

Appendix 7.3 Access Track Phase 1 Habitat Survey

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YELL WINDFARM

Phase 1 Habitat Survey (Access Track)

August 2018

Quality Management

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 ITP Energised was appointed by Element Power to undertake a Phase 1 habitat survey of a proposed windfarm access track between Sellafirth and Cullivoe, Yell (hereafter referred to as the 'Site'). The Site has central Ordnance Survey Grid Reference NS 77989 95484.

1.1.2 The purpose of the Phase 1 habitat survey was to document the habitats present within the Site and a 150m buffer (collectively referred to as the 'Study Area'). The survey results are intended to compliment a full Phase 1 habitat and National Vegetation Classification survey of the adjacent windfarm site (Botanaeco, 2016) in order to facilitate the identification of potential constraints to development and where mitigation and/or further survey work may be required to inform a future planning application, as appropriate.

1.1.3 This report describes the methods used to gather and record habitat baseline information for the Site; and provides details of the field investigation. Where appropriate, further recommendations are outlined.

1.2 Site Description

1.2.1 The Site measures 6.86 km in length and the Study Area measures approximately 212 hectares, the majority of which comprises open moorland. The Site runs north from the A968 in Sellafirth, then northeast to the B9082 in Cullivoe, and is generally gently sloping, cut with watercourses.

1.3 Development Proposal

1.3.1 The Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken to inform a planning application for a proposed windfarm ('the Proposed Development').

2 Legislation, Policy and Guidelines

2.1.1 Key legislation and guidelines relevant to the present assessment are summarised below.

2.2 Legislation

2.2.1 Full consideration has been given to all relevant nature conservation legislation when carrying out this assessment. This includes the following:

- The Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna (the Habitats Directive) 1992 (92/43/3EEC);
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended);
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (as amended); and
- The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) which places a statutory duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity through the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, with Scottish priority species and habitats listed on the Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL), itself based on the former UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP), and regional biodiversity targets defined through the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) (see Section 3).

2.3 Best Practice Ecological Guidance

2.3.1 As part of the Phase 1 habitat survey, cognisance has been taken of the following good practice guidelines/survey method publications:

- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine.
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a technique for environmental audit, revised reprint.

3 Biodiversity

3.1 Biodiversity Actions Plans

Scottish Biodiversity List

3.1.1 Scottish Ministers created the SBL (Scottish Government, 2013) in 2005 to satisfy the requirements under Section 2(4) of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, assist public bodies in carrying out conservation of biodiversity, as well as to provide the general public with information regarding conservation within Scotland. The SBL comprises species and habitats listed using both scientific and social criteria. Only scientific criteria are considered relevant to this report. They include the following:

- All UK Priority Species present in Scotland;
- Species which Scotland has an international obligation to safeguard;
- All species defined as nationally rare at a GB or UK level that are present in Scotland;
- Species with populations present (resident, wintering or breeding) in five or fewer 10km squares or sites in Scotland;
- All species that are endemic to Scotland;
- Any sub-species or race that is widely recognised and accepted by the scientific (or other relevant) community and that is endemic to Scotland, if it also meets one of the other criteria; and
- Natural and semi-natural habitats that are known to be particularly important for supporting assemblages of plant or animal groups that are data deficient, such as fungi, bryophytes, lichens, algae and invertebrates.

3.1.2 At the time of its creation the SBL contained a total of 41 land-based habitat types, 19 marine habitats, 22 terrestrial mammal species, 104 species of birds, 303 invertebrate species, 12 freshwater fish, 244 vascular plants and 711 fungi species¹.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

3.1.3 Living Shetland outlined a Shetland Local Biodiversity Action Plan in 2004 which was not updated and is no longer available to view online.

4 Methods

4.1.1 The survey was carried out of the Study Area on 28th and 30th August 2018, by a qualified and experienced ecologist using the JNCC survey methodology (JNCC, 2010), which is a standardised

¹ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/16118/Biodiversitylist/SBL> (accessed September 2018)

technique for classifying and mapping British habitats. Habitats greater than 0.1ha were mapped and classified based on the dominant plant species and their associates.

