

AGENDA ITEM 6

APPENDIX I

2015/0133/DET

HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT

Cairngorms National Park Authority

Habitats Regulations Assessment

2015/0133/DET Badaguish Outdoor Centre

2015/0132/DET Badaguish Outdoor Centre

Introduction

This is a record of the assessment under regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) for the planning applications 2015/0133/DET and 2015/0132/DET at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre.

The two applications involve the extension of the existing Badaguish Outdoor Centre by installation of 35 wigwams, a new camping area and mountain bike trail. Consent has been previously given and these 2015 applications involve altering the layout of wigwams, trails and camping areas. These planning applications are also retrospective, as some works have already taken place on the site.

The site has been clear felled as part of the FCS Forest Management Plan for that area.

Based on the figures presented by the applicant, using a trial of 10 wigwams, it is anticipated that the proposal will lead to an increase in visitor numbers and an increase in people using trails within the outdoor centre and in the surrounding Glenmore area.

The Badaguish Outdoor Centre is used as a “hub” from which residents can access off-site activities in the surrounding area from a range of local outdoor activity operators. Because the centre does not employ instructional staff, the majority of visitors are off-site during the daytime taking part in outdoor activities away from the centre. The on-site facilities are mostly in use for low-key informal recreation in early mornings and evenings.

The exception to this rule is disabled respite care visitors who spend more time at the centre and when there are larger, organised events which utilise the trails and ground adjacent to Badaguish. FCS has to be consulted on any events in order to avoid disturbance to wildlife and habitats.

A Visitor Management Plan (VMP) has been included as part of the application. The purpose of the VMP is to manage the impacts on capercaillie. The VMP includes measures such as:

- A woodland planting scheme around the wigwams and camping areas to act as a screen for adjacent woodland
- Additional signage at key access areas to alert people of sensitive wildlife and to remain on paths
- To ensure visitors entering the site from outside the centre and utilising the trails keep their dogs under control
- To discourage the creation of unauthorised trails and to remove these where necessary
- Briefing visitors on arrival of the sensitivity of wildlife around the site and encourage them to recreate responsibly

Background to the assessment

The principal documents which have been taken into account for this assessment are:

- Long Term Masterplan, drawing number 3663-030
- Long Term Masterplan, drawing number 3663-020 (wigwam relocation)
- Proposed Visitor Management Plan
- The Visitor Management Plan Version 5 (October 2015)
- Badaguish Outdoor Centre website www.accommodationatbadaguish.org
- Comment on Enforcement by RSPB (letter dated 08/09/2015)
- FCS brood count data
- Confidential reports and surveys on capercaillie distribution in Rotheimurchus, Inshriach, Abernethy and Craigmore Wood. (T.Poole, FCS and RSPB 2013)*

* Within this report the details of locations of capercaillie and their Lekking sites is generalised and the surveys above are not within the public domain. This is to protect the birds from possible disturbance that may result from this information being widely distributed. Consultees have been given access to all information.

Table 1. Stages of Assessment

Stages of Assessment	
Stage 1	Decide whether proposal is subject to HRA
Stage 2	Identify Natura Sites that should be considered and gather information about the Natura Sites
Stage 3	Consultation on the method and scope of the appraisal with SNH and others. Request additional information from applicant if required.
Stage 4	Screening the proposal for likely significant effects on Natura sites including mitigation measures included within the proposal
Stage 5	Screen for “in combination effects” with other plans or projects
Stage 6	Appropriate Assessment to determine effect upon conservation objectives. Preliminary conclusion about adverse effect upon the integrity of any site.
Stage 7	Consultation with SNH (and others if considered appropriate)
Stage 8	Apply additional mitigation measures, if required, via conditions or agreements to ensure that there is no adverse effect on site integrity
Stage 9	Conclusion on Integrity test
Stage 10	Regulation 49 derogation procedures. This only applies if adverse effects

	remain and Competent Authority still wishes to approve the application
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Stages 1-5 describing the Natura sites and Screening

The proposed development is not wholly concerned with the necessary management of a European site for nature conservation and requires planning permission and so the plans must be subject to assessment under the terms of Directive 92/43/EEC.

Stages 2: Identification of Natura Sites and gathering their details

The list below is those sites that have been taken forward to screening for likely significant effects. See Appendix I for details on each site and its qualifying features.

Other sites were considered but have not been taken forward. For example, the River Spey SAC and Cairngorms SAC. There is no route to an effect for these sites through the construction and operational phase of the proposal and as such they have been ruled out of the assessment.

Special Protection Area (SPA)

Cairngorms SPA
Abernethy SPA
Kinveachy SPA
Craigmore SPA
Anagach SPA

Stage 3: Discussions on the method and scope of the appraisal and requests for additional information

SNH have commented on the VMP and have requested additional detail on mitigation measures. This request was supported by the CNPA National Heritage and Access teams. Forestry Commission Scotland are the landowners and have agreed to the measures outlined in the VMP.

