list/> [Accessed 19/07/2023]

7. Figures

Figure 1: Site Layout Plan (produced for the EIA; Figure 5.1)

Figure 2: Water Vole Protection Plan

Key

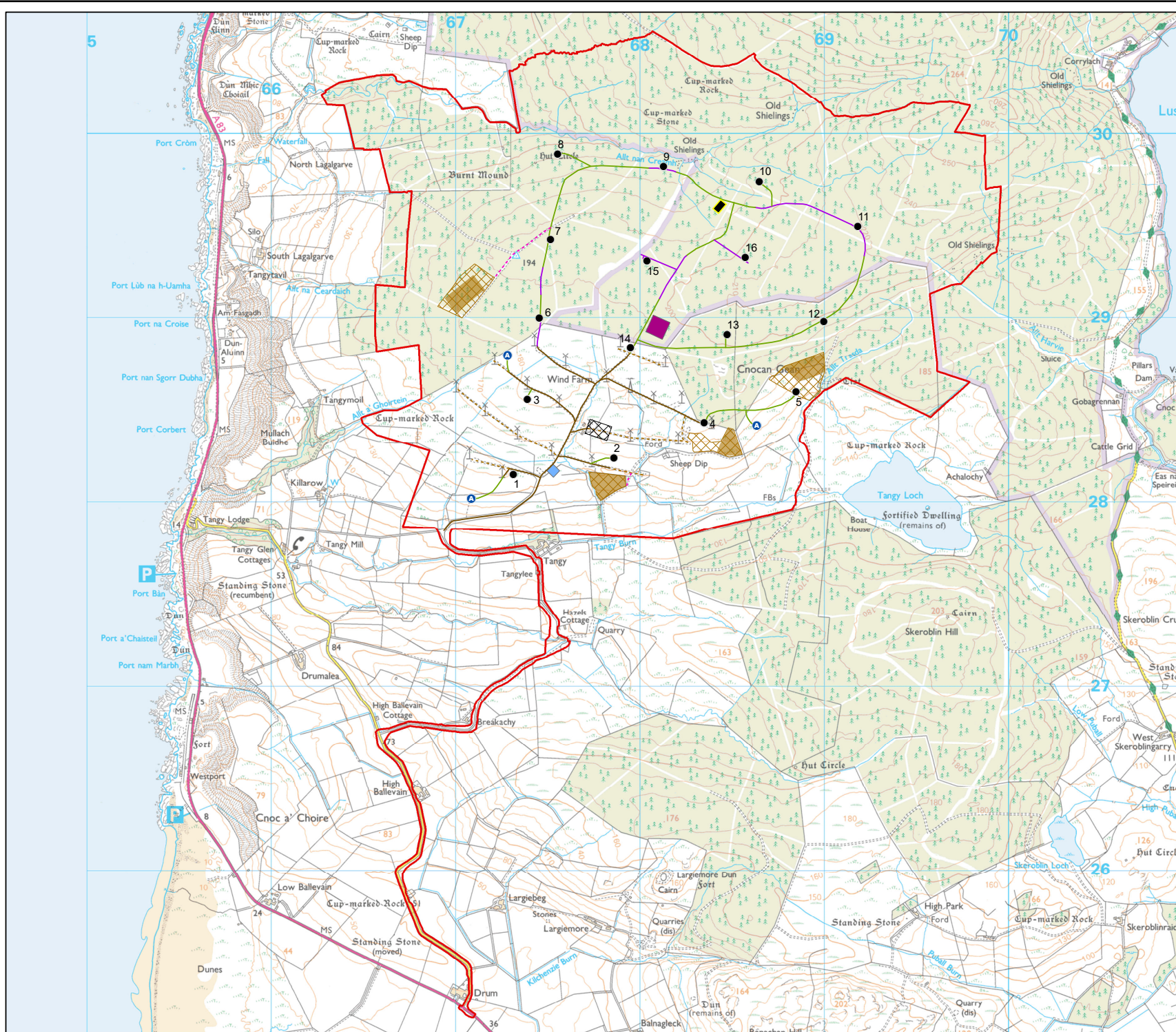
- Site Boundary
- Turbine
- ⦿ Permanent Met Mast
- New Cut Track
- New Floating Track
- Existing Track to be Reused
- Existing Track for Construction Only
- Existing Track to be Reinstated
- Operations Building
- Substation
- Laydown Area
- Borrow Pit Working Area
- Borrow Pit Search Area
- Construction Compound

