Beauly BESS

784-B066659

Biodiversity Enhancement Feasibility Assessment

TNEI on behalf of Field

December 2024

Document prepared on behalf of Tetra Tech Limited. Registered in England number: 01959704

TETRA TECH

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Revision:	**V2**	**Prepared by:**	Rob Gavan MSc BSc ACIEEM **Senior Ecologist** [redacted]
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Status:	**Final**	**Approved By:**	Doug Blease BSc (Hons) MCIEEM Associate Director [redacted]

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APPENDICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Contents	Summary
Site Location	The Site is located approximately 900 m south of Beauly in the Scottish Highlands and is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NH 52446 44471.
Proposals	The development proposals consist of the creation and operation of "Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) of up to 100 MW with associated infrastructure, earthworks, drainage, accesses and ancillary works (including landscaping and biodiversity enhancement)."
Scope of this Survey(s)	Current industry guidance states that a full planning applications should be supported by a biodiversity strategy. This strategy should be used to inform the Local Planning Authority and detail the baseline biodiversity of a Site in relation to habitats, and if applicable, hedgerows and watercourses. It should then demonstrate the feasible biodiversity unit uplift that can be generated from prescribed interventions onSite and/or offSite. As such the purpose of this report is to: • Quantify the baseline habitat biodiversity units present on Site; • Quantify the post-development habitat biodiversity units on Site; • Calculate the likely change in biodiversity units from pre- to post-development; and, • Provide a series of post-intervention strategies to ensure the development reaches a minimum of 10% BNG.
Results and Evaluation	The proposed development will result in the direct loss of modified grassland to the south of the Site. This loss accounts for 6.29 habitat units. However, the combined habitat creation included within the associated landscaping plans accounts for 8.73 habitat units and 3.77 hedgerow units. This is primarily through the establishment of a species-rich meadow mixture, which will encompass the Site to the east and south. In addition, two areas of woodland have been targeted for enhancement, which generate a further 6.27 habitat units. To satisfy the preferred 10% Biodiversity Enhancement, the development required a total of 43.55 habitat units (i.e. 110%) and as the post-intervention Site value is 43.96 habitat units, the proposals achieve a 11.03% increase and **biodiversity enhancement has been achieved**, this is in addition to satisfying the trading rules. As there were no hedgerows present in the baseline, hedgerow units gain cannot be calculated.

Recommendations	**Monitoring and Management** To deliver successful implementation of the proposed habitats, a Habitat Management and Monitoring plan is recommended. This will detail: • any immediate planting/habitat creation requirements or intervention to achieve an enhanced habitat, • habitat management requirements during the establishment period (up to 5 years), and; • long-term management and maintenance requirements for 40 years, in excess of the minimum 30 years stipulated. Adherence to the document will maximise the likelihood that enhancement and/or creation targets are concise, proportionate, and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable, Time-bound) and successful establishment of proposed habitats is achieved. **Faunal Recommendations** Provision of habitats for faunal species, although not currently measured in the Metric, is important for maximising biodiversity. Mitigation and enhancement measures for protected species including birds, amphibians and invertebrates are provided and detailed in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Tetra Tech was commissioned by TNEI Services Ltd in November 2024 on behalf of Field Beauly Ltd (the Applicant) to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment to support a planning application for the creation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated development, hereafter referred to as the "Proposed Development", on land at Dunballoch Farm, Beauly, IV4 7AY (the Site) and is wholly within The Highland Council (THC) administrative area.

This report has been prepared by Senior Ecologist Rob Gavan BSc (Hons) MSc ACIEEM and the conditions pertinent to it are provided in Appendix A.

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The Site is located approximately 900 m south of Beauly in the Scottish Highlands and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NH 52446 44471 (Figure 1). It comprises of a large grassland pasture which, at the time of the survey, hosted grazing sheep. There are two electrical pylons within the field with overhead cables running from east to west. The southeast of the Site is bound by an old dry-stone dyke, behind which is an area of extensive woodland. The wider landscape is largely a mix of pastoral and arable farmland, conifer plantations and areas of mixed woodland. The River Beauly flows from south to north, separated from the southwest Site boundary by a narrow, broadleaved riparian woodland.

1.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The development proposals consist of the creation and operation of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) of up to 100 MW with associated infrastructure, access and ancillary works (including landscaping to achieve biodiversity enhancement).

1.4 PURPOSE OF REPORT

Current industry guidance[1] states that planning applications, should be supported by a biodiversity strategy. This strategy should be used to inform the Local Planning Authority and detail the baseline biodiversity of a Site in relation to habitats, and if applicable, hedgerows and watercourses. It should then demonstrate the feasible biodiversity unit uplift that can be generated from prescribed interventions onSite and/or offSite. Although BNG is not a mandatory requirement in Scotland, as per The Highland Council's Local Policy 'All developments must enhance biodiversity, including, where relevant, restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks and the connections between them', the submission of a BNG assessment is recommended.

[1] CIEEM (2021): Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester, UK.

As such the purpose of this report is to:

- Quantify the baseline habitat biodiversity units present on Site;
- Quantify the post-development habitat biodiversity units on Site;
- Calculate the likely change in biodiversity units from pre- to post-development; and,
- Provide a series of post-intervention strategies to ensure the development reaches a minimum of 10% BNG.

No watercourse units were present on Site or within 10m of the footprint of development. The red line boundary is extended towards the River Beauly to allow for enhancement of the riparian woodland between the footprint and the River Beauly. As such, watercourse units are not subject to any further consideration within this report.

The details of this report will remain valid for a period of eighteen months from the date of the survey (i.e. until 22nd January 2026), after which the validity of this assessment should be reviewed to determine whether further updates are necessary. The recommendations within this report should be reviewed (and reassessed if necessary) should there be any changes to the red line boundary or development proposals which this report was based on.

Scientific names are provided at the first mention of each species using standard nomenclature (Stace, 2019) and common names (where appropriate) are then used throughout the rest of the report for ease of reading.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 BIODIVERSITY GUIDANCE

The assessment has been completed using DEFRA's Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), 2024), hereafter referred to as 'the metric'. The associated methods were informed by the User guide (DEFRA, 2024a) and and Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development (Baker, Hoskin, & Butterworth, 2019).

The methodology set out below defines a simplified version of the method used to carry out the BNG assessment. For full details including rules and methodology refer to the guidance documents referenced above.

2.2 HABITAT ASSESSMENT

The Site habitats were determine using professional judgement, Site photographs, and historic Phase 1 survey data (JNCC, 2010). This habitat data was then converted to UK Habitat Classifications (UKHab) using UKHab Professional Edition V2 (UKhab Ltd., 2023). This process is documented in the associated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal undertaken for this Site (Tetra Tech, 2024 ref. 784-B066659_Beauly BESS_PEA). Likewise, habitat condition was documented in line with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment Sheets (Defra, 2023) using available data and professional judgement. It is usually considered best practice to allocate a condition of 'Good' to habitats which are lacking a formal condition assessment, but as recent Site knowledge and photographs are available from a series of surveys undertaken in 2024, this is considered sufficient to apply a more accurate condition.

The survey was completed in accordance with methodology outlined in the UK Habitat Classification Professional Edition V2 (UKHab Ltd., 2023), with the type and extent of each habitat present within the Site recorded. The condition, strategic significance of each habitat and the associated distinctiveness of these habitats, are discussed in greater detail below.

Further detail of habitat descriptions with target notes can be found in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal undertaken for this project (Tetra Tech, 2024).

2.3 METRIC

The Metric generates a value measured in 'biodiversity units' for a Site before development commences (referred to as the 'Baseline') and after development is completed (referred to as 'post-intervention'). The difference (positive or negative) between the two generated values is the output, provided as a percentage change.

The Metric assesses habitat parcel units, including urban trees, separately from linear habitat units which are split into either hedgerows (including line of trees) or rivers. Area habitats are measured in hectares, whereas linear habitats are measured in kilometres. There are no rivers, watercourses or ditches anticipated to be affected by the Development Area. As such, no calculations in relation to these features are required.

The Metric calculates an output based on the habitat parcel area / linear habitat length and a range of factors that are associated with its assessed quality. The generated biodiversity value is therefore based on 'quality' factors that are multiplied together. These are detailed in Table 1.

Habitats were separated into discrete parcels either where they were geographically discrete or where there was a change in habitat condition across a single location. Each parcel was recorded and calculated separately using the Metric. Urban trees are counted as habitat areas, although the method of calculating area is different to other habitat parcels, this is described below.

Trees

For individual trees (not including lines of trees or woodland) their area is calculated from stem diameter, which equates to a specified size group (small, medium or large). Full details on how this is calculated is defined within the User Guide. The number of individual trees of each size is then input to the 'Urban Tree Helper' table within the Metric, and an area is given which is entered into the Metric as a habitat area. Each of the factors listed in Table 1 below are then applied to this area.

The sizes of urban trees are measured using their diameter at breast height (DBH) and defined as:

- Small tree= <10 cm;
- Medium tree= 10-30 cm;
- Large tree= 50-90 cm.
- Very large tree= >90 cm

Hedgerows

In the Metric, hedgerows and lines of trees are measured by hedgerow biodiversity units. This uses length (km), distinctiveness, condition and strategic significance to calculate the hedgerow units, the loss of which, need to be assessed separately to other biodiversity unit. As such, it is only possible to compensate for the loss of hedgerows / line of trees through the creation or enhancement of hedgerows / line of trees elsewhere.

Watercourses

The River Beauly is present to the southwest of the Site, however, no habitats will be impacted within 10 m of the riverbank. As the riparian area will be unimpacted by the proposed development no watercourse assessments are required.

Table 1 below sets out the methodology for calculating the baseline and post-intervention biodiversity values.

Table 1: Methodology for assessing factors within the Metric

Factor	Baseline	Post-intervention
Habitat type	Habitat types were recorded and mapped using UKhab (Figure 2).	The landscape plans were interpreted (TGP 2024, Drg No. 2210 / L01 and L02) and professional judgement used in classifying the designs into the relevant UKhab classifications (Figure 3). Additionally, areas suitable for habitat enhancements and creations were selected using professional judgement. This will dictate what is feasible both on and off-Site.

Factor	Baseline	Post-intervention
Area	Habitats were separated into parcels: geographically discrete or a change in habitat condition across a single location. Each parcel was recorded and calculated separately within the Metric. Areas were calculated in hectares to three decimal places using digital mapping in ArcGIS[2].	
Distinctiveness	Distinctiveness value is automatically generated by the Metric based on habitat type. The overall distinctiveness categories used for habitat areas is shown within the User Guide, habitats will be defined as Very Low, Low, Medium, High or Very High.	
Condition	Habitat condition is a score based on the quality of the habitat, judged against the perceived ecological optimum state for that particular habitat. It is, therefore, a means of measuring variation in the quality of patches of the same habitat type rather than a measure of quality between habitat types. The 'condition assessment'[3] involves assessing each habitat type / parcel against criteria in the associated condition sheet, resulting in a condition score (Good, Moderate or Poor) which is then input into the Metric. Some intensively managed habitats have a pre-defined condition score; and for other very low distinctiveness habitats no assessment is required.	
	A condition assessment was not undertaken during the field survey, with a retrospective assessment undertaken using professional judgement, Site knowledge and photographs. Where insufficient information is available to determine whether a criterion has been satisfied, it shall automatically be passed.	A precautionary approach was adopted when allocating the condition of habitats which will be created and enhanced in line with prescribed interventions.
Strategic Significance	Strategic significance utilises published local plans and objectives to identify local priorities for targeting biodiversity and nature improvement. It works at a landscape scale and gives additional unit value to habitats that are located in preferred locations for biodiversity and other environmental objectives.	
Time to Target Condition	N/A	Time to target condition is a standard score automatically generated by the Metric based on how long the habitat type takes to establish. The time period to use is the length of time (in years) between the intervention and the point in time the habitat reaches the pre-agreed target quality (i.e. distinctiveness, condition, area). This time will vary between habitat types, between change scenarios (e.g. creation typically takes longer than enhancement).
Difficulty of Creation or Restoring a Habitat	N/A	Habitat creation carries an associated risk based on the difficulty and uncertainty of successfully creating, restoring or enhancing a habitat. A multiplier is therefore applied automatically by the Metric to

[2] ESRI. ArcGIS online https://www.arcgis.com/index.html
[3] Defra. Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets and Instructions

Factor	Baseline	Post-intervention
		recognise the difficulty of creating different habitats, detailed in the user guide. Where uncertainties have been identified further work will be required to help give confidence that the habitat creation or restoration will be successful.

All habitat interventions must take into consideration the trading rules as defined in the Statutory Metric User Guide. The type of trading depends on the distinctiveness and condition of the habitat. As such it is prohibited to enhance a habitat across 'broad habitat groups' if the distinctiveness or condition is not also enhanced. As per rule 1 of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), 2024a) "*The trading rules of this biodiversity Metric must be followed*" and "*if trading rules have not been satisfied, then a net gain in biodiversity cannot be claimed".*

There were no 'irreplaceable habitats' present on Site. For reference however, these habitats cannot be accounted for in the Metric and require separate consideration[4].

2.4 LIMITATIONS

Assumptions have been made when converting the provided Phase 1 data to UKHab classifications and in inferring the habitat condition based on field results from preliminary studies. Habitats on Site were of a simple type and were easily categorised, and the effect of consistent livestock grazing on grassland and within woodland informed a confident assessment of condition. All effort has been made to allocate the most accurate habitat and condition category, with a higher value applied, where there is doubt or uncertainty.

It was highlighted during this assessment that a defined, narrow access for livestock to the River Beauly as drinking water will be designed, described as a 5m corridor. Whilst this area would not be subject to enhancement of woodland understorey or augmented planting, it is expected that the woodland canopy would remain above this corridor and as such the broad habitat would not change. The area not subject to additional planting to allow this access would be adapted elsewhere augmenting the riparian woodland. When the livestock access is designed it may be possible to recalculate the BNG metric, however the access proposal is not expected to significantly change the metric output.

Habitats have been mapped using a 'Minimum Mappable Unit' area of 25m^2 applied in line with UKhab methodology. As such some small areas of habitats have been excluded from the BNG assessment. Given the extent of the post-development landscaping to be implemented, this will not significantly affect the metric calculations undertaken as part of this assessment.

The metric does not override or undermine any existing planning policy or legislation, including the mitigation hierarchy, which should always be considered as the metric is applied. Furthermore, the metric does not change the protection afforded to biodiversity. Existing levels of protection afforded to protected species (such as for bats) and to habitats, are not changed by use of this or any other metric.

Finally, it is important to note that this report does not define the full detailed methodology for BNG

[4] National Planning Policy Framework (2019) Glossary provides a definition and examples of irreplaceable habitats

assessment, and the guidance documents should be referred to where relevant and if necessary.

3.0 RESULTS

For detailed descriptions of habitats identified on Site, alongside photographs, please review section 3.2 and Appendix B of the associated Beauly Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report (Tetra Tech, 2024 ref. 784-B066659_Beauly BESS_PEA). Information on BNG Legislation and habitat condition assessments are provided in Appendix B and C of this report.

The following section provides a summary of the habitat value in both the baseline and post-intervention stages of the project. For additional clarity the various steps in calculating the Sites biodiversity value are provided in Table D.1 and Table D.2 of Appendix D.

3.1 BASELINE HABITAT UNITS

The Site as a whole; supported common and widespread habitats of limited ecological value. The main component was a species-poor, sheep-grazed grassland, which was separated into a northern and southern section. Along the western periphery of the fields was a section of deciduous woodland, which fell slightly within the Site extents. To the east was a series of buildings and sealed developed land associated with a farm. This supported a small amenity grassland and two blocks of mixed woodland comprising both deciduous species, such as silver birch *Betula pendula* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior,* alongside Scot's pine *Pinus sylvestris.* Separating the farm property and the fields was a small strip of gorse *Ulex europaeus* scrub. For spatial reference please see Figure 2.

As there is yet to be a published Local Nature Recovery Strategy for The Highland Council, habitats were considered to be of strategic significance if they were formal identified in plans or policies, particularly the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (Highland Nature, 2021). If formally identified, the habitat was then assessed to determine if it was of a suitable size and/or composition to provide strategic connectivity value to the wider landscape.

With relevance to the habitats identified across the Site, no features were formally identified. As such each was awarded low strategic significance. Of note is the area of riparian woodland, which runs along the southern extent of the Site, but beyond the boundary. This was considered to offer high strategic significance and also comprises the riparian area of the River Beauly. As this will not be impacted by the proposals, and falls outside the provided Red Line Boundary, this area has not been included in the onSite calculations.

Table 2 below provides a summary of the baseline habitat value of the Site.

Table 2: Baseline Habitat Baseline Units

Habitat Type / UKhab code	Description	Area (ha)	Habitat Distinctiveness	Condition	Strategic Significance	Units
Modified grassland (g4)	Amenity grassland associated with the farmhouse.	0.330	Low	Good	Low	1.98
Modified grassland (g4)	Northwestern grazed field.	4.002	Low	Poor	Low	8.00
Modified grassland (g4)	Southwestern larger grazed field.	12.217	Low	Poor	Low	24.43
Tall herb ruderal (g416)	Tall injurious herbs to north of the Site.	0.140	Low	Moderate	Low	0.28
Buildings (u1b5)	Associated buildings in and around the farm.	0.214	Very Low	N/A	Low	0.00
Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)	Sealed laydown and operations area associated with the farm.	0.758	Very Low	N/A	Low	0.00
Other woodland; mixed (w1h)	Woodland blocks along entrance to the farm.	0.395	Medium	Poor	Low	3.16
Other woodland; broadleaved (w1g)	Woodland blocks along the southern boundary of the Site.	0.295	Medium	Moderate	Low	1.18
Mixed scrub (h3h)	Thin band of mixed scrub between the grazed fields and farm.	0.018	Medium	Poor	Low	0.07
Arable field margins (c1a)	Area of marginal rank grassland between the farm and grazed fields.	0.122	Medium	N/A	Low	0.49
	Total Area	**18.490**			**Total Units**	**39.59**

3.2 POST-INTERVENTION HABITAT UNITS

The provided Master Landscape Plans (TGP 2024, Drg No. 2210 / L01 and L02) focus on two areas of the Site. The main Site component is to the southeast and comprises the BESS with associated infrastructure. This will see the conversion of grazed grassland to developed sealed surfaces with a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDs). Landscaping in the form of a seeded wildflower meadow has been proposed along the access track and as a large component of the southern tip. This southern component will be planted with six native trees, whilst woodland screening will be planted along the northwestern component, and as a buffer to the existing riparian woodland.

The second area subject to habitat interventions is on the north west field boundary. This will be planted-up with a species-rich and native, hedgerow with trees.

In addition to creating habitats, the existing woodland components across the Site will be enhanced. These enhancements have been considered in line with the Statutory Condition Sheets (Defra, 2023), and will entail management to enhance structural diversity, whilst increasing deadwood, and ground flora composition.

All habitat interventions are presented in Figure 3, with the appropriate calculations provided in Tables D.1 to D.4 of Appendix D.

3.3 HEADLINE RESULTS

A summary of the headline results is provided below in Table 3, with an extract of the Metric provided as a companion document to this report.

Table 3: Headline Results

Project Stage	Habitat Type	Units
On-Site baseline	Habitat units	39.59
	Hedgerow Units	0.00
On Site post-intervention	Habitat units	43.96
	Hedgerow Units	3.77
On Site Total net unit change	Habitat units	4.37
	Hedgerow Units	3.77
Total percentage change	Habitat units	+11.03%
	Hedgerow Units	NA
Trading rules met?		Yes

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSION

The proposed development will result in the direct loss of modified grassland to the south of the Site. This loss accounts for 6.29 habitat units. However, the combined habitat creation included within the associated landscaping plans accounts for 8.73 habitat units and 3.77 hedgerow units. This is primarily through the establishment of a species-rich meadow mix, which will encompass the Site to the east and south. In addition, two areas of woodland have been targeted for enhancement, which generate a further 6.27 habitat units.

To satisfy the 10% biodiversity enhancement stipulated within The Highland Council's Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance, the development required a total of 43.55 habitat units (i.e. 110%) and as the post-intervention Site value is 43.96 habitat units, the proposals achieve a 11.03% increase and **biodiversity enhancement has been achieved**, this is in addition to satisfying the trading rules.

As there were no hedgerows present in the baseline, hedgerow units gain cannot be calculated.

4.2 RECOMENDATIONS

Monitoring and Management

To deliver successful implementation of the proposed habitats, a Habitat Management and Monitoring plan is recommended. This will detail:

- any immediate planting/habitat creation requirements or intervention to achieve an enhanced habitat,
- habitat management requirements during the establishment period (up to 5 years), and;
- long-term management and maintenance requirements for 40 years, in excess of BNG requirements.

Adherence to the document will maximise the likelihood that enhancement and/or creation targets are concise, proportionate, and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reasonable, Time-bound) and successful establishment of proposed habitats is achieved.

Faunal Recommendations

Provision of habitats for faunal species, although not currently measured in the Metric, is important for maximising biodiversity. Mitigation and enhancement measures for protected species including birds, amphibians and invertebrates are provided and detailed in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and targeted species survey recommendations.

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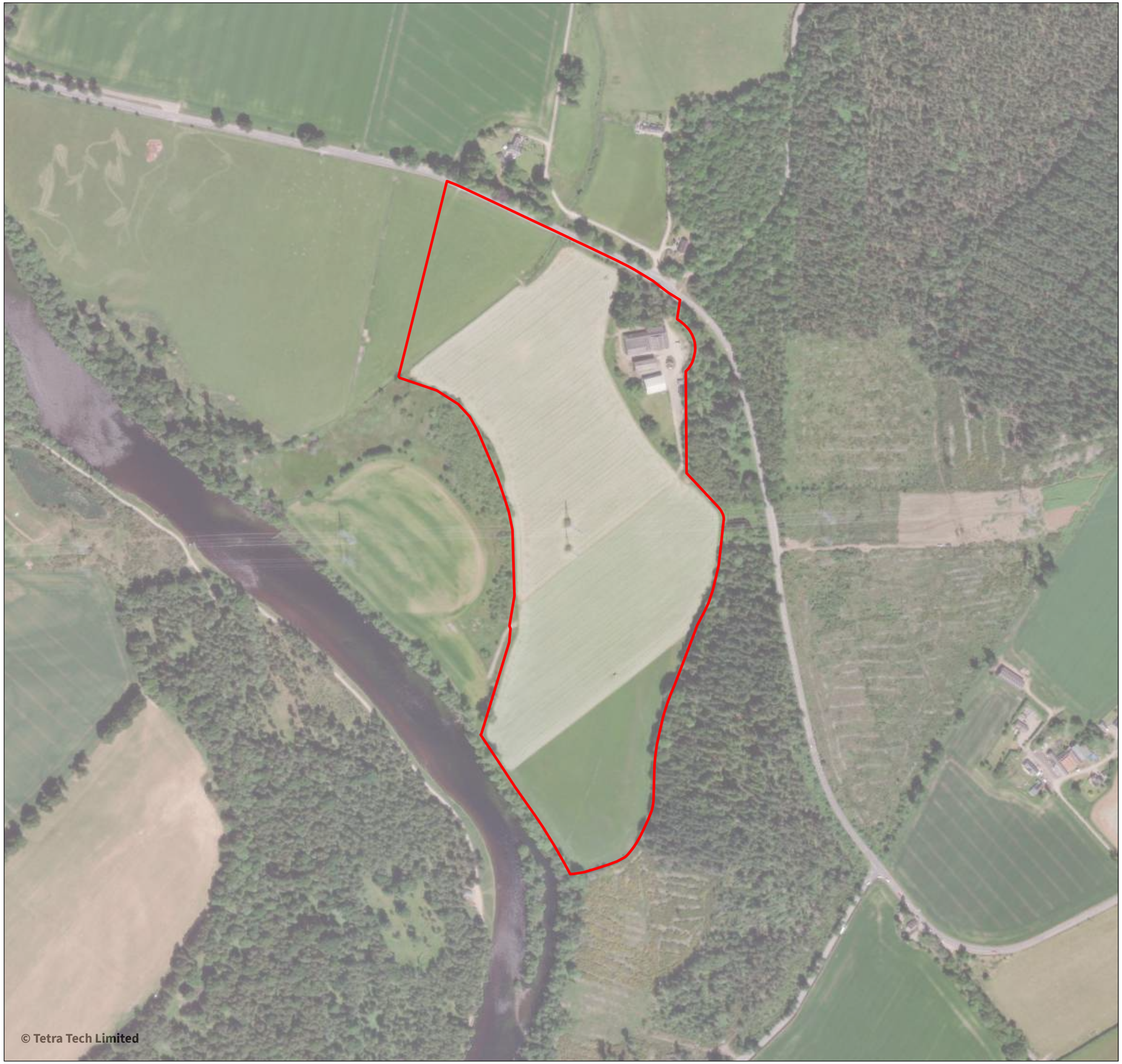
FIGURES



BNG Site Location Plan

Beauly BESS

TNEI

Legend

BNG Site Boundary

Notes:

Drawn by: AARON.HOWARD

Checked by: Rob Gavan

Figure No. 1

Revision No. A

09 December 2024

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Scale 1:4,500 @A3

British National Grid

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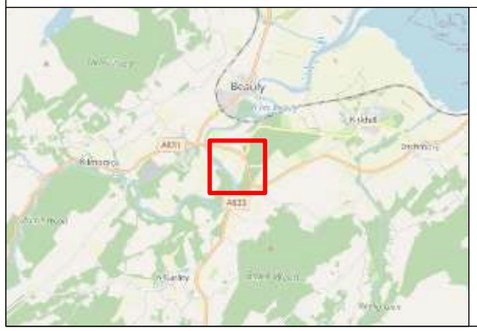

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Pre-Development Plan

Beauly BESS

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Legend

- BNG Site Boundary
- c1a - Arable field margins
- g4 - Modified grassland
- h3h - Mixed scrub
- u1b - Developed land, sealed surface
- u1b5 - