



Agenda item 5

Appendix 2

2025/0229/DET

Habitats regulations appraisal

HABITATS REGULATIONS APPRAISAL

Planning reference and proposal information	2025/0229/DET
Appraised by	Scott Shanks, Ecological Advice Officer (Planning)
Date	28 November 2025 Updated 20th February 2026. Updated 23rd March 2026
Checked by	Anne Elliott, NatureScot Operation's Officer – Central Highland
Date	27 March 2026

INFORMATION
European site details
Name of European site(s) potentially affected
<p>1) River Spey SAC (approximately 750m from development/ 300m from site access point)</p> <p>2) Craigmore Woods SPA¹ (approximately 1.36 km from development)/ but development is within Wood H- Craigmore Woods (see Annex I I)</p> <p>3) Anagach Woods SPA¹ (approximately 1.43 km from development)/ Wood D – Anagach Woods (see Annex II)</p>
Qualifying interest(s)
<p>1) River Spey SAC</p> <p>Otter (current condition: favourable/maintained)</p> <p>Freshwater pearl mussel (current condition: unfavourable/declining)</p> <p>Sea lamprey (current condition: favourable/maintained)</p> <p>Atlantic salmon (current condition: unfavourable/recovering)</p> <p>2) Craigmore Woods SPA (Capercaillie Woodland H - Craigmore Woods)</p> <p>Capercaillie (current condition: unfavourable/ declining)</p> <p>3) Anagach Woods SPA (Capercaillie Woodland D - Anagach Woods)</p> <p>Capercaillie (current condition: unfavourable/ declining)</p>
Conservation objectives for qualifying interests
<p>1) River Spey SAC</p> <p>Conservation Objective 2. To ensure that the integrity of the River Spey SAC is restored by meeting objectives 2a, 2b, 2c for each qualifying feature (and 2d for freshwater pearl mussel):</p>

¹It is recognised that effects on capercaillie at any one of the Badenoch and Strathspey capercaillie SPAs or associated woodlands shown on the map in **Annex I** has the potential to affect the wider capercaillie metapopulation of Badenoch and Strathspey. Other capercaillie SPAs were considered during the initial phase of the assessment (**see Annex 2 – Detailed Capercaillie Assessment Question 3**) but detectable effects were ruled out, so they have not been included in this HRA. Attention has been focused in this HRA on capercaillie woods closest to the development, which in this case is Anagach Woods SPA (Wood D – Anagach Woods) and Craigmore Wood SPA (Wood H -Craigmore Woods).

- 2b. Restore the distribution of **freshwater pearl mussel** throughout the site
- 2c. Restore the habitats supporting **freshwater pearl mussel** within the site and availability of food
- 2d. Restore the distribution and viability of **freshwater pearl mussel** host species and their supporting habitats
- 2a. Restore the population of freshwater pearl mussel as a viable component of the site

- 2b. Maintain the distribution of **sea lamprey** throughout the site
- 2c. Maintain the habitats supporting **sea lamprey** within the site and availability of food
- 2a. Maintain the population of **sea lamprey** as a viable component of the site

- 2b. Restore the distribution of **Atlantic salmon** throughout the site
- 2c. Restore the habitats supporting **Atlantic salmon** within the site and availability of food
- 2a. Restore the population of **Atlantic salmon**, including range of genetic types, as a viable component of the site

- 2b. Maintain the distribution of **otter** throughout the site
- 2c. Maintain the habitats supporting **otter** within the site and availability of food
- 2a. Maintain the population of **otter** as a viable component of the site

Conservation Objective I. To ensure that the qualifying features of the River Spey SAC are in favourable condition and make an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status

2) Craigmore Woods SPA

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species: **Capercaillie (breeding)** 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 site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

3) Anagach Woods SPA

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species: **Capercaillie (breeding)** 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 site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

APPRAISAL

STAGE I:

What is the plan or project?

Relevant summary details of proposal (including location, timing, methods, etc)

Erection of Agricultural Storage Shed (retrospective application) on land 31m SW Of No 1 Keepers Cottage, Revack Estate, Grantown-on-Spey.

The development site is within an area of woodland classed as Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site (PAWS) that is recorded on the Ancient Woodland Inventory as ancient, of semi-natural origin (ref ANSO-1750).

The development has involved the permanent removal of approximately 0.33 ha of PAWS woodland (apparently Scots pines and larch) without a felling licence from Scottish Forestry. There was extensive excavation and earth works to level the site prior to the construction of a large building. The development site is close to existing buildings at Revack Lodge.

The development site is located within woodland that is part of the Craigmores Woods/Wood H capercaillie woodland (see Annex II).

Remaining ancient woodland directly to the south and west of the site has Scot's pine, birches and rowan with an understory of blaeberry, cowberry, bell heather, hard fern etc. There is European larch in the woodland to the north of the development.

It has been confirmed by the applicant's agent that no ecological surveys or pre-commencement checks were undertaken by an ecologist prior to commencement of development on the site.

A 0.3ha block of ancient woodland approximately 160m north of the development site has also been removed and developed as a car park/ storage area (again without a Scottish Forestry felling licence), and existing tracks through the Revack Estate woods appear to have been upgraded (without planning permission) using excavated materials from the development site.