SNH have provided advice on the scope of the HRA.

Additional information was required in the form of brood count data from the FCS data set for Glenmore.

Stage 4: Screening the proposal for likely significant effects

The effects identified as discussed in Table 3.

Table 3. Screening for LSE from Badaguish Outdoor Centre (additional wigwams, camping area and bike trails)

Cairngorms SPA					
Qualifying Feature Affected	Possible effect of development	Likely significant effect	Duration	Screening assessment	Screening outcome
Capercaillie	Increase in recreational activity in the form of walkers within Cairngorm SPA from users of new development. This is a direct effect.	Disturbance to lekking, brood rearing and feeding habitats from informal recreational activity.	Permanent	<p>A small increase in use of the SPA which lies 300m from the site.</p> <p>The additional 35 wigwams are proposed adjacent to an already well developed visitor area. The additional wigwams and camping are predicted to add an additional 5313 guests per year. However the majority of these will be using organised outdoor activities off-site and outside of the SPAs. Visitors that remain on site during the day are specific groups using the site's facilities and present no risk (i.e. disabled groups).</p> <p>There is a lek within the SPA 1km from the Badaguish Centre. The nearest brood rearing area within the SPA lies approximately 970m from the Badaguish centre in woodland off-track.</p> <p>The numbers of people recreating in mornings/afternoons/evenings predicted to be much lower than the total number of visitors. However due to the close proximity of the SPA from the visitor centre there is a risk that some visitors could recreate within the SPA and cause disturbance to capercaillie.</p>	Likely Significant Effect
	Increase in recreational activity in	Disturbance to lekking, brood rearing and feeding	Permanent	Pets are not allowed at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre site (camping or wigwams) Therefore there is	No effect

	the form of walkers with dogs within Cairngorm SPA from residents of new development. This is a direct effect.	habitats from recreational activity.		no effect from walkers with dogs as part of the proposal.	
	Increase in recreational activity in the form of Mountain bikers within the Cairngorm SPA from residents of new development. This is a direct effect.	Disturbance to lekking, brood rearing and feeding habitats from informal recreational activity in afternoon/evenings.	Permanent	<p>A small increase in use of the SPA which lies 300m from the site.</p> <p>The additional 35 wigwams are proposed in an already well developed visitor area. The additional wigwams and camping are predicted to add an additional 5313 guests per year. However the majority of these will be using organised outdoor activities off-site and outside of the SPAs. Visitors that remain on site during the day are specific groups using the site's facilities and present no risk (i.e. disabled groups).</p> <p>There is a lek within the SPA 1km from the Badaguish Centre. The nearest brood rearing area within the SPA lies approximately 970m from the Badaguish centre in woodland off-track.</p> <p>The numbers of people recreating in mornings/afternoons/evenings predicted to be much lower than the total number of visitors. However due to the close proximity of the SPA from the visitor centre there is a risk that some visitors could enter the SPA and cause disturbance to capercaillie.</p>	Likely Significant Effect
	Increase in recreation (walkers, walkers with dogs, mountain bikers) in other SPAs that support capercaillie. This is an indirect	A reduction in productivity in neighbouring SPAs, reducing the viability of the meta population through decreased migration and increased habitat	Permanent	Abernethy Forest (5km away) – potential small increase in occasional use of this SPA. Abernethy already experiences 40,000 visitors per year. The proposal of an additional 35 wigwams and camping space would present a very small addition to this figure. Given the distance from Badaguish this figure	No effect

