



**Phase 1 Habitat
Survey at Myreton,
Keith**

**Prepared for
Seren Energy Ltd**

January 2009

RSK GENERAL NOTES

Project No: P851450

Title: Phase 1 Habitat Survey at Myreton, Keith

Client: Seren Energy Ltd

Issue Date: 13th January 2009

Issuing Office: Aberdeen

Authorised by:		Project Manager	Date: 12 th Jan 2009
Authorised by:		Project QA Rep	Date: 13 th Jan 2009

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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.

This work has been undertaken in accordance with the Quality Management System of RSK Carter Ecological Ltd.

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1 PHASE 1 HABITAT ASSESSMENT

An ecological appraisal of the proposed Seren Energy Ltd windfarm development at Myreton Farm, Keith has been undertaken by RSK Carter Ecological Ltd. This included a desk-based assessment and a site visit on 12th December 2008 to undertake an extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Preliminary Protected Species Survey.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of the ecological survey were to:

- identify any surrounding nature conservation sites within 2km through the MAGIC database;
- obtain detailed baseline information on the current habitats and ecological features in and around the site;
- identify the presence of any UK Priority Habitats;
- identify the presence or potential presence of any protected species whose disturbance may require consent under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981* (as amended) or the *Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations, 1994*; and
- identify any further, specialist surveys that may be required.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Desk Based Assessment

A desk-based assessment was undertaken prior to the site visit to identify any potential conservation areas or nature reserves that are within a 2km radius of the site. The search focussed on identifying:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's);
- Special Protection Areas (SPA's);
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- Ramsar sites, RSPB Reserves and Important Bird Areas; and
- National Nature Reserves (NNR's) and Biosphere Reserves.

1.2.2 Phase 1 Habitat Survey

A Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken at the site, located at Myreton Farm, near Keith, Moray. Methodology was in accordance with Joint Nature Conservation Council (JNCC) (1990) standard Phase 1 survey methodology.

1.2.3 Preliminary Protected Species Survey

The site, including the boundary and immediate vicinity (within 50m of boundary) were examined for signs of European Protected Species and Nationally Protected Species.

1.2.4 *Survey Limitations*

It has not been the aim of this survey to record every species present in the vicinity of the site. Only those species listed above and those that are present at the time of the survey have been recorded.

It should also be noted that the survey was undertaken out-with the optimal time for survey of most species particularly flowering plants, amphibians and breeding birds, therefore some plant species were not identified due to lack of flowers and leaves.

In addition the weather on the day of survey was poor with high winds and sub-zero temperatures, which would have influenced the numbers of species observed particularly birds.