An additional 1.2ha block of Sitka Spruce and Norway Spruce approximately 250m to the south-east of the development has been felled. This felling was undertaken with a Scottish Forestry felling licence (FPA -11931, approved January 2025), and includes a restocking condition. These additional forestry operations and removal of woodland habitat may have cumulative impacts.

Update: The applicant's agent has stated that site clearance and construction activity took place in November 2024 and that a visual check for protected species was undertaken by the Estate Manager prior to tree felling. Excavated materials from the site were used in another area of removed ancient woodland approximately 160m to the north, and to upgrade paths in the south of the forest.

STAGE 2:

Is the plan or project directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European site for nature conservation?

1) River Spey SAC

No, this project is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European site for nature conservation

2) Craigmore Woods SPA

No, this project is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European site for nature conservation

3) Anagach Woods SPA

No, this project is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European site for nature conservation

STAGE 3:

Is the plan or project (either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects) likely to have a significant effect on the site(s)?

1) River Spey SAC

Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey, freshwater pearl mussel, otter: No LSE (December 2025 Update). This is based on the distance of the development site from the River Spey, and statements from the applicant's agent regarding the locations where excavated materials from the site were stored/utilised. No watercourse directly connects these sites with the River Spey. This reduces the likely risk from pollution impacts on the water environment, habitats, designated species and prey species. **Therefore, no LSE, and this site is not considered further in this assessment.**

2) Craigmore Woods SPA

Breeding capercaillie – Yes, LSE: Disturbance to dispersing capercaillie moving between known leks in Anagach Woods and Craigmore Woods with potential impacts on the metapopulation of capercaillie in Badenoch and Strathspey. Disturbance of nesting female capercaillie dispersing from Craigmore Woods SPA, and permanent loss of supporting habitat for foraging birds and breeding females in a capercaillie woodland with connectivity to the SPA.

3) Anagach Woods SPA

Breeding capercaillie – Yes, LSE: Disturbance to dispersing capercaillie moving between known leks in Anagach Woods and Craigmore Woods with potential impacts on the metapopulation of capercaillie in Badenoch and Strathspey. Disturbance of nesting female capercaillie dispersing from Anagach Woods SPA, and permanent loss of supporting habitat for foraging birds and breeding females in capercaillie woodland with connectivity to the SPA.

STAGE 4:

Undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the implications for the site(s) in view of the(ir) conservation objectives

2) Craigmore Woods SPA

-Distribution of the species (capercaillie) within the site:

There has been no development or direct loss of woodland habitat within Craigmore Woods SPA, however the development is within the boundary of Wood H - Craigmore Woods (see Annex II), which is a capercaillie woodland with connectivity to Craigmore Woods SPA. It is recognised that effects on capercaillie at any one of the Badenoch and Strathspey capercaillie SPAs or associated woodlands has the potential to affect the wider capercaillie metapopulation of Badenoch and Strathspey. Therefore, the loss of woodland habitat at this site may indirectly impact the distribution of capercaillie within Craigmore Woods SPA.

The development site is within 1.5km of Craigmore Woods SPA and approximately 3.2km from a known capercaillie lek in Craigmore Woods SPA. It is also within 1.5km of Anagach Woods SPA and 3.3km from a known capercaillie lek in Anagach Woods. Male capercaillie may disperse up to 5km from lek sites, while female capercaillie may disperse up to 30 km from lek sites to suitable areas of woodland for nesting and rearing chicks. Therefore, the development site is well within the dispersal range of both male and female capercaillie from Craigmore Woods SPA and Anagach Woods SPA.

Capercaillie woodlands including Wood H – Craigmore Woods, are recognised as being important for sustaining the metapopulation of capercaillie in Badenoch and Strathspey, and may provide functional habitat connectivity for foraging, breeding and dispersing capercaillie moving between capercaillie SPAs and other capercaillie woodlands. Revack Woods is a connecting woodland between Anagach Woods SPA and Craigmore Woods SPAs with suitable capercaillie habitat of Scots pine, blaeberry and bog woodland. Evidence of male capercaillie and nesting female capercaillie has been recorded from Revack Woods within the last 10 years (latest 2018), including records from approximately 930m and 1km from Revack Lodge in 2016 (Ref: personal communication Carolyn Robertson, CNPA Cairngorms Nature Manager and Helen Grey, RSPB Scotland Capercaillie Advisory Officer).

This development will result in an increase in the level of human activity surrounding the development site, which was formerly ancient woodland. Loss of ancient woodland habitat and increased human activity associated with the development may result in a slight increase the risk of disturbance to capercaillie using Revack Woods. This may affect the distribution of capercaillie within Craigmore Woods SPA by disrupting the exchange of capercaillie between Craigmore Woods SPA and Anagach Woods SPA.

However, due to the proposed usage of the development site for storing machinery and estate equipment, it is considered unlikely that this development will result in an increase in recreational activity within Craigmore Woods SPA that would impact the distribution of capercaillie within that site **(see Annex I Detailed Capercaillie Assessment)**.

It is noted that the development site extends to 0.33ha, at the edge of a significantly larger block of pine woodland (>250ha). Therefore, the removal of ancient woodland here will result in the loss of

approximately 0.13% of suitable capercaillie habitat. It is also noted that the development site is close to existing buildings at Revack Lodge, where there will have been an existing level of human activity close to the development site, which in the past may have inhibited capercaillie from using the woodland close to Revack Lodge.

There may be cumulative impacts from other recent forestry activities within the Revack Estate, including the removal and felling of woodland at locations near to the development site and from the upgrading of forestry tracks throughout the Revack Woods.

The felling of 1.2ha of commercial Sitka Spruce plantation south of the development site was undertaken with a Scottish Forestry licence and will be restocked. However, the permanent removal of approximately 0.33 of ancient woodland to the north of the development site was not carried out under SF licence or with a planning application. The recent track upgrades through Revack Woods have been undertaken without planning permission, and therefore their extent is currently unclear, however they are likely to be associated with increased human activity in the woodlands.

Therefore, cumulatively, there has been the permanent removal of approximately 0.63ha of ancient woodland from a block of >250ha, which is approximately 0.25% of suitable capercaillie habitat in Revack Woods (northern section of Wood H- Craigmore Woods).

While there has been a loss of suitable capercaillie habitat within a capercaillie woodland, and there is likely to be a slight increase in the level of human activity close to the development site, which may result in some increased risk of disturbance to capercaillie using these woods, it is considered unlikely that this will result in a significant impact on the distribution of capercaillie within Craigmore Woods SPA.

Therefore, it can be ascertained that this Conservation Objective can be met.

-Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species (capercaillie); Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species (capercaillie):

No development has occurred within Craigmore Woods SPA and therefore there will not be an impact on the distribution and extent of habitats supporting capercaillie within the SPA. The structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting capercaillie within Craigmore Woods SPA will also not be impacted by this development. However, the development has resulted in the removal of woodland habitat within Wood H- Craigmore Woods (see Annex II), which is a capercaillie woodland associated with Craigmore Woods SPA and other capercaillie SPAs. It is recognised that effects on capercaillie at any one of the Badenoch and Strathspey capercaillie SPAs or associated woodlands has the potential to affect the wider capercaillie metapopulation of Badenoch and Strathspey. The woodland habitats present within Revack Woods/Wood H- Craigmore Woods are likely to provide foraging and nesting habitat for capercaillie associated with Craigmore Woods SPA, and to provide functional habitat connectivity for dispersing capercaillie associated with the SPA and Anagach Woods SPA to the north of the development site.

Recent capercaillie habitat survey work (2021) has been undertaken within the area of Revack Woods owned by Scottish Woodlands, which found that the woodland contained a good amount

of habitat suitable for capercaillie, and human activity appeared to be relatively low in that area. (Ref: Helen Grey, RSPB Scotland Capercaillie Advisory Officer).

As there has been no direct loss of habitat, or impacts on the distribution and extent of habitat, and supporting processes within the boundary of Craigmore Woods SPA it can be ascertained that this Conservation Objective has been met.

-No significant disturbance of the species (capercaillie)

As stated previously female capercaillie may disperse up to 30km from lek sites to find suitable woodland habitat for nesting and rearing chicks. The ancient woodland/PAWS habitat previously present within the development site is well within that distance. It is also within the dispersal distance for male capercaillie from leks (max dispersal is 5km). There is evidence of both male and breeding female capercaillie within Revack Woods within the last 10 years. The most recent records are from 2018. (ref: Personal communication Carolyn Robertson, CNPA Cairngorms Nature Manager and Helen Grey, RSPB Scotland Capercaillie Officer) suggesting that the woodland within and surrounding the development site may have been used by dispersing or foraging adults, and by nesting females. However, there has been no recent survey work within the area of woodland owned by Revack Estate, and therefore it is not possible to confirm whether a capercaillie lek is present, or whether females regularly nest close to the Revack Lodge. There are capercaillie records from Craig Revack in 2010 (ref: personal communication Helen Grey, RSPB Scotland Capercaillie Advisory Officer).

Disturbance can have severe consequences for capercaillie. It can physically deter the birds from mating and cause eggs to chill if they are left unattended when birds are disturbed. Chicks separated from their mother become more vulnerable to hypothermia and predation, and human presence raises stress hormone levels in capercaillie. This can lead to chronic stress in the case of repeated disturbance, which affects growth, body condition, immune function, reproduction and survival. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that females with chicks will have regularly approached within 150m of the buildings at Revack Lodge. Human activity associated with this development has encroached further into the woodland, extending the zone of potential disturbance deeper into suitable woodland habitat.

The applicant has stated that the removal of ancient woodland habitat, site clearance and construction of the storage shed took place in November 2024, which is out-with the capercaillie breeding season (1 March to 31 August). This timing will have avoided construction-phase disturbance to breeding capercaillie associated with Anagach Woods SPA and Craigmore Woods SPA.

It is noted that the ancient woodland habitat formerly present within the development site was at the edge of the woodland and in proximity to existing buildings at Revack Lodge. The development site may therefore have been subject to an existing level of disturbance from human activity and may not have been frequently used by foraging, nesting or dispersing capercaillie. Breeding females are sensitive to disturbance within 150m of nests and broods of chicks (see: [Disturbance Distances in selected Scottish Bird Species – NatureScot Guidance | NatureScot](#)).