	effect.	fragmentation. This could have an effect upon the Cairngorms SPA.		<p>would be reduced further. There is already adequate provision for visitors at this site through managed footpaths, visitor centre and a trail warden. Therefore the effect of additional visitors from the proposal is deemed insignificant.</p> <p>Anagach Woods (20km away) – Given the distance of the proposal from this site and that it is not a promoted place to visit from Glenmore area, it is unlikely to be a destination for visitors at Badaguish. The effect of the proposal on this site is deemed insignificant.</p> <p>Craigmore Wood (12km away) - this SPA is not a popular destination with only one promoted path which skirts southern edge and no core paths. The proposal is unlikely to generate significant increase in users to paths; distance from development means it is unlikely to be a significant target destination. RSPB management strategy is to keep numbers low by promoting other less sensitive areas and not promoting access and car parking. The effect of the proposal on this site is deemed insignificant.</p> <p>Kinveachy Forest (8km away) – There is a well-developed estate path and track network which is used by walkers. Cyclists are largely kept away from the SPA from Aviemore side because of large deer fence that is crossed by stiles rather than gates. Alternative routes through Craigellachie NNR are well promoted and may ‘intercept’ significant proportion of potential walkers from the proposal. NCN7 runs below Kinveachy face outwith of SPA in this area. Given the distance from the proposal, and the low number of potential visitors, the effect of the proposal on this site is deemed insignificant.</p>	
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	<p>Increase in recreation by walkers, dog walkers and mountain bikers within Non-SPA woodland supporting capercaillie This is an indirect effect.</p>	<p>Reduction in productivity of population reducing the viability of meta-population though decreased migration and in effect increased habitat fragmentation.</p>	<p>Permanent</p>	<p>The Sluggan track leads from Badaguish to Pityoulsh. Recent inspection of Pityoulsh shows no evidence of use of these woods by capercaillie. Infrequent migratory use may occur.</p> <p>There is a lek approximately 1km from Badaguish outdoor centre. This has been increasing in size and is now at its peak of 8 lekking males.</p> <p>The area surrounding Badaguish is also known to support hens with brood. There are two records, one which lies adjacent to a forest track approximately 600m from the Badaguish centre. The other lies approximately 970m from the Badaguish centre in woodland off-track.</p> <p>Proposal has potential to increase number of visitors using woodland surrounding Badaguish for recreation in afternoons/evenings, thus increasing risk of disturbance, particularly to capercaillie hens with brood.</p> <p>Pets are not allowed at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre site (camping or wigwams) Therefore there is no effect from walkers with dogs as part of the proposal.</p>	<p>Likely significant effect (walkers and mountain bikers only)</p>
	<p>Increased participation in organised events held at Badaguish, using woodland surrounding the centre (SPA and non-SPA). Direct and indirect effects.</p>	<p>Reduction in productivity within Glenmore forest population reducing the viability of meta-population though decreased migration and in effect increased habitat fragmentation.</p> <p>Disturbance to lekking, brood rearing and feeding</p>	<p>Permanent</p>	<p>Large organised events are held annually from Badaguish Outdoor Centre.</p> <p>The Aviemore Half Marathon finishes at Badaguish. The Aviemore Triathlon starts and finishes at Badaguish and utilises woodland around the Badaguish centre.</p> <p>The majority of participants will be staying off-site. The scale of the proposal is unlikely to make a significant</p>	<p>No effect</p>

		habitats from recreational activity in the SPA.		<p>contribution to the numbers of participants attending these events.</p> <p>The applicant already has to have detailed consultation with the landowner, Forestry Commission Scotland, when arranging these events. Events already take into consideration the locations of areas important for capercaillie and take place outside of the breeding season.</p>	
	Loss of trees within the proposal area	Disruption to woodland connectivity within non-SPA woodland	Permanent	<p>Removal of groups of trees or larger areas of woodland has the potential to reduce habitat connectivity for capercaillie, thus reducing their ability to move between different patches of habitat.</p> <p>The proposal area has already been clear-felled as part of the woodland management of the area by FCS as part of a Forestry Management Plan. The woodland immediately surrounding the Badaguish Centre is not supporting habitat for capercaillie and the impact of losing this plot is deemed insignificant.</p>	No effect
	Construction activity	Disturbance construction of the site and installation of facilities	Temporary	<p>Felling has already taken place and therefore remaining construction will involve installation of wigwams, seeding areas and planting.</p> <p>The proposal is taking place 300m from edge of SPA, but is remote from main lekking and brood rearing areas (1km is the closest lek and the nearest brood record is 600m). Disturbance from this distance is not likely.</p>	No effect
Scottish Crossbill	Increase in recreational activity from residents of new development within	Disturbance to nesting sites and foraging habitat	Permanent	<p>There is no evidence that species affected by disturbance; species does not nest on the ground. Therefore birds within SPA are not likely to be affected.</p>	No effect

	the SPA				
Osprey	Increase in recreational activity from residents of new development within the SPA	Disturbance to nesting sites	Permanent	Nest sites are well managed and monitored by Rothiemurchus Estate. General recreation managed by FCS and Rothiemurchus to encourage recreational access to promoted paths away from nest sites.	No effect
Dotterel	Increase in recreational activity from residents of new development within the SPA	Increase disturbance to nesting from more visitors to relevant habitats in the SPA	Permanent	Nest sites are in remote uplands. The number of visits generated by the development is not likely to have an effect.	No effect
Golden eagle	Increase in recreational activity from residents of new development within the SPA	Increase disturbance to nesting from more visitors to relevant habitats in the SPA	Permanent	Nest sites are in remote uplands. The number of visits generated by new development to the SPA is likely to be very small and restricted to walkers and a few cyclists. Eagle nests are already in view of footpaths so some habituation is likely. The number of visits generated by the development is not likely to have an effect.	No effect
Merlin	Increase in recreational activity from residents of new development within the SPA	Increased disturbance to nesting sites	Permanent	Nest sites are in remote upland sites in heather moorland. The number of visits from the development is not likely to have an effect.	No effect
Peregrine	Increase in recreational activity from residents of new development within the SPA	Increased disturbance to nesting sites	Permanent	Nest sites are usually on inaccessible cliff faces away from footpaths, though sometimes within sight. Tolerance to people varies between individual birds but habituation is significant in other sites near to Aviemore. The number of visits generated by the new development is not likely to have an effect.	No effect