- 4.1.2 The vegetation was described in a series of georeferenced target notes (TNs), with plant nomenclature following Stace (2010). Target notes were also produced to describe notable habitats too small to be mapped.
- 4.1.3 Whilst not a full botanical species survey, the Phase 1 habitat survey enables experienced ecologists to obtain an understanding of the ecology of a site, such that it is possible to confirm the nature conservation significance of the site and assess whether the potential for impacts on habitats is likely to represent a material consideration in planning terms.

5 Baseline

5.1 Field Survey

Overview

- 5.1.1 The results of the Phase 1 habitat survey are presented below and shown on Figure 1, which illustrates the location and extent of all habitat types recorded within the Site boundary and 150m buffer. Target note (TN) locations are also shown, and TNs are detailed in Appendix A.

Phase 1 Habitat Descriptions

- 5.1.2 The following eleven habitat types (Phase 1 habitat codes are shown in brackets) are present within the Study Area:

- Unimproved grassland (B1.1);
- Semi-improved grassland (B1.2);
- Improved grassland (B4);
- Marshy grassland (B5);
- Blanket bog (E1.6.1);
- Bare peat (E4);
- Standing water - oligotrophic (G1.3);
- Running water (G2);
- Intertidal (H1.3);
- Quarry (J2.1); and
- Other (hard standing, gravel road, sheep pen) (J5).

Unimproved grassland

- 5.1.3 A field of unimproved acid grassland was recorded south of the Site (TN10). Sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*) was recorded as the dominant species with Devil's-bit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), hawkweeds (*Hieracium* spp.), compact rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*), sharp-flowered rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) all frequently noted. The western edge of the section was noted as a mosaic of grassland and blanket bog.

Semi-improved grassland

- 5.1.4 A number of acid semi-improved grassland fields were recorded at the north and south end of the Study Area (TN1-5, TN9, TN32 and TN34). The sections all displayed similar characteristics with sheep's fescue recorded as the dominant grass species, red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) was also noted as

dominant or abundant and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), hare's tail cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), common sedge (*Carex nigra*) and compact rush were also present. White clover (*Trifolium repens*), creeping buttercup, silverweed (*Argentina anserina*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) and spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) were also frequently recorded within the grassland sections. A stand of autumn gentian (*Gentianella amarella*) was recorded in the south of the Study Area (TN34).

Improved grassland

- 5.1.5 Two fields of improved sheep grazed grassland were recorded within the Study Area (TN7 and TN33).

Marshy grassland

- 5.1.6 A section of marshy grassland was recorded either side of a watercourse in the south of the study area (TN31). Hare's tail cottongrass was recorded as the dominant species with sharp-flowered rush and lesser spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) noted as abundant. Marsh pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), compact rush and Yorkshire fog were all frequently recorded with occasional records of marsh willowherb (*Epilobium palustre*) and *Polytrichum* moss spp. also noted.
- 5.1.7 A second section was recorded as a marshy grassland and blanket bog mosaic (TN11) with cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) and sheep's fescue recorded as the dominant species. Devil's-bit scabious, tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), common sedge and hare's tail cotton grass were all frequently recorded.

Blanket bog

- 5.1.8 Blanket bog covers the majority of the Study Area and was noted as generally being in good condition (TN12 and TN28) containing occasional oligotrophic pools, although there were some small sections that were heavily eroded (TN20).
- 5.1.9 Hare's tail cotton grass was noted as the dominant species throughout much of the blanket bog with cross-leaved heath, as well as *Polytrichum*, *Sphagnum* and other moss species recorded as dominant in sections. Tormentil, sharp-flowered rush, ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), common sedge, bog asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and crowberry (*Empetrum* sp.) were all recorded as either abundant or frequent in sections with round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) also noted.

Bare peat

- 5.1.10 A section of peat cutting was recorded east of the gravel track (TN16). Marshy grassland was noted in sections between the peat cuts.

Standing Water – Oligotrophic Lochs and Lochans

- 5.1.11 A number of oligotrophic lochs and lochans were recorded within the Study Area, two in the northern section (TN17, TN18) are fringed with blanket bog, species as noted above. The larger loch (TN17) is a reservoir and contained no aquatic vegetation. Further lochans in the south of the Study Area, (TN22, TN29 and TN30) contained floating bur-reed (*Sparganium angustifolium*) and curled pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) and were fringed by marshy grassland species such as compact rush and sharp-flowered rush.