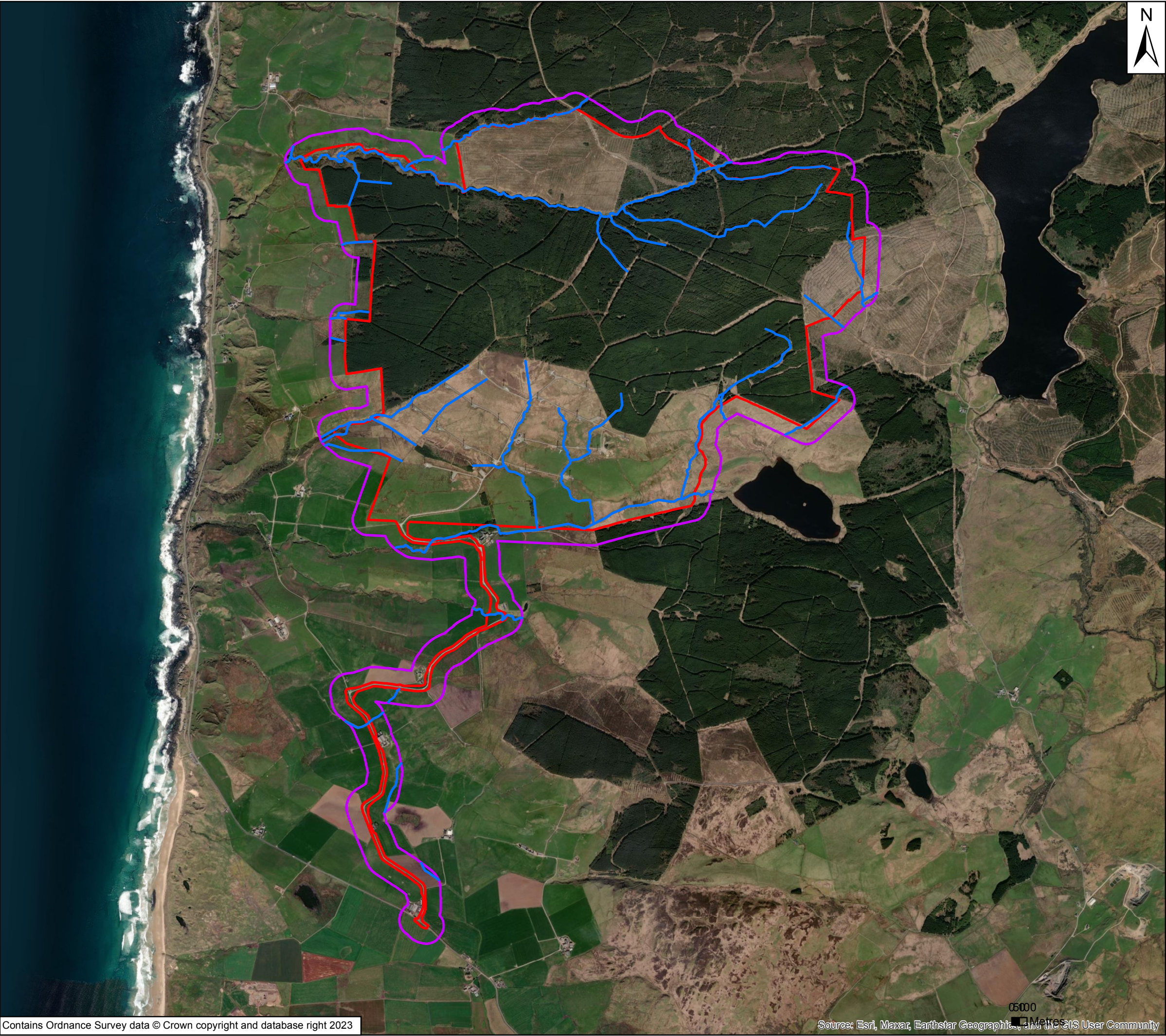
Scale 1:20,000 @ A3

0 0.5 1 Km

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Figure 5.1
Site Layout





Key

- Site Boundary
- Water Vole Survey Area - 100m Buffer
- Watercourses



Client:

Project:
Tangy IV Ecology and Ornithology

Title:
Water Vole Protection Plan
Figure 2

Drawing No:	Layers	Drawn:	KM
Date:	08/09/2023	Checked:	DC
Scale:	24,000 @ A3	Approved:	HS