



report to

Denholm Partnerships Architects

Preliminary Ecological Assessment



Proposed Development Land in St Fillans

February 2022

Quality Assurance

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1. Introduction

1.1. Project Description

The land surveyed in St Fillans has been proposed as a suitable site for the development of a new Village Hall by the community. It is currently a vacant piece of land comprising rough grassland, a pond with birch and alder woodland within a boundary of post and wire fencing. It has previously been rented and used as a paddock for ponies. The project is in the early planning stage; therefore, detailed plans of the proposed development have not yet been decided. This report comprises one of many that will help inform the design and planning process.

1.2. Legislation

EUROPEAN PROTECTED SPECIES

All bat species found in the UK are European Protected Species (EPS). EPS are those which are protected by the EC Habitats and Species Directive 92/43/EEC. The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 translates this European legislation into UK law. This has been amended in Scotland by The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2004 and 2007 and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (

No. 2) (Scotland) Regulations 2008. In addition to all bat species, EPS includes; otter, wildcat and great crested newt. The regulations make it an offence to deliberately or recklessly:

- capture, injure or kill an EPS
- harass a wild animal or group of wild animals of EPS
- to disturb such an EPS while it is occupying a structure or place it uses for shelter or protection
- to disturb an EPS while it is rearing or otherwise caring for its young
- to obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place of an EPS or to otherwise deny an EPS use of a breeding site or resting place
- to disturb an EPS in a manner that is, or in circumstances which are, likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species to which it belongs
- to disturb an EPS in a manner that is, or in circumstances which are, likely to impair its ability to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or otherwise care for its young
- to disturb such an animal while it is migrating or hibernating

It is also an offence to:

- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal

- keep transport, sell or exchange or offer for sale or exchange any wild animal or plant EPS or any part or derivative of one (from 1st May 2007).

In relation to protected species of animal, licences can be issued under Regulation 44 that will permit, only for specific purposes, certain actions that would otherwise be a criminal offence. Scottish Natural Heritage (NATURESCOT) is the body responsible for all EPS licensing under the Habitats Regulations (with the exception of some areas of licensing for whales and dolphins).

There is no provision for licences for development, however, under Regulation 44 (2e) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 licences may be granted for:

- Preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.

However, a licence will not be granted unless, importantly under 44 (3), the appropriate licensing authority is satisfied:

- That there is no satisfactory alternative; and
- That the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides protection to species and habitats. The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 amends the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in Scotland. In April 2012 the Wildlife and Natural Environments (Scotland) Act 2011 (WANE) has further amended the 1981 Act. This is in particular relation to the prevention of release and control of non-native species of animal and plant.

BIRDS

All wild birds receive general protection to their nest and eggs under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. Some species receive enhanced statutory protection due to their listing in schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to disturb a Schedule 1 species while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young.

There are obligations within the Birds Directive 1979 relating both to protection of species and maintenance of habitats. Birds on Annex 1 to the Birds Directive, regularly occurring migratory species, and birds on Schedule 1 to the Wildlife & Countryside Act are recognised in statute as requiring special conservation measures.

A number of bird species have been highlighted in non-statutory lists as priorities of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom. This includes those listed in Birds of Conservation Concern 3: and those included on the Scottish Biodiversity List as priority species. Birds are assigned according to one of these three categories (Eaton et al. (2009):

- Red List Species - those birds whose populations or range is rapidly declining (recently or historically), and those of global conservation concern;

- Amber List Species - those birds whose populations are in moderate decline, rare breeders, internationally important and localised species and those of an unfavourable conservation status in Europe; and,
- Green List Species - those other birds occurring in the United Kingdom not included in the Red or Amber Lists above. Further details of the appraisal can be found in Eaton et al. (2009).

SCHEDULE 5 ANIMALS

Enhanced protection is provided for species listed on Schedule 5, including Red Squirrel, Water Vole, Pine Marten and Freshwater Pearl Mussel. It is an offence to recklessly kill, injure or take animals listed on Schedule 5, with the exception of Water Vole. Water Voles are protected in respect of section 9(4) only (in Scotland), meaning that water vole habitat is protected, although the animals themselves are not.

It is also an offence to recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used for shelter or breeding. Licences are available for development purposes if certain conditions are met. Licences should be applied for from NATURESCOT.

HABITATS AND PLANTS

The protection of habitats and plants of national importance is provided under the provisions of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This designates key sites that fulfil the habitat designation criteria as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Certain plant species receive enhanced statutory protection under Schedule 8 of the Act.

NON-NATIVE SPECIES

The WANE Act amended and expanded Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The 1981 Act now contains sections on the release or planting of all non-native species and the keeping, sale and notification of invasive species, in addition to provisions on Species Control Agreements and Species Control Orders. Non-native is re-defined to include native species outwith their natural range and the natural range is further defined as the location in which an animal or plant is indigenous. The 'wild' is also more clearly defined and there is a list of exempted land (Section 5, list 2 of Code of Practice). The WANE Act also put in place the means to introduce a new code of practice with regard to non-native species. This was done under Section 14C of the amended Wildlife and Countryside Act and came into force in July 2012. The code of practice should be referred to when dealing with any non-native animal or plants. The code outlines the law relating to native and non-native species and explains the main provisions set out in the 1981 Act. Schedule 9 has now been repealed.

PROTECTION OF BADGERS ACT 1992

The Protection of Badgers Act (1992) provides full legal protection to badgers. In Scotland, this legislation was amended by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and more recently by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. It is an offence to recklessly take, injure or kill a badger (or knowingly cause or permit such an offence), or destroy or cause disturbance to their setts. NATURESCOT interprets the legislation in such a way that any sett within an active badger territory is afforded legal protection, whether it shows signs of recent use or not. In addition, badgers are afforded protection from cruel ill treatment. All the definition of 'ill treatment' has not been clearly defined; this is likely to include preventing badgers access to their setts as well as causing the loss of

significant foraging resources within a badger territory. Licences are available for the disturbance or destruction of setts. NATURESCOT must be consulted prior to any works which could cause disturbance to badgers.

UK, SCOTTISH AND LOCAL BIODIVERSITY POST-2010

In October 2010, 192 governments and the European Union met in Nagoya, Aichi Province, Japan and together reached new agreement on global biodiversity. This was the 'Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020' and contains five strategic goals and 20 new global targets referred to as the 'Aichi Targets'. In the UK this translates into the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework'.

As a consequence of this new strategy the UK BAP partnership no longer operates. The work previously carried out by the partnership will now be focussed within each of the four countries i.e., Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This also means that the species and habitats agreed under the UK BAP will now be superseded by each country's own priority list.

The current SBL can be seen by following the link below.

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/16118/Biodiversitylist/SBL>

NON-STATUTORY DESIGNATED SITES (INCLUDING LNCS)

Local and district level non-statutory designations, often called Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) or Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), may be identified by Local Planning Authorities. In addition, other sites including those managed by organisations like Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), National Trust for Scotland (NTS), Woodland Trust (WT) and John Muir Trust (JMT) are also considered, where relevant.

ANCIENT WOODLAND INVENTORY

This is woodland listed on the Ancient and semi-natural woodland inventory (identified by the former Nature Conservancy Council and held/updated by NatureScot).

2. Surveys: Methods & Results

2.1. Survey Personnel

Aquila Ecology was contracted to complete a Preliminary Ecological Assessment by Denholm Partnership Architects in December 2021.

All survey and reporting were overseen by Andrea Hudspeth. Andrea is a NatureScot licensed bat worker (licence number 18123), an experienced ecologist, botanist, qualified tree climber and an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (ACIEM).

2.2. Site Location

The land surveyed is situated along the south loch road in St Fillans, across the river from the main village and the A85.

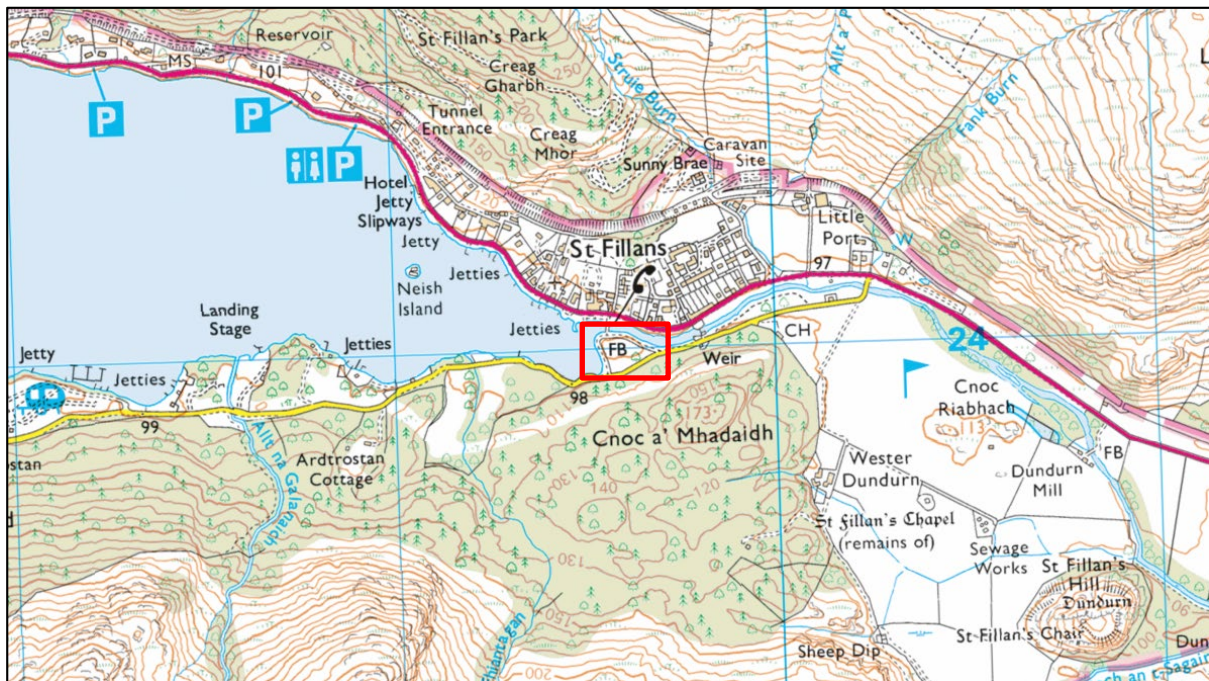


Figure 1: Location Map – red box indicates the survey site

2.3. Desk Top Study

As the report author has lived in St Fillans for the past 12 years, and has been conducting protected species surveys regularly during that time, no search was made of online biological records as the author's observations are more up to date.

2.3.1 Protected Species

The following protected species are known to occur or breed within 1km of the survey site:

Pine marten *Martes martes* - this species has been regularly caught on Trailcams™ and seen live by members of the community, even in gardens within the centre of the village. The surrounding habitat

of conifer plantation offers plenty of denning sites, and the animals come down into the village searching for food. One member of the community has had a pair of pine marten breeding in their house, underneath floorboards.

Badger *Meles meles* - the species has not been observed in the village within the past 12 years; however, dead badgers have been noted on occasion on the A85 between St Fillans and Lochearnhead.

Red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* - this species occurs in good numbers throughout the village, often visiting bird feeders in villagers' gardens. There is an abundance of surrounding habitat for the species and it is likely they will be found on the site on occasion.

Otter *Lutra lutra* – the species has been observed many times on River Earn and also on Loch Earn. No breeding holts have been discovered to date, but resting up and sprainting sites are located regularly.

Beaver *Castor fiber* – this species has been occurring at irregular intervals for a number of years. More recently, one or two animals have created a territory on the river through the village and there are almost daily feeding signs adjacent to the survey site.

Bat species *Chiroptera* –the following bat species have been recorded by the report author:

- Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
- Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*
- Daubentons' bat *Myotis daubentonii*
- Brown long-eared bat *Auritus plecotus*

Pipistrelle bats and Daubentons' bats are regularly observed over the river and in the woodland on the site. It is possible that some of the older trees on site could provide roosting sites, especially for Daubentons' bat, which have a preference for roosting in trees close to watercourses.

2.3.2 Designated sites

A search was made for designated sites within a 1km buffer on NatureScot Sitelink and further information was obtained from the JNCC website.

International – Ramsar Sites

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention. Many Ramsar sites are also Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) (The Birds Directive).

European – Natura 2000 Sites

European sites consist of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). SPAs aim to protect the habitat of rare, threatened or migratory bird species under Council Directive of 2 April 1979 on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) (The Birds Directive). SACs aim to protect rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and species under Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats and Species

Directive). The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 (the 'Habitats Regulations') implement these Directives in Britain.

National Designations

NatureScot has a duty under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, to notify any area of land which in their opinion is 'of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features'. Such areas are known as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

The following designated sites were located:

- THE LOCH LOMOND AND THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK

2.4. Field Surveys

2.4.1. Preliminary Ecological Assessment - Methodology

The habitats within the survey site were classified using the Phase 1 habitat survey methodology. The habitats on site and in the surrounding area were assessed for their suitability for supporting protected species and the field signs and actual presence of a number of native and non-native, or invasive, species were searched for. Whilst all species were considered during the survey, there was a focus on potentially sensitive species and species with enhanced protection. All habitat suitability and evidence of species was recorded. The details recorded include the location of features or species along with photographic evidence. The habitats and target notes were then mapped.

Invasive non-native plant species including Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* and Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* were also searched for as well as signs of the non-native mammals, grey squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* and American mink *Neovison vison*.

The main species considered as being relevant and likely to be encountered in the area and the habitats surveyed included:

- Otter
- Beaver
- Mink
- Red squirrel
- Pine marten
- Deer (red and roe)
- Common frog
- Common toad
- Slow worm
- Bats
- Nesting birds

2.4.2. Preliminary Ecological Assessment – Results

Habitats

The survey area is mainly dominated by trees with a grassy area between the two patches of trees and a pond to the southwest corner. Although the trees are classified as woodland for the purposes of this report, in reality there are distinct grouping of trees on site which is small in area.

The trees to the north comprise young silver birch *Betula pendula* whilst the trees along the northern edge of the pond comprise mainly semi-mature alder *Ulnus glabra*. The southern boundary of the site has scattered mature trees, many of which are dying off, comprising mainly pendunculate oak *Quercus robur* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. There is standing and fallen dead wood on the site.

The central grassy area is neutral semi-improved grassland with large patches dominated by soft rush *Juncus effusus*. There is also a dense patch of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* to the western end of the site and scattered bracken within the grassland.

The pond is shallow and is choked up with yellow flag iris *Iris pseudacorus* and leaf litter. There are some fallen, rotting trees in the pond itself. The western edge of the pond is secured by a concrete supporting wall which lies below the footpath. It is not clear whether there is an outflow pipe present which prevents water from the loch flooding the path above by diverting it into the pond. There are no watercourses within the site or which appear to run into the site.

To the southeast corner, left of the gated entrance to the site, there is a pile of large rocks along with some fallen dead wood. This could provide habitat for invertebrates, small mammals along with amphibians and reptiles.

The habitats comprised:

- A1.1.1 Semi-natural broadleaved woodland
- A3.1 Scattered trees
- B2.2 Semi-improved neutral grassland
- C1.1 Continuous bracken
- G1 Standing water
- J2.4 Fence
- J2.5 Wall

The values of the habitats recorded were assessed using the criteria in Table 1 below and the descriptions and assessments are summarised in Table 2.

Table 1: Ecological Value Assessment Criteria

Value	Criteria	Examples
Very High	High importance and rarity, international scale (European) and limited potential for substitution	Internationally designated sites (SPAs, SACs, RAMSAR etc.)
		Qualifying feature of an internationally designated site
		Groundwater Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE), which are of high dependency (score 1), within 0-250m from construction activities
High	High importance and rarity, national scale (UK), or regional scale (Scotland) with limited potential for substitution	A nationally designated site e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), or a site proposed for, or considered worthy of such designation
		Regionally designated sites with limited potential for substitution
		A viable area of a habitat type listed in Annex 1 of the EU Habitats Directive or of smaller areas of such habitat which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole
		Scottish Biodiversity List or Local BAP priority habitat of importance for the conservation of biological diversity
		Significant extent of priority habitats
Medium	High or medium importance and rarity, local or regional scale (Scotland), and limited potential for substitution	Locally designated sites
		Locally important number of a Schedule 1 and 5 species
		Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE), which are of moderate dependency (score 2), within 0-250m from construction activities
		Areas of internationally or nationally important habitats which are degraded but are considered readily restored
Low	Low or medium importance and rarity, local scale	Species of national or local importance, but which are only present very infrequently or in very low numbers within the subject area
		Areas of internationally or nationally important habitats which are degraded and have little or no potential for restoration
		A local broad habitat type that is listed in a Local BAP because of the rarity in the locality
		Other species and habitats which are, in the opinion of the assessor, of note and for which mitigation measures may be required
Negligible/ Negative	Very low importance and rarity, local scale	Areas of heavily modified or managed vegetation of low species diversity or low value as habitat to species of nature conservation interest and common and widespread species Non-native invasive species

The following table describes the habitats found with their assessment value. Their locations can be found on the map in Appendix I.

Table 2: Habitat Assessment

Habitat	Description	Assigned Value	Photo Reference
A1.1.1 Semi-improved broadleaved woodland	There are three distinct groupings of trees on site: An area with birch and a fringe of alder to the northern side of the site, alder along the northern edge of the pond and scattered mature trees to along the southern boundary (see below). The birch trees have little value due to size and age, whilst the older alder trees have more potential. Birch woodland is abundant in the area and could easily be replaced, whilst the mature alder would be harder to replace.	Low	 <i>Photo 1: Predominantly birch woodland</i>  <i>Photo 2: Alder woodland</i>
A3.1 Scattered broadleaved trees	The trees along the southern boundary are more mature in age and size. The trees comprise: oak, sycamore, holly and Douglas fir. Amongst these trees there are standing dead poles, fallen trees and trees with features supporting bat roost potential and holes for nesting birds. If lost, the habitat provided by these trees would not be easy to replace.	Medium	 <i>Photo 3: Scattered trees to the southeast corner</i>

Habitat	Description	Assigned Value	Photo Reference
			 <i>Photo 4: Scattered trees and standing dead wood</i>
B2.2 Semi-improved neutral grassland	The majority habitat present between and below the trees is semi-improved neutral grassland comprising typical grass species such as cock's-foot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i>, red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i>, tufted hair-grass <i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i> and soft rush <i>Juncus effusus</i>. This habitat has been grazed in the past so has received some improvement and has few forbs in the sward. This habitat could be easily replaced if lost.	Low	 <i>Photo 5: Grassland where soft rush is dominant</i>

Habitat	Description	Assigned Value	
C1.1 Continuous bracken	Bracken occurs in small patches across the site, but there is a distinct dense patch in the central western end of the site. Bracken occurs frequently within the local area and can become invasive. The habitat should not be replaced if lost.	Negative	 <i>Photo 6: Area of dense bracken</i>
G1 Standing water	The pond measures approximately 10mx35m and has a depth of less than 0.5m. It is choked up with vegetation and frequently dries up. It does support some amphibian species. There are few ponds in the area so it has local value to wildlife and could be improved easily to benefit more wildlife.	Medium	 <i>Photo 7: Pond</i>
J2.4 Fencing	There is post and wire fencing around the perimeter of the site and there is a gate to the eastern entrance. This has little value for wildlife, but it is serving to keep the local beavers out of the site.	Negligible	N/A
J2.5 Wall	There are the remnants of an old, low wall in the southeast corner of the site. This could provide habitat for amphibians and reptiles as well as small mammals. It is likely to be lost, but some stones could be placed in a pile on site.	Low	N/A

Summary

There are a few mature trees along the southern boundary which have some potential for roosting bats and hole-nesting birds as do the alders. This provides them with a higher ecological value than the younger birch trees on site. Some of the trees have signs of decay and there is already some fallen trees along with standing dead trees.

The open areas of grass and bracken are very common in the area and across Scotland, so have little value in habitat terms. These areas will provide local habitat for species such as field vole and in return, food for the local birds of prey, for example tawny owl *Strix aluco* and common buzzard *Buteo buteo*.

The pond is currently providing some habitat for newts, frogs and freshwater invertebrates (personal observation), but it has the potential to be improved and managed with wildlife and amenity value in mind. Currently water from the ponds seeps into the adjacent low laying grassland to the east so this area is often inundated. See also note in Appendix II.

There are no habitats on site with national or international importance.

Protected Species

No evidence of protected species was found within the survey area. However, there is habitat with the potential to support protected species including the mature trees (bats and birds) and piles of rocks and dead wood were considered as suitable for providing habitat for small mammals, invertebrates and hibernacula for reptiles and amphibians. The River Earn flows adjacent to the northern boundary of the site

The following target notes were recorded.

Table 2: Protected species target notes

TN no.	Description	Photos
1	Large, mature oak pendunculate oak (tag no. 6735) with multiple holes and cracks suitable for bats	 <i>Photo 8: Oak with bat roost features</i>
2	Two standing dead poles next to Douglas fir (tag no. 6738). Holes present suitable for hole nesting birds.	 <i>Photo 9: Standing dead wood</i>

TN no.	Description	
3	Large, mature pendunculate oak (tag no. 6737) with dead wood present and holes and cracks suitable for bats.	 <i>Photo 10: Dying oak with bat roost potential</i>
4	Standing dead pole with holes suitable for nesting bats or roosting bats.	 <i>Photo 11: Dead pole</i>

TN no.	Description	
5	Large, mature pendunculate oak (tag no. 6739) with holes, cracks and fissures suitable for roosting bats.	 <i>Photo 12: oak with bat roost features</i>
6	Standing dead sycamore (tag no 6681) with holes suitable for bats or birds	 <i>Photo 13: Dead standing tree</i>
7	Birch (tag no. 6680) with old bird nest. The nest could be reused in the breeding season.	 <i>Photo 14: Nest in tree</i>

TN no.	Description	Photos
8	Alder (tag no. 6651) with two holes suitable for bats	N/A
9	Cluster of alders (tag no. 6729) with one dying tree. Holes and cracks present.	 <i>Photo 15: Alders with one dead pole</i>
10	Alder (tag no. 6727) with hole present.	 <i>Photo 16: Alder with hole</i>

TN no.	Description	Photos
11	Alder (tag no. 672) with holes present.	
12	Alder (tag no. 6705) with hole approx. 20 feet up trunk	 <i>Photo 17: Alder with a high hole</i>

TN no.	Description	Photos
13	Alder (tag no. 6698) with hole present.	 <i>Photo 18: Alder with hole</i>
14	Alder (tag no. 6693) with holes present	 <i>Photo 19: Alder with holes</i>

Other species

There were droppings of red deer *Cervus elaphus* found within the site. Beaver signs are numerous along the southern bank of the river, but no signs were found within the site.



Summary

No protected mammals, birds, amphibians or reptiles were recorded during the survey, but it is possible that animals could be hibernating in suitable habitat such as trees, piles of rocks and the old wall.

The mature trees and standing dead wood have the potential to support bat roosts and nesting birds during the spring and summer.

2.5. Survey Limitations

The survey was undertaken outside of the breeding bird and bat seasons.

An absence of evidence does not indicate that a species is absent. Different species are more active at certain times of the year when their field signs are more numerous and can be easier to detect.

2.6. Evaluation of Results

Habitats

No habitats of international importance were discovered during the survey. The mature trees will be important locally as these habitats are not easily replaced. These trees have high value for a number of bird, mammal and invertebrate species and should be retained as much as possible.

Wildlife

There was no evidence of protected species using the site at the time of the survey, but further surveys would be required to rule out the presence of bat roosts in the trees with suitable features.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Introduction

As the project is in the early stages of design it is not yet known where the various buildings and hard standing will be located on the site and therefore to what extent existing features of the site will be impacted. The following recommendations are made to inform the design and planning and to suggest where further surveys may be required.

3.2. Existing features

3.2.1 Mature trees and dead wood

Whilst these may be perceived as of little value and a possible danger, dead wood provides habitat for a large number of species. Some of the standing dead wood is likely to be used by bats and hole nesting birds. Fallen dead wood that will need to be moved, should be moved elsewhere on site or near to the site rather than removed completely as there will be a lot of creatures living in the wood.

3.2.2 Pond

Whilst the pond needs some improvement to increase its wildlife and amenity value, it is still providing habitat for a number of species and should be retained if possible. The footprint of the pond could be reduced and a smaller, deeper pond created which would be better for wildlife. Edges could be kept gently sloping for safety and vegetation could be thinned out and new marginal plants could be added around the edges. If the pond was suitably bunded to the east end this would allow the wet hollow in the east end of the site to dry out.

3.2.3 Rocks and wall

These will likely need to be removed to make way for the development. As with the dead wood above, these could be stacked up on site or removed somewhere near by rather than removed completely to continue to provide habitat.

3.2.4 Fencing

The current fencing could be preventing the beavers from coming into the site. This should be retained as part of the design process. Consideration could be given to planting hedge species inside the boundary for wildlife benefit and for aesthetic value.

3.3. Further surveys

A Phase 2 bat survey will be required before any trees are felled. This will likely need to be undertaken at height using rope access.

A nesting bird survey will also need to be undertaken before any trees can be felled during the breeding bird season, although it is recommended that this time of year is avoided to comply with best practice.

4. References

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5. Appendix I - Map

6. Appendix II – Accessing the site

Currently access is gained to the site via the gate to the northeast end of the site. As this is the narrowest part of the site, it may prove problematic to larger vehicles.

An alternative proposed access point is to the southwest end of the site, directly off the South Loch Road. This would mean tracking over the existing pond. With the existing status of the pond (rather depleted in terms of biodiversity), this would be feasible if avoiding times of the year when amphibians will be spawning and egg laying. The ideal time to gain access at this point would be during Autumn/Winter, ideally in November or December. However, with warmer winters, amphibians have been spawning a lot earlier (February is typical), so the advice of an ecologist should first be sought before gaining access via this route.