Running Water

- 5.1.12 A number of small water courses were recorded throughout the Study Area (TN8, TN14, TN15, TN23, TN25 and TN26). The water course banks were noted as having a number of blanket bog and grassland species with hare's tail cottongrass, sharp-flowered rush, lesser spearwort, marsh pennywort, compact rush, sheep's fescue, marsh thistle and marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*) all recorded as dominant, frequent or abundant species.

Intertidal

5.1.13 The extreme northeast of the Study Area was recorded as a section of intertidal habitat (TN35).

Quarry

5.1.14 There is a disused quarry which lies directly southeast of the gravel track (TN20). *Polytrichum*, other mosses, hare's tail cottongrass, sheep's fescue, creeping thistle, common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) were all recorded within the quarry.

Other (hard standing / gravel track / sheepfold)

5.1.15 The A968, B9082 and a small number of tarmac roads were recorded in the northern and southern sections of the Study Area (TN36 and TN37). The Site follows the route of a gravel track for much of its length (TN6 and TN12), the gravel track is flanked on either side by man-made ditches and verges containing typical blanket bog and grassland species as described earlier. A sheepfold was recorded along the edge of the gravel track (TN27).

Invasive Non-native Species

5.1.16 No evidence of invasive non-native plant species was recorded during the field survey.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Habitats

6.1.1 The majority (75.5%) of the Study Area is made up of blanket bog. Blanket bog is a priority habitat for conservation according to its national (SBL) and international importance (Annex 1 EC Habitats Directive). The blanket bog within the Study Area was noted as generally being in good condition as was the case with large sections of the windfarm site (Botanaeco, 2016).

6.1.2 Lochans are included in Annex I of the Habitats Directive and Scottish Biodiversity List. There are a number of small and medium sized lochans within the Study Area and although their vegetation is limited in terms of its species richness and cover/productivity, this is a natural feature of these nutrient-poor lochans.

6.1.3 The acid grassland sections of the Study Area is generally of low value to nature conservation because of its secondary nature and species-poor and uneven species composition.

7 References

Botanaeco (2016). Yell Phase 1 Habitats and National Vegetation Classification.

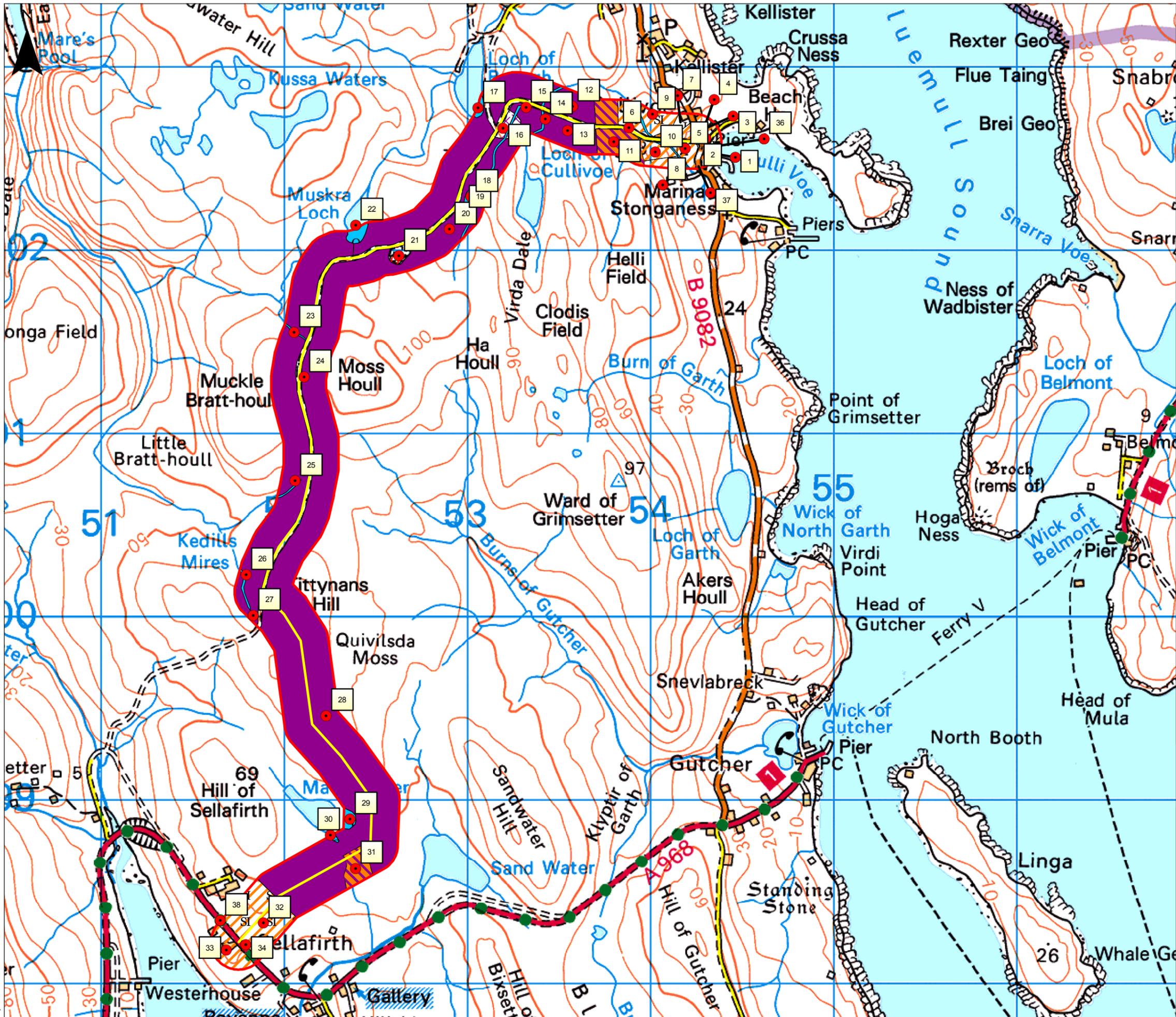
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Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a technique for environmental audit, revised re-print. JNCC, Peterborough, UK.

Stace, C (2010). New Flora of the British Isles: 3rd Edition. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

Figures



KEY

- Proposed Access Track
- Study Area (150m)
- Phase 1 Habitats**
- Habitat**
- Unimproved grassland (B1.1)
- Semi-improved grassland (B1.2)
- Improved grassland (B4)
- Marshy grassland (B5)
- Blanket bog (E1.6.1)
- Bare peat (E4)
- Standing water (G1.3)
- Running water (G2)
- Intertidal (H1.3)
- Quarry (I2.1)
- Other (J5)
- Target Notes

0 0.5 1 km

Scale 1:20,000 @ A3

Yell Windfarm
Proposed Access Track

Figure 1

Phase 1 Habitats and Target Notes

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Appendix A - Target Notes

Table 1: Target Notes

TN	Grid Reference	Habitat code	Notes
1	HP 54311 02567	B1.2	Verge adjacent to foreshore. Semi-improved grassland. Sheep's fescue (<i>Festuca ovina</i>) (D), hawkweed spp (<i>Hieracium</i> spp.) (A), common mouse-ear (<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>) (F), common bird's-foot trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>) (F), creeping buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>) (F), plantain spp. (<i>Plantago</i> spp) (F), silverweed (<i>Argentina anserina</i>) (F) and white clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>) (F).
2	HP 54295 02573	B1.2	Triangle in road. Semi-improved wet grassland. Yellow flag (F) (<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>), creeping buttercup (F), tormentil (<i>Potentilla erecta</i>) (F), silverweed (F), Devil's-bit scabious (<i>Succisa pratensis</i>) (O), common horsetail (<i>Equisetum arvense</i>) (F), red fescue (<i>Festuca rubra</i>) (D), common sorrel (<i>Rumex acetosa</i>) (F) and Yorkshire fog (<i>Holcus lanatus</i>) (O).
3	HP 54259 02597	B1.2	Wide verge. Semi-improved wet grassland. Yellow flag (F), creeping buttercup (F), tormentil (F), silverweed (F), Devil's-bit scabious (O), common horsetail (F), red fescue (D), common sorrel (F), Yorkshire fog (O), common mouse-ear (O), yarrow (O) and perennial rye grass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>) (O).
4	HP 54279 02608	B1.2	Field. Semi-improved grassland. Red fescue (D), yellow flag (F), tormentil (F), Yorkshire fog (O), Devil's-bit scabious (F), hare's-tail cottongrass (<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>), (O), common sorrel (O), common horsetail (O), <i>Polytrichum</i> spp. (O), creeping buttercup (F), common mouse-ear (O), creeping thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>) (F) and white clover (O).
5	HP 54263 02566	B1.2	Pony paddock. Semi-improved grassland. Sheep's fescue (D), yellow flag (O), creeping buttercup (O) and common horsetail (O). Wetter along southern boundary at ditch edge with marsh marigold (<i>Caltha palustris</i>) (O) and sharp-flowered rush (O). Drier at western end with yellow rattle (<i>Rhinathus minor</i>) (O). Marshy grassland at the eastern end next to the road with Yorkshire fog (F) and eye-bright (<i>Euphrasia</i> spp.) (O).
6	HP 54207 02588	J5	Track. Ditch to either side and verge. Yellow flag (F), Yorkshire fog (F), red fescue (A), hawkweed spp. (O), common horsetail (O), tormentil (O), Devil's-bit scabious (O), common daisy (<i>Bellis perennis</i>) (O), common mouse-ear (O), creeping buttercup (O), ribwort plantain (<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>) (O), violet spp. (<i>Violaceae</i> spp.) ('R), hare's-tail cottongrass (O) and procumbent pearlwort (<i>Sagina procumbens</i>). From (TN12) south verge and central strip dominated by blanket bog species; cross-leaved heath (<i>Erica tetralix</i>), ling (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>), sheep's fescue, hare's tail cottongrass and <i>Polytrichum</i> spp.
7	HP 54180 02715	B4	Improved sheep-grazed grassland.
8	HP 54130 02517	G2	Watercourse. Bankside vegetation; marsh marigold (F) and compact rush (<i>Juncus conglomeratus</i>) (O).
9	HP 54060 02745	B1.2	Semi-improved grassland. Yorkshire fog (D), sheep's fescue (D), common sorrel (F), creeping buttercup (F), Devil's-bit scabious

TN	Grid Reference	Habitat code	Notes
			(F), ribwort plantain (F) and tormentil (F). Marshy grassland in centre with a large stand of compact rush.
10	HP 54062 02560	B1.1	Unimproved grassland. Sheep's fescue (D), Devil's-bit scabious (F), hawkweed spp. (F), compact rush (F), sharp-flowered rush (F) and creeping buttercup (F). At the western end becomes mosaic with blanket bog (see TN11).
11	HP53768 02744	E1.6.1	Blanket bog/marshy grassland mosaic. Cross-leaved heath (D), sheep's fescue (D), Devil's-bit scabious (F), hawkweed spp. (F), pleurocarpous mosses (F), common cottongrass (F), hare's tail cottongrass (F), crowberry (<i>Empetrum</i> sp.) (O), tormentil (F), <i>Sphagnum</i> spp. (F), bog asphodel (<i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>) (O), brown bent (O), purple moor-grass (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>) (F), common sedge (<i>Carex nigra</i>) (F) and Yorkshire fog (R).
12	HP 53343 02936	E1.6.1	Blanket bog with wet <i>Sphagnum</i> -covered pools. Hare's tail cottongrass (D), <i>Polytrichum</i> spp. (D), <i>Sphagnum</i> spp. (D), cross-leaved heath (D), tormentil (F), crowberry (F), sheep's fescue (F), common cottongrass (A), sharp-flowered rush (F), round-leaved sundew (<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>) (O) and bog asphodel (O).
13	HP 53573 02664	J5	Track with blanket bog/bare ground mosaic.
14	HP 53406 02753	G2	Watercourse with marsh thistle (D), compact rush (D) and <i>Polytrichum</i> spp. (A) along fringe.
15	HP 53261 02765	G2	Burn with fringe of compact rush (A), Yorkshire fog (A), common horsetail (F) and common sorrel (F).
16	HP 53178 02650	E4	Active peat cuttings and marshy grassland.
17	HP 53058 02749	G1.3	Oligotrophic loch (reservoir) with no aquatic vegetation.
18	HP 53031 02399	G1.3	Oligotrophic bog pools with bog pondweed (F). Margins as blanket bog above but additionally <i>Sphagnum</i> spp. (F), round-leaved sundew (F) and ling (F).
19	HP 53017 02352	E1.6.1	Flat valley with abundant bog pools. Grasses, excepting cottongrass absent. Hare's tail cottongrass (D), cross-leaved heath (A), ling (A), <i>Sphagnum</i> spp. (F), crowberry (F) and in drier areas pleurocarpous mosses. Pools; bog pondweed (F), sharp-flowered rush (F) and compact rush (O).
20	HP 52985 02273	E1.6.1	Blanket bog heavily eroded. From here south the blanket bog is hare's tail cottongrass (D), cross-leaved heath (D), ling (F), pleurocarpous mosses (F), <i>Sphagnum</i> spp. (F), crowberry (F) and common sedge (O).
21	HP 52618 01985		Disused quarry. Mosses (D), hare's tail cottongrass (F), sheep's fescue (O), creeping thistle (O), common nettle (O) and <i>Polytrichum</i> spp. (O).
22	HP 52367 02067	G1.3	Oligotrophic loch with floating burweed (<i>Sparganium angustifolium</i>) and curled pondweed (<i>Potamogeton crispus</i>) (~40% surface coverage). Liverworts (<i>Marchantiophyta</i> spp.) on shoreline.
23	HP 52116 01660	G2	Watercourse, passing under track. Grassy at margins with Yorkshire fog, sheep's fescue and compact rush.
24	HP 52110 01360	n/a	Dry bog pool. Bare peat and sharp-flowered rush (D) with compact rush (O) at the edge.
25	HP 52007 00686	G2	Watercourse (excavated at the track side). Bog pondweed (<i>Potamogeton polygonifolius</i>) (O), intermediate water-starwort (<i>Callitriche hamulata</i>) (A), compact rush (F), lesser spearwort

TN	Grid Reference	Habitat code	Notes
			(<i>Ranunculus flammula</i>) (O), marsh pennywort (<i>Hydrocotyle vulgaris</i>) (O), common sorrel (O) and tormentil (F).
26	HP 51801 00063	G2	Watercourse which is a series of bog pools. Hare's tail cottongrass (D) and <i>Sphagnum</i> spp. (D).
27	HP 51841 00031	J5	Sheepfold. Bare ground at trackside.
28	HU 51999 99872	E1.6.1	Blanket bog with occasional oligotrophic bog pools with no aquatic vegetation. Pleurocarpous mosses (D), hare's-tail cottongrass (D), cross-leaved heath (D), <i>Sphagnum</i> spp. (A), ling (A), common sedge (A), bog asphodel (F) and crowberry (F).
29	HU 52367 98946	G1.3	<i>Sphagnum</i> -fringed linear pool probably flows into Maea Water when wetter.
30	HU 52258 98796	G1.3	Maea Water. Oligotrophic with floating burweed . Marshy fringe to eastern side. Compact rush (A), <i>Polytrichum</i> spp. (F), marsh willowherb (<i>Epilobium palustre</i>) (O), <i>Sphagnum</i> spp. (O), hare's-tail cottongrass (O), sharp-flowered rush (F), marsh pennywort (O) and marsh marigold (R).
31	HU 52327 98723	B5	Marshy grassland. Hare's-tail cottongrass (D), sharp-flowered rush (A), lesser spearwort (A), marsh pennywort (F), compact rush (F), marsh willowherb (O), <i>Polytrichum</i> spp. (O) and Yorkshire fog (F).
32	HU 51845 98405	B1.2	Enclosed sheep-grazed field. Sheep's fescue (D), pleurocarpous mosses (D), tormentil (A), hare's-tail cottongrass (A) especially on the lower slope, Devil's-bit scabious (O), hawkweed spp. (O), heath milkwort (F), common sedge (F), Yorkshire fog (F), round-leaved sundew (O), cross-leaved heath (O), ling (O), <i>Sphagnum</i> spp. (R), compact rush (R), spear thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>) (R), marsh cudweed (<i>Gnaphalium uliginosum</i>) (R) and common mouse-ear (R).
33	HU 51678 98275	B4	Improved sheep-grazed grassland.
34	HU 51702 98298	B1.2	Road-side verge. 50% bare ground. Sheep's fescue (D), hawkweed spp. (O), crowberry (O), common sorrel (O), marsh thistle (R), spear thistle (R), sea plantain (<i>Plantago maritima</i>) (A) and autumn gentian (<i>Gentianella amarella</i>) (R). Ditch between verge and field. Hare's-tail cottongrass (F), sheep's fescue (F), Yorkshire fog (F), compact rush (F), lesser spearwort (F), creeping buttercup (O), marsh willowherb (O) and spear thistle (R).