The permanent removal of ancient woodland habitat and the construction of an estate building at the development site will result in an increase in human activity at this location during its

operational phase. Increased human activity within and surrounding the development site may slightly increase the risk of disturbance to capercaillie moving between leks in Anagach Woods SPA and Craigmore Woods SPA, and to dispersing females looking for nesting sites and raising broods of chicks. However, it is considered unlikely that this development will specifically result in additional recreational disturbance within Craigmore Woods SPA, over and above what is already occurring (See Annex I and II).

There may also be cumulative impacts from the removal of woodland habitat to the north of the development and felling of commercial forestry south-east of the development site, and from the upgrading of forestry tracks through the surrounding woodland, which may reduce options for dispersal corridors and remove supporting habitat that may have been used by nesting female capercaillie.

However, considering the extent of habitat removed and the location of the development site next to existing buildings. It is considered unlikely that the increase in human activity in the vicinity of the development will result in a significant increase in disturbance to capercaillie connected to Craigmore Woods SPA.

Therefore, it can be ascertained that this Conservation Objective can be met.

See **Annexes I-II** for the detailed capercaillie assessment on increased disturbance within Craigmore Woods SPA.

-Population of the species (capercaillie) as a viable component of the site:

As discussed above this development has reduced the extent of ancient woodland habitat within capercaillie Wood H -Craigmore Wood, which is situated between two capercaillie SPAs. The likely increase in human activity associated with this development may increase the risk of human disturbance to dispersing capercaillie from lek sites, and to breeding females raising broods. This may impact connectivity between two capercaillie woodlands/SPAs and increase population fragmentation of this vulnerable species. The numbers of capercaillie recorded at leks with Craigmore Woods SPA and Anagach Woods SPA have significantly declined in recent years (Ref: personal communication Helen Gray, RSPB Capercaillie Advisory Officer), which appears to be at least partly attributable to human disturbance.

As previously stated, it is recognised that effects on capercaillie at any one of the Badenoch and Strathspey capercaillie SPAs or associated woodlands has the potential to affect the wider capercaillie metapopulation of Badenoch and Strathspey. Therefore, loss of woodland habitat could increase the risk of disturbance and reduce connectivity between two capercaillie SPA, which may have a negative impact on the population of capercaillie associated with Craigmore Woods SPA.

However, considering the scale of woodland habitat lost (approximately 0.25% of suitable capercaillie habitat (cumulatively) within a larger woodland of >250ha) and the location of the development next to existing buildings that would have had an existing level of disturbance, it is considered unlikely that that increase in human activity close to the development will significantly affect the population of capercaillie as a viable component of Craigmore Woods SPA.

Therefore, it can be ascertained that this Conservation Objective can be met.

In conclusion, the development has resulted in the permanent loss of ancient woodland habitat within a capercaillie woodland (Wood H – Craigmore Woods) with connectivity to Craigmore Woods SPA. The loss of suitable capercaillie habitat, and an increase in the level of human activity close to the development site may slightly increase the risk of disturbance to capercaillie using these woods. However, considering the scale and the location of the development, it can be ascertained that there will not be a significant impact on the integrity of the Craigmore Woods SPA.

3) Anagach Woods SPA

Distribution of the species (capercaillie) within the site:

There has been no development or direct loss of woodland habitat within Anagach Woods SPA, however the development is within the boundary of the Wood H - Craigmore Woods (see Annex II), which is a capercaillie woodland between Anagach Woods SPA and Craigmore Woods SPA. It is recognised that effects on capercaillie at any one of the Badenoch and Strathspey capercaillie SPAs or associated woodlands has the potential to affect the wider capercaillie metapopulation of Badenoch and Strathspey. Therefore, the loss of woodland habitat at this site may indirectly impact the distribution of capercaillie within Anagach Woods SPA.

The development site is within 1.5km of Anagach Woods SPA and 3km from a known capercaillie lek in Anagach Woods. Male capercaillie may disperse up to 5km from lek sites, while female capercaillie may disperse up to 30 km from lek sites to suitable areas of woodland for nesting and rearing chicks. Therefore, the development site is well within the dispersal range of both male and female capercaillie from Anagach Woods SPA.

The development site is located within ancient woodland that is part of the Wood H- Craigmore Woods capercaillie woodland (see Annex II), which is considered important for sustaining the metapopulation of capercaillie in Badenoch and Strathspey. Capercaillie woodlands such as Wood H provide functional habitat connectivity for foraging, breeding and dispersing capercaillie moving between capercaillie SPAs and other capercaillie woodlands. Evidence of male and female capercaillie has been recorded from the Revack Woods within the last 10 years, most recently in 2018 (Ref: personal communication Helen Grey, RSPB Scotland Capercaillie Officer).

This development will result in an increase in the level of human activity surrounding the development site, which was formerly ancient woodland. Loss of ancient woodland habitat and increased human activity associated with the development may result in a slight increase the risk of disturbance to capercaillie using Revack Woods. This may affect the distribution of capercaillie within Anagach Woods SPA by disrupting the exchange of capercaillie between Anagach Woods SPA and Craigmore Woods SPA.

However, due to the proposed usage of the development site for storing machinery and estate equipment, it is considered unlikely that this development will result in an increase in recreational activity within Craigmore Woods SPA that would impact the distribution of capercaillie within that

site (see Annex I Detailed Capercaillie Assessment).