Kinveachy Forest SPA, Abernethy Forest SPA, Craigmore Wood SPA, Anagach Woods SPA					
Qualifying Feature Affected	Possible effect of development	Likely significant effect	Duration	Screening assessment	Screening outcome
Capercaillie (all sites)	Increase in recreation (walkers, walkers with dogs, mountain bikers) in these SPAs which support capercaillie. This is direct effect on these SPAs.	A reduction in productivity in neighbouring SPAs, reducing the viability of the meta population through decreased migration and increased habitat fragmentation. This could have an effect upon the Cairngorms SPA	Permanent	<p>Abernethy Forest (5km away) – potential small increase in occasional use SPA. Abernethy already experiences 40,000 visitors per year. The proposal of an additional 35 wigwams and camping space would present a very small addition to this figure. Given the distance from Badaguish this figure would be reduced further. There is already adequate provision for visitors at this site through managed footpaths, visitor centre and a trail warden. Therefore the effect of additional visitors from the proposal is deemed insignificant.</p> <p>Anagach Woods (20km away) – The distance of the proposal from this site, and given that it is not a promoted place to visit from Glenmore area, it is unlikely to be a destination for visitors at Badaguish. The effect of the proposal on this site is deemed insignificant.</p> <p>Craigmore Wood (12km away) - this SPA is not a popular destination with only one promoted path which skirts</p>	No effect

				<p>southern edge and no core paths. The proposal is unlikely to generate significant increase in users to paths; distance from development means it is unlikely to be a significant target destination. RSPB management strategy is to keep numbers low by promoting other less sensitive areas and not promoting access and car parking. The effect of the proposal on this site is deemed insignificant.</p> <p>Kinveachy Forest (8km away) – There is a well-developed estate path and track network which is used by walkers. Cyclists are largely kept away from the SPA from Aviemore side because of large deer fence that is crossed by stiles rather than gates. Alternative routes through Craigellachie NNR are well promoted and may ‘intercept’ significant proportion of potential walkers from the proposal. NCN7 runs below Kinveachy face outwith of SPA in this area. Given the distance from the proposal, and the low number of potential visitors, the effect of the proposal on this site is deemed insignificant.</p>	
Capercaillie (all sites)	Increase in recreation in Cairngorm SPA and non-SPA woodland, increased disturbance reducing productivity and subsequently a reduction in dispersal rate to these	A reduced dispersal of birds from Cairngorm SPA into these SPAs, thus reducing the viability and productivity in these SPAs.	Permanent	Above screening for the Cairngorms SPA shows Likely Significant Effect, therefore there could be an indirect effect on these SPAs from the development.	Likely Significant effect

	SPAs. This is an indirect effect on these SPAs.				
Scottish crossbill (Kinveachy SPA, Abernethy SPA)	Increase in recreational activity from residents of new development within the SPA	Disturbance to nesting sites and foraging habitat	Permanent	There is no evidence that species affected by disturbance; species does not nest on the ground. Therefore birds within SPA are not likely to be affected.	No effect
Osprey (Abernethy SPA only)	Increase in recreational activity from residents of new development within the SPA	Disturbance to nesting sites	Permanent	Nest sites are well managed and monitored by RSPB. General recreation managed by RSPB to encourage recreational access to promoted paths away from nest sites.	No effect

Stage 5: In-combination effects

No relevant Likely Insignificant Effects (Minor Residual Effects) identified during screening in the following plans:

- Local Development Plan 2015-2020
- An Camas Mor
- Boat of Garten housing
- A9 dualling

A Minor Residual Effects was identified during the Appropriate Assessment of the proposal:

- MRE on the conservation objective “No significant disturbance to capercaillie” for the Cairngorms SPA. This occurred both directly, and indirectly, through disturbance in surrounding non-SPA woodland.

Because no similar MRE's have been found in relevant plans above, there are no in-combination effects.

Stages 6–10 Assessment and Conclusions

Stage 6: Appropriate Assessment

The proposals have been screened in Stages 4 and 5. It was found that there were likely significant effects upon the qualifying interests of Nature sites. As such, an Appropriate Assessment was deemed necessary.

Cairngorms SPA

Qualifying species and conservation status

Capercaillie: Favourable Maintained
Peregrine: Favourable Maintained
Dotterel: Unfavourable Declining
Golden eagle: Favourable Maintained
Osprey: Favourable Maintained

From SNH Site Link, 20/05/2015

Conservation objectives

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed above) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and

To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site

- Distribution of the species within the site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting process of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

Is the operation likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interest?

Capercaillie: Likely Significant Effect

Peregrine: No Effect

Dotterel: No Effect

Golden Eagle: No Effect

Osprey: No Effect

Will the development adversely affect the site's conservation objectives?

In this assessment, the implications of the planning application for the site's conservation objectives are assessed in order to answer the question: "Can it be ascertained that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site?"

The over-arching conservation objective of SPAs is to avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species, or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the sites is maintained. This over-arching conservation objective can be broken down into the following detailed elements:

To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term for the qualifying species:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the sites
Distribution of the species within sites
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

In-combination effects

As described at Stage 5 (screening); no in-combination effects have been identified.

Assessment against the Conservation Objectives

Capercaillie (direct effects)

1. Population of the capercaillie as a viable component of the sites

A Likely Significant Effect has been identified on the Cairngorms SPA by visitors to the proposal recreating in woodland within the SPA. A lek site and brood rearing areas within the SPA are within walking distance of the Badaguish Centre and there is potential for increased recreational disturbance in these areas.

Increased recreational disturbance could render this habitat unsuitable for capercaillie, thus reducing the population of capercaillie in this area and disturbance may also have an effect on productivity by reducing either breeding or brood rearing success.

The VMP contains measures to specifically target the effect of residents on the surrounding woodlands. These measures include:

- A no dogs policy in the wigwam and camping areas
- Planting to screen the proposal and help minimise disturbance, as well as providing a natural barrier to movement off-path
- Signs at key access points advising visitors to stay on designated tracks and avoid disturbance to wildlife
- Briefing of all visitors on arrival by a resident warden

Woodland surrounding the Badaguish centre comprises dense, semi-mature stands of commercial spruce and pine on rough ploughed ground with open drains which will deter those wandering off-path.

Despite the increase in number of users to the camp site, these measures will be applicable to the whole of the site and so not only will they be sufficient to mitigate the effect of the new development but it is considered that there will be a change in the behaviour of users on the existing development that will benefit the birds.

We have considered the evidence and advice offered by SNH and others and concluded that the measures outlined in the VMP to manage visitors will avoid significant disturbance to capercaillie within the Cairngorms SPA. Consequently there will be no adverse effect on this conservation objective.

2. Distribution and extent of habitats supporting capercaillie and structure, function and supporting processes of habitat supporting capercaillie

The proposal area lies out with the SPA and is not considered to be used by capercaillie. Therefore there is no loss of supporting habitat through the proposal.

We conclude that there will be no adverse effect upon this conservation objective.

3. No significant disturbance of capercaillie

There are three ways in which the proposal could cause increased disturbance to capercaillie in the Cairngorms SPA:

- An increase in walkers recreating in the Cairngorms SPA
- An increase in mountain bikers recreating in the Cairngorms SPA
- Either of the above using unauthorised trails which could increase the area of disturbance in the Cairngorms SPA

An increase in walkers and mountain bikers and use of unauthorised trails

Although the provision of additional wigwams and camping through the proposal means that an increase in visitors to the site is expected; due to the nature of activities on the site, the majority of visitors are on organised outdoor activities away from the site during the daytime in areas away from the Cairngorms SPA. Visitors may recreate around the site and in woodland surrounding Badaguish (including the SPA) in the mornings and evenings, but this is likely to be a small proportion

of the overall visitor numbers.

A Visitor Management Plan has been provided as part of the application which includes:

- Planting to screen the proposal and help minimise disturbance, as well as providing a natural barrier to movement off-path
- Signs at key access points advising visitors to stay on designated tracks and avoid disturbance to wildlife
- Briefing of all visitors on arrival by a resident warden

There is potential that visitors, particularly mountain bikers, could develop and use informal, unauthorised trails which could increase the area of disturbance.

The Visitor Management Plan will prevent the establishment of new unauthorised trails and close existing unauthorised trails where necessary.

Even with these measures in place, a Likely Significant Effect caused by disturbance to capercaillie through visitors disturbing a lek site or hens with brood cannot be ruled out entirely. There is still a chance that one person may wander off-path and disturb a lek site, but it not likely to be at a frequency to have an adverse effect.

The VMP details how the Badaguish Outdoor Centre and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) – the landowner – will work closely to monitor visitor behaviour and identify potential management issues which have potential to impact capercaillie. FCS update the Badaguish Outdoor Centre annually with details of leks and brood rearing areas so that these areas can be avoided. It is proposed that a 6 monthly meeting between the two parties takes place to provide updates on visitor behaviour/numbers and propose action where necessary.

Appropriate action will be taken if monitoring finds that Badaguish visitors are having an impact, before this becomes an adverse effect (i.e. the relocation of a lek or failure of brood).

We have considered the evidence and advice offered by SNH and others and concluded that the proposal will have a Minor Residual Effect (Likely Insignificant Effect) to capercaillie within the Cairngorms SPA. The measures contained in the VMP will ensure that there will be no adverse effect directly upon this conservation objective.

Capercaillie (indirect effects)

1. Population of the capercaillie as a viable component of the sites

The Capercaillie within Badenoch and Strathspey exist as a meta-population and birds frequently move from site to site. The non-SPA woodland around Glenmore is adjacent to that within the Cairngorms SPA and birds are able to flow freely between these areas.

A Likely Significant Effect has been identified on the non-SPA woodland surrounding Badaguish which could have a knock-on effect on the Cairngorms SPA.

Increased recreational disturbance within non-SPA woodland surrounding Badaguish could render this habitat unsuitable for capercaillie. Connectivity between this non-SPA woodland and the Cairngorms SPA may be impaired and the “meta-population” could suffer as a result.

Increased recreational disturbance could render this habitat unsuitable for capercaillie, thus reducing the population of capercaillie in this area and disturbance may also have an effect on productivity by reducing either breeding or rearing success and direct mortality of the birds.

The VMP contains measures to specifically target the effect of residents on the surrounding woodlands these measures include:

- A no dogs policy in the wigwam and camping areas
- Planting to screen the proposal and help minimise disturbance, as well as providing a natural barrier to movement off-path
- Signs at key access points advising visitors to stay on designated tracks and avoid disturbance to wildlife
- Briefing of all visitors on arrival by a resident warden

Woodland surrounding the Badaguish centre is dense, semi mature stands of commercial spruce and pine on rough ploughed ground with open drains which will deter those wandering off-path.

Despite the increase in number of users to the camp site, these measures will be applicable to the whole of the site and so not only will they be sufficient to mitigate the effect of the new development but it is considered that there will be a change in the behaviour of users on the existing development that will benefit the birds.

We have considered the evidence and advice offered by SNH and others and concluded that the measures outlined in the VMP to manage visitors will avoid significant disturbance to capercaillie within the Cairngorms SPA. Consequently there will be no adverse effect indirectly upon this conservation objective.

2. Distribution and extent of habitats supporting capercaillie and structure, function and supporting processes of habitat supporting capercaillie

The woodland plot where the proposal is situated has already been removed as part of routine forestry management. This woodland, adjacent to the Badaguish centre, is not known to be supporting habitat for capercaillie and will not result in significant fragmentation of habitat.

We conclude therefore that there is no adverse effect on this conservation objective.

3.No significant disturbance of capercaillie

There are several ways in which the proposal could cause increased disturbance to capercaillie:

- Disturbance during construction and installation of the new wigwams and camping facility
- An increase in walkers recreating in woodland around Badaguish
- An increase in mountain bikers recreating in woodland around Badaguish
- Either of the above using unauthorised trails which could increase the area of disturbance

Disturbance during construction/installation

It was concluded during screening that there is no effect from this source, for the reasons stated above in table 3.

An increase in walkers and mountain bikers and use of unauthorised trails

Although the provision of additional wigwams and camping through the proposal means that an increase in visitors to the site is expected; due to the nature of activities on the site, the majority of visitors are on organised outdoor activities away from the site during the daytime in areas away from the Cairngorms SPA and neighbouring SPAs (see table 3). Visitors may recreate around the site and in woodland surrounding Badaguish in the evenings, but this is likely to be a small proportion of the overall visitor numbers.

A Visitor Management Plan has been provided which includes:

- Planting to screen the proposal and help minimise disturbance, as well as providing a natural barrier to movement off-path
- Signs at key access points advising visitors to stay on designated tracks and avoid disturbance to wildlife
- Briefing of all visitors on arrival by a resident warden

There is potential that visitors, particularly mountain bikers, could develop and use informal, unauthorised trails which could increase the area of disturbance. There are already informal paths around the Sluggan Pass for example.

The Visitor Management Plan will prevent the establishment of new unauthorised trails and close existing unauthorised trails where necessary.

Even with these measures in place, a Likely Significant Effect caused by disturbance to capercaillie through visitors disturbing a lek site or hens with brood cannot be ruled out entirely. There is still a chance that one person may wander off-path and disturb a lek site, but it not likely to be at a frequency to have an adverse effect.

The VMP details how the Badaguish Outdoor Centre and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) – the landowner – will work closely to monitor visitor behaviour and identify potential management issues which have potential to impact capercaillie. FCS update the Badaguish Outdoor Centre annually with details of leks and brood rearing areas so that these areas can be avoided. It is proposed that a 6 monthly meeting between the two parties takes place to provide updates on visitor behaviour/numbers and were change may be necessary.

Appropriate action will be taken if monitoring finds that Badaguish visitors are having an impact, before this becomes an adverse effect (i.e. the relocation of a lek or failure of brood).

We have considered the evidence and advice offered by SNH and others and concluded that the proposal will have a Minor Residual Effect (Likely Insignificant Effect) to capercaillie within the Cairngorms SPA. The measures contained in the VMP will ensure that there will be no adverse effect directly upon this conservation objective.

Additional mitigation

No further mitigation is required.

Likely insignificant effects

There are none.

Conclusion on site integrity

We have assessed the impact of the development and found there to be no effect on any of the conservation objectives. Therefore we conclude that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the Cairngorms SPA.

Abernethy SPA, Anagach Woods SPA, Craigmore Woods SPA, Kinveachy SPA

Qualifying species - Is the operation likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interest?

Scottish Crossbill (Abernethy SPA, Kinveachy SPA): No effect
Osprey (Abernethy SPA only): no effect
Capercaillie (all sites): Like Significant Effect

Conservation objectives

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed above) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and

To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within the site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting process of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

Will the development adversely affect the site's conservation objectives?

In this assessment, the implications of the planning application for the site's conservation objectives are assessed in order to answer the question: "Can it be ascertained that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site?"

The over-arching conservation objective of SPAs is to avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species, or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the sites is maintained. This over-arching conservation objective can be broken down into the following detailed elements:

To ensure that the following are maintained in the long term for the qualifying species:

- I. Population of the species as a viable component of the sites

Distribution of the species within sites

2. Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species

Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species

3. No significant disturbance of the species

In-combination effects

As described at Stage 5 (screening); no in-combination effects have been identified.

Assessment against the Conservation Objectives

A Likely Significant Effect was found during screening on the SPAs above indirectly, via a Likely Significant Effect on the Cairngorms SPA and on capercaillie populations within non designated woodland. A direct Likely Significant Effect on the above SPAs was not found during screening.

Capercaillie (indirect effect)

1. Population of the capercaillie as a viable component of the sites

Capercaillie exist as a meta-population and birds frequently move from site to site. A Likely Significant Effect was identified on the Cairngorms SPA and non-designated woodland at screening (stage 5). However when considered within the appropriate assessment above it was concluded that there was no LSE from either source. Consequently an indirect effect cannot happen.

We conclude that there will be no adverse effect upon this conservation objective.

2. Distribution and extent of habitats supporting capercaillie and structure, function and supporting processes of habitat supporting capercaillie

The proposal area lies out with the SPA and is not considered to be used by capercaillie. Therefore there is no loss of supporting habitat through the proposal.

We have considered the impact of the proposal and concluded that the measures outlined in the VMP to manage visitors will avoid significant disturbance to capercaillie within the Badaguish area. Consequently there will be no adverse effect directly upon this conservation objective for the Abernethy Forest SPA, Anagach Woods SPA, Kinveachy SPA and Craigmore SPA.

3.No significant disturbance of capercaillie

This would be a direct effect of disturbance of the birds within these SPAs by the residents of the proposal. This was screened out at Stage 4 above.

We conclude that there will be no adverse effect upon this conservation objective.

Additional mitigation

No further mitigation is required.

Likely insignificant effects

There are none.

Conclusion on site integrity

We have assessed the impact of the proposal and found there to be no effect on any of the conservation objectives for these SPAs. Therefore we conclude that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the Abernethy Forest SPA, Anagach Woods SPA, Kinveachy Forest SPA and Craigmore Woods SPA.

Stage 7: Consultation

Regulation 48(3) requires the authority to consult with the appropriate conservation body and to have regard to their representations. This is in such cases where a LSE is identified and an appropriate assessment is undertaken. In Scotland SNH is the appropriate conservation body. This draft report and its conclusion were subject to such consultation.

Wider consultation of the draft report is at the discretion of the competent authority. In this case no direct consultation was made because information was provided by the RSPB and Forestry Commission we considered that they had made their position on this matter clear.

Stage 8: Additional mitigation

The conclusion of the Appropriate Assessment within this report shows that there are no likely significant effects and no in-combination effects, as such no additional mitigation is deemed necessary.

Stage 9: Conclusion on the integrity test

This assessment based upon the best available scientific evidence and advice offered from SNH and has shown that there are no likely significant effects from the proposed development upon the qualifying features or the conservation objectives for the following Natura sites:

- Abernethy Forest SPA
- Anagach Woods SPA
- Cairngorms SPA
- Craigmore Wood SPA
- Kinveachy Forest SPA

We therefore conclude that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of any of these sites.

Stage 10: Section 49 (derogation)

The conclusion that there is no adverse effect upon the integrity of any of the Natura sites covered in this report means that regulation 49 is not relevant.

References

Habitat Regulations process

Council Directive 92/43/EEC “the Habitats Directive” EEC adopted 1992

Managing Natura 2000 sites – EU communities 2000

Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC - EC 2007

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)

Welsh Assembly Government TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning - 2009

Habitat Regulations Appraisal of Plans – Guidance for Plan Making Bodies in Scotland SNH/DTA August 2012 (Version 2.0)

Other sources

Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan 2010 – CNAP – 2010

CRAGG Visitor, visitor infrastructure and tourism Audit. Robinson 2013

Cairngorms Outdoor Access Strategy 2007-2012 – CNPA 2007

Scottish Recreation Survey, Annual Summary report 2011. CR No. 535 SNH 2012

Appendix I

Details of Natura 2000 sites within, or adjacent to, the proposed development site