2 RESULTS

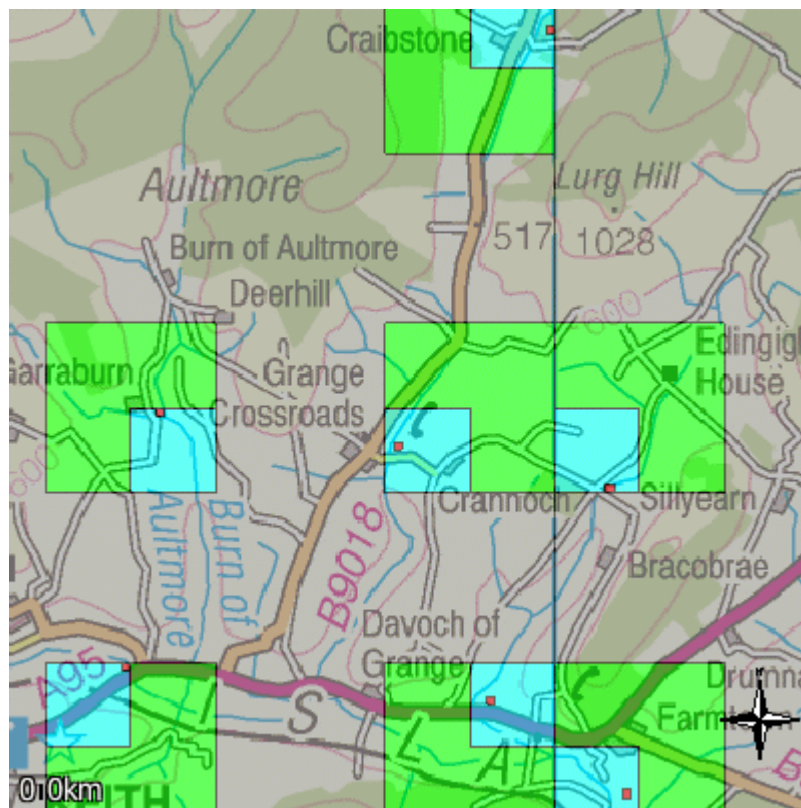
2.1 Desk Based Assessment

The desk study included use of the National Biodiversity Network gateway website (www.nbn.org.uk), *magic* website (www.magic.gov.uk) and correspondence from the North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC).

The findings of the desk-based assessment indicated that there are no conservation areas or nature reserves within 2km of the site.

The desk study revealed that there are records of otters within 2km of the site from between 1984 and 1991. The locations are shown below:

Otter records from NBN gateway



The ditches and streams where these records are located are generally not individually large enough to support a permanent otter presence, they are most likely being used as dispersal routes between larger local waterbodies or by a home range covering a number of streams. It is therefore likely that a number of these records are of the same one or two animals.

There were no other records of protected species within 2km of the site, although there were records of bats within the town of Keith.

The Site Check Report and Site Check Map from *magic*, and the correspondence from NESBReC are provided in *Appendix A*.

2.2 Phase 1 Habitat Survey Findings

The following sections describe the habitats found on site and their locations are shown on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey map (see *Figure 1, Appendix B*). Target notes (TN) are provided in *Appendix B*.

2.2.1 Site Description

2.2.1.1 Woodland

The woodland on site is a mono-culture of young conifer plantation which does not provide an ecologically rich environment.

However there are some areas of note within the woodland, such as small patches of grass, *Juncus* and Silver Birch (Target Notes 3 & 4), which provide variety in habitat types for the species present. There is also a small row of mature conifers (Target Note 1) close to Myreton farm which provide a nesting resource for larger bird species.

These small areas of open space and differing habitats (including wet ditches and pond discussed later) will attract insects, amphibians and birds to the site and ensure that there is likely to be a reasonable level of diversity on site during the summer given that the overall majority site is ecologically poor.

The majority of the woodland and in particular the open areas within it will be unaffected by the proposed development.

Photo 1 – Woodland ride through young plantation



2.2.1.2 Grass & Arable

The few small areas of grass on site are ecologically poor, with considerable *Juncus spp* in wetter areas. There is some evidence of historical and more recent grazing by sheep and deer. Therefore it has been classified as poor semi-improved grassland.

It is possible that the more open areas adjacent to the site may be used by ground nesting birds during the summer months, however this could not be established by a winter survey. It is unlikely that the grassland on site is used for nesting as it is close to the woodland which would provide ambush opportunities for predators, this would discourage nesting close to woodland areas.

There are a few areas of rough grass within the plantation (including rides) which provide small areas of open space within the woodland and will continue to do so as the woodland matures.

These open areas are important ecological features on a site level within the woodland mono-culture and will be unaffected by the proposed development.

Photo 2 – Poor grassland in north-east corner of site and adjacent



The fields to the north-west of the site which will be crossed by the proposed new access track are typical arable fields found across Scotland of either barley or wheat.

While these will provide a food supply for local birds at all times of year they are not an ecologically important habitat and the construction of a track across them would not reduce their usefulness to the local bird population by any significant amount.

2.2.1.3 *Ditches and water bodies*

The site is crossed by a number of ditches, which generally flow in a south or south-westerly direction across the site. Along these ditches there are a few small areas of open water (generally where blockages or overflows have occurred), the most notable of these is located at Target Note 2 (TN2), which is an area of open water large enough (7m x 4m, 30cm deep) to support some aquatic and emergent vegetation (Photo 3).

These features provide habitat for amphibians and insects in summer (none observed due to timing of survey), which in turn will provide a valuable food source for the birds on site and potentially the local otter population.

These water features are the most ecologically important habitat on site and also the most sensitive to impact as a number of them flow past the proposed construction areas with the associated risk of run-off or pollution events.

Therefore measures should be implemented to protect these features during construction from run-off and pollution to ensure no negative impacts either on site or downstream.

Photo 3 – Target Note 2, area of open water



2.2.2 *Protected Species*

2.2.2.1 *Non Avian Fauna*

European Protected Species

No signs of European Protected Species were identified on site.

Nationally Protected Species

No signs of Nationally Protected Species were identified on site.

While not protected a number of Roe deer were observed on site.

2.2.2.2 *Avian Fauna*

The proposed development area supports some common bird species often found throughout rural north-east Scotland. Species observed during the survey, included pheasant, pigeon, various gulls, rook, robin, wren, blackbird and chaffinch. A buzzard was observed off-site from the road between the site and the town of Keith.

None of the species observed on site are protected (beyond general protection during nesting season) or are particularly sensitive to disturbance or at heightened collision risk from the proposed turbines (except perhaps gulls).

It must be noted that the bird species on site were likely under-recorded due to the timing of the survey and the weather on day on survey (high winds, sub-zero temperature).

3 MITIGATION

The findings of the baseline survey were used to help identify potential impacts of the proposed development on the surrounding ecology. Based on the findings, mitigation measures were developed to help avoid or reduce these impacts.

- Habitat loss will be limited to within the proposed development boundary.
- Best site management practices during construction will be adopted to minimise the risk of secondary impacts to adjacent habitat.
- Management of water run off from construction areas and potential sedimentation will be addressed due to the proximity of the construction areas to ditches, particularly The Burn of Croft.
- Wherever possible, habitat removal (particularly young trees and scrub areas) will take place outside the breeding bird season (approximately September to the end of February) to avoid impacting on nesting birds. Where this is not possible, all habitats will be checked for nesting birds before removal. If any are identified, appropriate mitigation measures will be agreed with SNH and implemented.
- The measures implemented to help mitigate impacts to wildlife will be consistent with species and habitat priorities set out in the LBAP.
- Fencing will be used to prevent animals such as deer gaining access to construction compounds.

3.1 Assessment of Impacts

There will be a slight loss of young plantation and poor semi-improved grassland habitats during the construction works, together with the temporary displacement of the common bird species identified that are associated with these features.

However, due to the nature of the site and many areas of very similar habitat in the surrounding area, there are unlikely to be any long-term residual impacts to the local bird population.

There are unlikely to be any significant impacts upon any other protected species such as otters.

Furthermore, as none of the habitats are of high ecological value, the methods detailed within the mitigation will prevent any residual impact to this habitat and associated species.

It is expected that with the enforcement of appropriate mitigation there are unlikely to be any long-term residual impacts associated with the proposed development.

APPENDIX A

Site Check Report

You clicked on the point:

Grid Ref: **NJ 498 565**

Full Grid Ref: **349894 , 856523**

The following features have been found within 2,000 metres of your search point:

Counties, Metropolitan Districts and Unitary Authorities (GB)

Name	Geographic Level
MORAY	UNITARY AUTHORITY

NUTS1 - Government Office Regions (GB)

Name	Reference	Hotlink
SCOTLAND	UKM	http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/nuts_scot.asp

National Cycle Network (GB)

There are no features within your search area.

Biosphere Reserves (GB)

There are no features within your search area.

Marine Nature Reserves (GB)

There are no features within your search area.

National Nature Reserves (GB)

There are no features within your search area.

Ramsar Sites (GB)

There are no features within your search area.

Special Areas of Conservation (GB)

There are no features within your search area.

Special Protection Areas (GB)

There are no features within your search area.

Important Bird Areas (GB)

There are no features within your search area.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (GB)

There are no features within your search area.

RSPB Reserves (GB)

There are no features within your search area.

To save the report, select "Save As" from the File menu. Give the report a name of your choice and save it in "Web Page, HTML only" format.

You can then open your report using your web browser software.

[Print Report](#) | [Close Window](#)



Our ref: m:\requests\consultants\serenenergy\20081106 - Myreton.doc

Oliver Penney
Seren Energy Ltd,
1B High Street,
Clydach,
Swansea,
SA6 5LG

13 January 2009

Dear Oliver

NESBReC report - 2 proposed wind farm sites at Myreton, Keith

No designated species or sites have been found in the search area. The search was conducted at a radius of 500m around the two proposed sites, according to the co-ordinates given to us by Seren Energy Ltd. These sites are indicated on the following maps by red dots.

A list of all the datasets used in the search process can be obtained directly from NESBReC, but can be summarised as designated and non-designated habitats and priority species.

Results table:

Ref no	Data set	Interest	Locality	Grid Ref	Proposal
20081106	scottish semi-natural woodland inventory (2000)	Planted Conifer (100%) Semi-natural Conifer (10-49%) Planted Conifer (50-99%)	Myreton	NJ 50169 56775	Erection of 2 wind turbines
	ancient woodland inventory	Long-Established (of plantation origin)			

Please find all maps of requested sites included below. If higher resolution maps are required please contact NESBReC directly.

Yours sincerely

Glenn Roberts
Biological Recorder/Manager

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING NOTES:

- 1) Search was done to within 500 metres of the area of interest. This is indicated on the map by a broken line around the site.
- 2) Area(s) of Interest, as defined in the search criteria, are highlighted in red.
- 3) Scientific names are only used to identify species on maps when no common name is in general accepted usage.
- 4) For maps without a key, the relevant information is provided in the table.
- 5) The ownership of the data within this report remains with the original recorder and is subject to the laws defining Intellectual Property Copyright.
- 6) Unless otherwise indicated, all data within this report was recorded post-1980.
- 7) This report and the data held within it is to be used solely for those purposes described under the terms of any agreement between the applicant and NESBReC.
- 8) Some, or all of the data held within this report maybe of a sensitive or confidential nature. Such information will be marked as such and if required an appropriate contact for further correspondence will be given (otherwise NESBReC should be contacted).
- 9) Although NESBReC makes every possible effort to ensure that the data it provides is accurate and up to date, this report should only be considered to represent the most recent version of each dataset as available at the time of the search.
- 10) Forestry Commission Capercaillie Core Areas. If development is within these areas please contact Kenny Kortland, Capercaillie Project Officer 01463 715000.

NESBReC

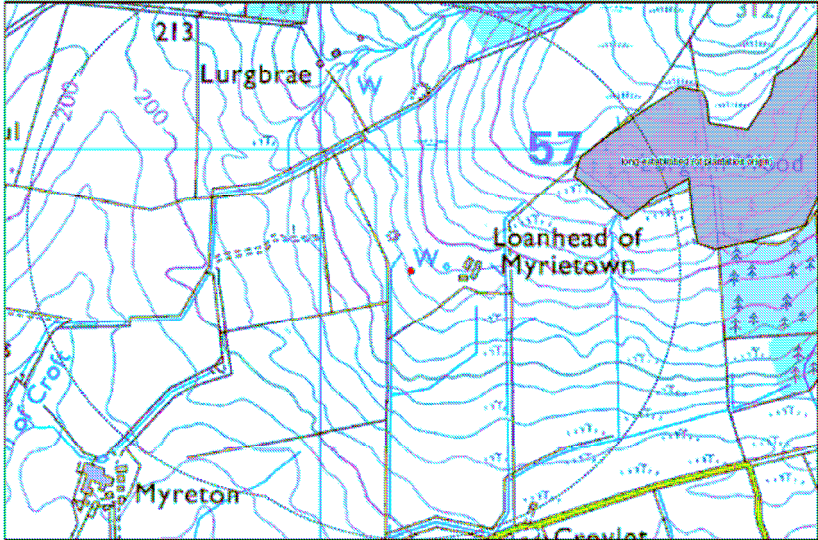


NORTH-EAST SCOTLAND
BIOLOGICAL RECORDS CENTRE

NESBReC
University of Aberdeen
23 St Machar Drive
Aberdeen
AB24 3RY

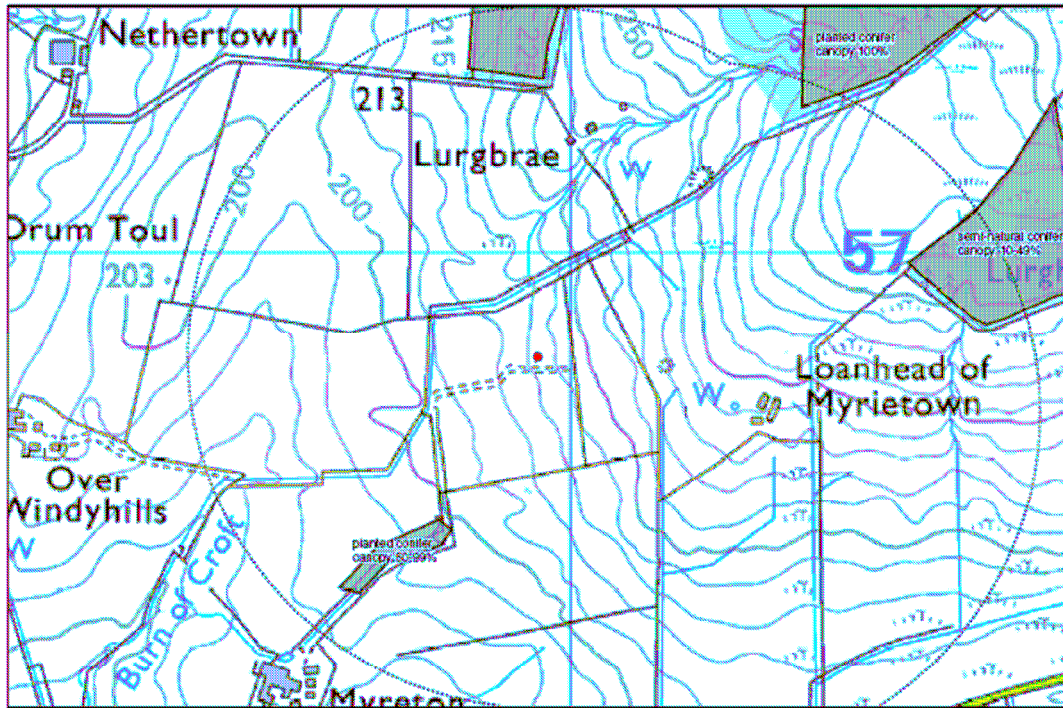
tel: 01224 273633
nesbrec@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

20081106	ancient woodland inventory	Long-Established (of plantation origin)	Myreton	NJ 50 169 56775	Erection of 2 wind turbines
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	scottish semi-natural woodland inventory (2000)	Planted Conifer (100%) Planted Conifer (50-99%) Semi-natural Conifer (10-49%)		NJ 49956 56849	
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APPENDIX B

Target Notes

TN 1: Row of mature conifers adjacent to ditch along edge of track. If track is to be widened, it should be on opposite side to retain these mature trees and reduce potential for impact on ditch.

TN 2: Small area of open water fed by drainage ditch. Covers and area approximately 7m x 4m, although is undoubtedly reduced in summer months. Provides good amphibian habitat which may be used by local otter population. This feature should be retained and potential run-off from construction sites monitored to ensure there is no impact upon this feature.

TN 3: Small area of young silver birch which provides a different habitat for species (particularly birds) from the surrounding plantation. Adjacent to this is a small area of rough grass with *Juncus spp*, again this area provides important habitat variation within the site.

TN 4: As TN3, small area of Silver Birch.

TN 5: Quarry area, of no great ecological value other than providing open space within continuous plantation.

TN 6: Loanhead of Myrietown – Small farmstead building, previously more than one according to OS map, but others have obviously been demolished. This building had previously been surveyed for bats according to landowner (believed to be 2years ago) with no bats found.

The building is unsuitable for bats as it is in considerable disrepair (see Photo 4) with large parts of the roof missing resulting in the inside of the building being very cold and wet.

Photo 4 - Photo of inside of farmstead building