It is noted that the development site extends to 0.33ha, at the edge of a significantly larger block of pine woodland (>250ha). Therefore, the removal of ancient woodland here will result in the loss of approximately 0.13% of suitable capercaillie habitat. It is also noted that the development site is close to existing buildings at Revack Lodge, where there will have been an existing level of human activity close to the development site. This may have inhibited capercaillie from using the woodland close to Revack Lodge.

There may be cumulative impacts from other recent forestry activities within the Revack Estate, including the removal and felling of woodland at locations near to the development site and from the upgrading of forestry tracks throughout the Revack Woods.

The felling of 1.2ha of commercial Sitka Spruce plantation south of the development site was undertaken with a Scottish Forestry licence and will be restocked. However, the permanent removal of approximately 0.33 of ancient woodland to the north of the development site was not carried out under SF licence or with a planning application. The recent track upgrades through Revack Woods have been undertaken without planning permission, and therefore their extent is currently unclear, however they are likely to be associated with increased human activity in the woodlands.

Therefore, cumulatively, there has been the permanent removal of approximately 0.63ha of ancient woodland from a block of >250ha, which is approximately 0.25% of suitable capercaillie habitat in Revack Woods (northern section of Wood H- Craigmore Woods).

While there has been a loss of suitable capercaillie habitat, and there is likely to be an increase in the level of human activity close to the development site, which may result in some increased risk of disturbance to capercaillie using these woods, it is considered unlikely that there will be a significant impact the distribution of capercaillie within Anagach Woods SPA.

Therefore, it can be ascertained that this Conservation Objective can be met.

-Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species (capercaillie); Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species (capercaillie):

No development has occurred within Anagach Woods SPA and therefore there will be no impact on the distribution and extent of habitats supporting capercaillie within the SPA. Similarly, there will not be a significant impact on the structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting capercaillie within the Angach Woods SPA.

Therefore, it is considered that this Conservation Objective can be met.

-No significant disturbance of the species (capercaillie)

As stated previously female capercaillie may disperse up to 30km from lek sites to find suitable woodland habitat for nesting and rearing chicks. The ancient woodland/PAWS habitat previously present within the development site is well within that distance. It is also within the dispersal distance for male capercaillie from leks (max dispersal is 5km). There is evidence of both male and

breeding female capercaillie within Revack Woods within the last 10 years (most recently in 2018, but records from 2016 within 930m of Revack Lodge.) (Ref: Personal communication Carolyn Robertson, Cairngorms Nature Manager and Helen Grey, RSPB Scotland Capercaillie Officer) suggesting that the woodland within and surrounding the development site may have been used by dispersing or foraging adults, and by nesting females. However there has been no recent survey work within the area of woodland owned by Revack Estate, therefore it is not possible to confirm whether a capercaillie lek is present, or whether females regularly nest close to the Revack Estate Lodge. There are capercaillie records from Craig Revack in 2010 (ref: personal communication Helen Grey, RSPB Scotland Capercaillie Advisory Officer).

It is noted that the ancient woodland habitat formerly present within the development site was at the edge of the woodland and in proximity to existing buildings at Revack Lodge. The development site may therefore have been subject to an existing level of disturbance from human activity and may not have been frequently used by foraging, nesting or dispersing capercaillie. Breeding females are sensitive to disturbance within 150m of nests and broods of chicks (see: [Disturbance Distances in selected Scottish Bird Species – NatureScot Guidance | NatureScot](#)).

The permanent removal of ancient woodland habitat and the construction of an estate building at the development site will result in an increase in human activity at this location during its operational phase. Increased human activity within and surrounding the development site may slightly increase the risk of disturbance to capercaillie moving between leks in Anagach Woods SPA and Craigmore Woods SPA, and to dispersing females looking for nesting sites and raising broods of chicks. However, it is considered unlikely that this development will specifically result in additional recreational disturbance within Anagach Woods SPA, over and above what is already occurring (See Annex I and II).

There may also be cumulative impacts from the removal of woodland habitat to the north of the development and felling of commercial forestry south-east of the development site, and from the upgrading of forestry tracks through the surrounding woodland, which may reduce options for dispersal corridors and remove supporting habitat that may have been used by nesting female capercaillie.

However, considering the extent of woodland that has been removed and the location of the development site next to existing buildings. It is considered unlikely that that a small increase in human activity in the vicinity of the development will significantly increase the risk of disturbance to capercaillie connected to Anagach Woods SPA.

Therefore, it can be ascertained that this Conservation Objective can be met.

See **Annexes I-II** for the detailed capercaillie assessment on increased disturbance within Anagach Woods SPA.

-Population of the species (capercaillie) as a viable component of the site:

As discussed above this development has reduced the extent of ancient woodland habitat within capercaillie Wood H -Craigmore Wood, which is situated between two capercaillie SPAs. The likely increase in human activity associated with this development may increase the risk of human disturbance to dispersing capercaillie from lek sites, and to breeding females raising broods. This may impact connectivity between two capercaillie woodlands/SPAs and increase population fragmentation of this vulnerable species. The numbers of capercaillie recorded at leks with

Anagach Woods SPA and Craigmore Woods SPA have significantly declined in recent years (Ref: personal communication Helen Gray, RSPB Capercaillie Advisory Officer), which appears to be at least partly attributable to human disturbance.