Name of European Site	Cairngorms Special Protection Area
Site Type	
Conservation Objectives	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long-term:</p> <p>Population of the species as a viable component of the site Distribution of the species within the site Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species Structure, function and supporting process of habitats supporting the species No significant disturbance of the species</p>
Qualifying Species	Capercaillie, Scottish crossbill, Peregrine, Dotterel, Merlin Golden eagle, Osprey.
Site Condition	<p>Capercaillie: Favourable Maintained Peregrine: Favourable Maintained Dotterel: Unfavourable Declining Golden eagle: Favourable Maintained Osprey: Favourable Maintained</p> <p>From SNH SiteLink, 20/05/2015</p>
Factors currently influencing site	In terms of development, none at present
Vulnerabilities to change/potential effects of the Plan	<p>Recreational disturbance to species from neighbouring development</p> <p>Relevant settlements: An Camus Mòr, Boat of Garten – also developing of, or extension of existing, recreational facilities</p> <p>Wind farms could impact on young golden eagles, given their mobility</p>

Name of European Site	Kinveachy Forest Special Protection Area
Site Type	
Conservation Objectives	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long-term:</p> <p>Population of the species as a viable component of the site Distribution of the species within the site Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species Structure, function and supporting process of habitats supporting the species No significant disturbance of the species</p>
Qualifying Species	Capercaillie, Scottish crossbill
Site Condition	<p>Capercaillie: Favourable Maintained</p> <p>From SNH SiteLink, 03/06/2015</p>
Factors currently influencing site	In terms of development, none at present
Vulnerabilities to change/potential effects of the Plan	<p>Recreational disturbance to species from neighbouring development</p> <p>Relevant settlements: An Camus Mòr, Boat of Garten – also developing of, or extension of existing, recreational facilities.</p>

Name of European Site	Abernethy Forest Special Protection Area
Site Type	
Conservation Objectives	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long-term:</p> <p>Population of the species as a viable component of the site Distribution of the species within the site Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species Structure, function and supporting process of habitats</p>

	supporting the species No significant disturbance of the species
Qualifying Species	Capercaillie, Scottish crossbill, Osprey.
Site Condition	Capercaillie: Favourable Maintained Osprey: Favourable Maintained From SNH SiteLink, 03/06/2015
Factors currently influencing site	In terms of development, none at present
Vulnerabilities to change/potential effects of the Plan	Recreational disturbance to species from neighbouring development Relevant settlements: An Camus Mòr, Boat of Garten – also developing of, or extension of existing, recreational facilities.

Name of European Site	Craigmore Wood Special Protection Area
Site Type	
Conservation Objectives	To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long-term: Population of the species as a viable component of the site Distribution of the species within the site Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species Structure, function and supporting process of habitats supporting the species No significant disturbance of the species
Qualifying Species	Capercaillie
Site Condition	Capercaillie: Unfavourable No change From SNH SiteLink, 03/06/2015
Factors currently influencing site	In terms of development, none at present
Vulnerabilities to change/potential	Recreational disturbance to species from neighbouring development

effects of the Plan	Relevant settlements: An Camus Mòr, Boat of Garten – also developing of, or extension of existing, recreational facilities.
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Name of European Site	Anagach Woods Special Protection Area
Site Type	
Conservation Objectives	<p>To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and</p> <p>To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long-term:</p> <p>Population of the species as a viable component of the site Distribution of the species within the site Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species Structure, function and supporting process of habitats supporting the species No significant disturbance of the species</p>
Qualifying Species	Capercaillie
Site Condition	<p>Capercaillie: Favourable Maintained</p> <p>From SNH SiteLink, 03/06/2015</p>
Factors currently influencing site	In terms of development, none at present
Vulnerabilities to change/potential effects of the Plan	<p>Recreational disturbance to species from neighbouring development</p> <p>Relevant settlements: An Camus Mòr, Boat of Garten – also developing of, or extension of existing, recreational facilities.</p>

Appendix 2

Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Appropriate Assessment (AA)	The part of the Habitats Regulations Assessment process that considers the effects of an aspect of a plan upon the conservation objectives for a Natura site.
CNPA	Cairngorms National Park Authority
CNAP	Cairngorms Nature Action Plan
Competent Authority	The decision making body required under the Habitats Directive to undertake HRA. This includes Scottish Government, National Park Authorities, SNH , SEPA or Local Authorities.
CPP	Core Paths Plan
Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)	The whole appraisal process for determining effects upon Natura Sites. It includes Appropriate Assessments. It is a requirement by the Habitats Directive that competent authorities carry out HRAs where a plan or project affects a Natura site.
CLDP	Draft Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan
Likely Significant Effect	An adverse effect of the development upon a qualifying interest or conservation objective that is considered to be potentially severe enough as to threaten the integrity of the Natura site itself.
Natura Sites	Collective term for Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation
Ramsar sites	Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention 1971. Not technically Natura sites they are however usually also SPAs. They are included within the HRA process by policy.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	An area designated for the protection of habitats and species. Authorised under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (commonly called the “Habitats Directive”). One of three designation to be considered in a HRA
Special Protection Area (SPA)	An area designation for the protection of birds. Authorised by the Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (commonly called the “Birds Directive”). One of three designation to be considered in a HRA