As previously stated, it is recognised that effects on capercaillie at any one of the Badenoch and Strathspey capercaillie SPAs or associated woodlands has the potential to affect the wider capercaillie metapopulation of Badenoch and Strathspey. Therefore, loss of woodland habitat could increase the risk of disturbance and reduce connectivity between two capercaillie SPA, which may have a negative impact on the population of capercaillie associated with Anagach Woods SPA.

However, considering the scale of woodland habitat lost (approximately 0.25% of suitable capercaillie habitat (cumulatively) within a larger woodland of >250ha) and the location of the development next to existing buildings that would have had an existing level of disturbance, it is considered unlikely that that an increase in human activity close to the development will significantly affect the population of capercaillie as a viable component of Anagach Woods SPA.

Therefore, it can be ascertained that this Conservation Objective can be met.

In conclusion, the development has resulted in the permanent loss of ancient woodland habitat within a capercaillie woodland (Wood H – Craigmore Woods) with connectivity to Anagach Woods SPA. The loss of suitable capercaillie habitat, and an increase in the level of human activity close to the development site may slightly increase the risk of disturbance to capercaillie using these woods. However, considering that the scale and the location of the development, it can be ascertained that there will not be a significant impact on the integrity of the Anagach Woods SPA.

STAGE 5:

Can it be ascertained that there will not be an adverse effect on site integrity?

2) Anagach Woods SPA

Yes.

It is possible to ascertain that there will not be an adverse effect on site integrity from this development.

3) Craigmore Woods SPA

Yes.

It is possible to ascertain that there will not be an adverse effect on site integrity from this development.

Annex I Capercaillie Assessment: 2025/0299/DET – Erection of Agricultural Shed Revack Estate

Q1. Is the proposed development likely to change levels of human activity or patterns of recreation around the proposed development/associated settlement?

Q1: This and Q2 are included as screening questions to filter out any developments that aren't likely to have changed levels or patterns of recreation.

YES, there is likely to be a small increase in human activity within/around the proposed development.

This retrospective application is for an agricultural shed at Revack Lodge/ Keepers Cottage, within ancient woodland on the Revack Estate (within Wood H - Craigmore Woods). The storage of large construction machinery, building renovation materials and wood pellets for fuel appears to be the proposed use.

The development involved the removal of approximately 0.33ha of woodland on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (without a Scottish Forestry felling licence). No details of pre-construction ecological surveys have been provided to support the application, but it is possible to compare the felled site with remaining woodland to the south and west of the development, which is typical of native pine woodland, and appears suitable for capercaillie.

In addition to the removal of trees, a significant volume of soil/rocks/sediment has been excavated to level the ground on site prior to the construction of a large shed.

Update December 2025: The applicant's agent has stated that excavated materials were used to level the ground in another felled block of woodland approximately 160m north of the development site. This was to enable that site to be used for storage. Other excavated materials were used in the surfacing of upgraded tracks throughout the Revack Woods.

If the development is for the storage of construction heavy plant, agricultural machinery and estate equipment, there may be increased human activity within the development site. However as it is close to existing buildings at Revack Lodge, there is likely to have been an existing level of human activity close to the development site, which may have inhibited capercaillie from using this area of woodland.

It is noted that an additional block of ancient woodland to the north of the application site has been permanently removed (without felling permission or a planning application), and forestry track upgrades have been undertaken throughout the Revack Lodge Estate woodland coinciding with the current development. These other works are out-with the red line boundary of this development but may have a cumulative impact through increasing the extent and distribution of operational-phase disturbance throughout capercaillie Wood H – Craigmore Woods, and will exacerbate the loss of supporting habitat in the north of Revack Woods. The upgraded tracks are likely to facilitate an increase in human activity within the woodlands surrounding the development

	<p>While there has been no direct loss of capercaillie habitat within the boundaries of Anagach Woods SPA or Craigmore Woods SPA, there is direct loss of woodland within a Wood H- Craigmore Woods (see map in Annex II). This capercaillie woodland forms connecting woodland habitat between Anagach Woods SPA and Craigmore Woods SPA. Therefore, this development may impact habitat connectivity and the movement of birds between these two capercaillie SPAs to the north and the south of the development site. Evidence of both male and female capercaillie have been recorded within the Revack Woods (part of the Craigmore Woods/Wood H – see Annex II) within the last 10 years.</p> <p>Capercaillie are particularly sensitive to disturbance within 1km of leks during the main lekking season (1 March to 15 May). Females are sensitive to disturbance within 150m of nests or broods of chicks during the breeding season (1 March to 31 August).</p> <p>Update December 2025: The applicant’s agent has stated that the work was undertaken in November 2024, and that a ‘visual check for protected species’ was undertaken by the Estate Manager prior to commencement. RSPB Scotland Capercaillie Advisory Officer Helen Gray has confirmed that a capercaillie habitat survey was undertaken in 2021 in the part of Revack Woods owned/manage by Scottish Woodlands. However, no survey work for capercaillie has been undertaken near Revack Lodge or Craig Revack (last capercaillie record from Craig Revack appears to be 2010), so it is not possible to determine whether there has been recent capercaillie activity in the woodland close to the development site.</p>
<p>Q2. Are capercaillie woods significantly more accessible from this development site than from other parts of the associated settlement?</p> <p><i>Q2: This is included to ensure the effect of otherwise small-scale development sites particularly close to capercaillie woods are adequately considered. Evidence from settlements in Strathspey where houses are adjacent to woodlands indicates that networks of informal paths and trails have developed within the woods linking back gardens with formal path networks and other popular local destinations (eg primary schools). Such paths are likely to be used by visitors.</i></p>	<p>YES,</p> <p>The development is directly within the Wood H - Craigmore Woods (see Annex II).</p> <p>The development site is also within 1.5km of Wood D- Anagach Woods, and within 1.5km of both Anagach Woods SPA and Craigmore Woods SPA, although these sites are not considered to be significantly more accessibility as a result of this development.</p>

If Q1 & Q2 = No, conclusion is no significant disturbance to capercaillie and assessment ends here

If Q1 or Q2 = Yes, continue to Q3

Q3. Which capercaillie woods are likely to be used regularly for recreation by users of the development site at detectable levels? (list all)

Q3: This is included to identify which capercaillie woods are likely to be used for recreation by users of non-housing development sites at levels that would be detectable. The answer will be assessed using professional judgement based on knowledge of existing patterns of recreation around settlements and in the local area, the relative appeal of the capercaillie woods concerned compared to other recreational opportunities in the area, the volume of recreational visits likely to be generated by the development site, and informed by national survey data (eg on the distances people travel for recreational visits).

The development is within **Wood H -Craigmore Woods** and has resulted in the loss of ancient woodland habitat that may have supported capercaillie (no ecological survey work was undertaken prior to woodland removal/development of the site). Estate staff accessing the storage shed may occasionally use Craigmore Woods for recreation, however based on the current understanding of the shed's use (storage of equipment and heavy plant, and possibly for storage of fuel pellets) it appears unlikely that this development will result in a detectable increase in the number of people using Wood H - Craigmore Woods specifically for recreation. However, there may be an increase in noise and activity in proximity to the development site.

Continue to Q4

Q4. Are residents / users of this development site predicted to undertake any off path recreational activities in any of the woods identified at Q3 at detectable levels?

Q4: This is included because any off path recreational use in capercaillie woods will result in significant disturbance and require mitigation.

No. There is no reason to believe that users of the proposed development would undertake any additional off-path recreational activities compared to existing patterns of behaviour and use.

If Q4 = No for any woods, continue to Q5

If Q4 = Yes for any woods, mitigation is needed. Note and continue to Q5.

Q5: Are each of the woods identified at Q3

Yes. These woods are already established locations for recreational activity. Particularly the

already established locations for recreation?

Q5: This is included because if users of the development site are likely to access previously infrequently-visited capercaillie woods, or parts of these woods, for recreation, significant disturbance is likely and mitigation is needed. This will be answered on the basis of professional knowledge.

southern area of Craigmores Woods. The northern section of Wood H- Craigmores Woods which includes Revack Woods does not seem to have the same level of existing recreational use. (based on data from Strava maps [Strava Maps](#), accessed December 2025 and February 2026). A capercaillie habitat survey was carried out in the area of Revack Woods owned/ managed by Scottish Woodlands in 2021, and it was noted in the report that human disturbance didn't appear to be a significant issue in that area (Ref: Helen Gray, RSPB Scotland Capercaillie Advisory Officer).

If Q5 = No for any woods, mitigation is needed. Note and continue to Q6.

If Q5 = Yes for any woods, continue to Q6

Q6: For each of the woods identified at Q3, are users of the development site predicted to have different temporal patterns of recreational use to any existing visitors, or to undertake a different profile of activities? (eg. more dog walking, or early morning use)

Q6: This is included because some types of recreation are particularly disturbing to capercaillie; and increased levels of these types of recreation will cause significant disturbance and require mitigation. This will be answered on the basis of professional knowledge on existing patterns of recreational use and whether each location is sufficiently close and/or convenient in relation to the development site and patterns of travel from there, to be used by users of the development for different recreational activities or at different times of day. For example, capercaillie woods with safe routes for dogs that are located close to development sites are likely to be used for early morning &/or after work dog walking.

No. Wood H- Craigmores Woods is already used for recreation, particularly in the south of the woods where access is from Nethy Bridge.

While there may be increased human activity within the woods associated with this development, which may include early morning and late evening visits to pick up and unload equipment, users of the development site are unlikely to have different patterns of recreational use within these woods or undertake a different profile of activities. It is considered unlikely that there would be a significant increase in recreational use of the woods associated with this development. Due to the location of the development next to existing buildings at Revack Lodge, there may have been an existing level of human activity close to the development site, particularly when there was a restaurant at the Revack Lodge.

If Q6 = yes for any woods, mitigation is needed. Note and continue to Q7

If Q6 = No for any woods, continue to Q7

Q7: For each of the woods identified at Q3, could the predicted level of use by residents / users of the development site significantly increase overall levels of recreational use?

Q7: This is included because a significant increase in recreational use could result in significant disturbance to capercaillie, even in situations where the capercaillie wood is already popular for recreation, and no changes to current recreational patterns / activities or off path activities are predicted. The answer was assessed on the basis of professional judgement of current levels of use and whether the increase is likely to be more than approximately 10%.

No. There would not be a detectable or significant increase recreational human activity within **Wood H -Craigmore Woods** by users of the development.

If Q4-7 = No for all woods, conclusion is no significant disturbance to capercaillie and assessment ends here

If Q4, 5, 6 and/or 7 = Yes for any woods, mitigation is needed

Conclusion: Is mitigation needed as a consequence of this development site in relation to each wood listed at Q3?

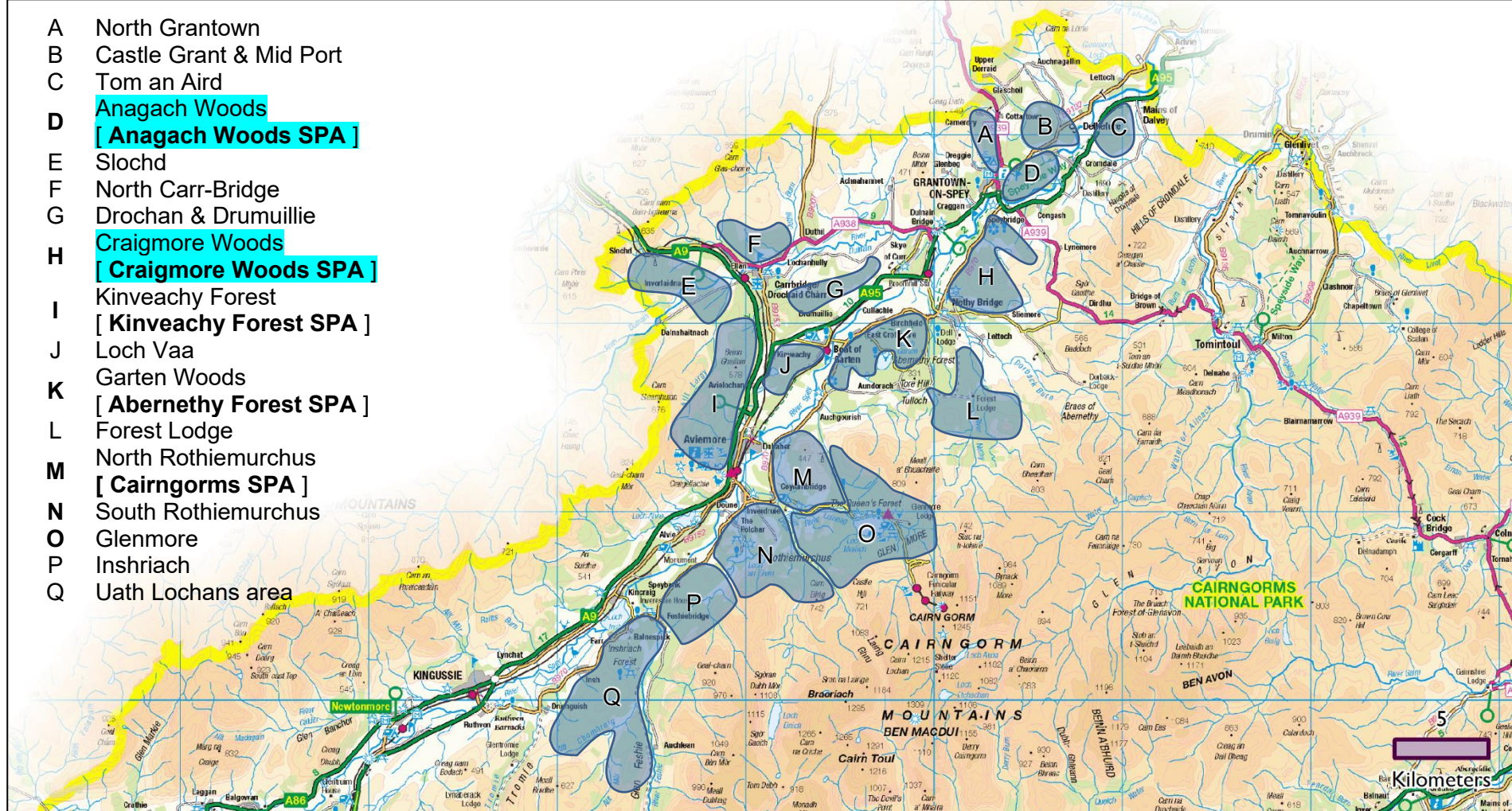
No, due to the non-residential and non-recreational nature of the development, and its location close to existing buildings it is considered unlikely that there will be a specific increase in recreational disturbance within **Wood H - Craigmore Woods SPA (or **Wood D- Anagach Woods**) because of this development. Therefore, no specific measures are required to mitigate recreational disturbance impacts on capercaillie from this development.**

However, it should be noted that the permanent removal of ancient woodland/PAWs habitat as a result of this development is not supported by the Scottish Government’s policy on woodland removal or CNPA policies, and mitigation/ compensatory planting is likely to be required.

Reasons mitigation needed:

N/A

Annex II Badenoch and Strathspey capercaillie woods map (considered woodlands highlighted blue)



Capercaillie woodland in Badenoch and Strathspey.

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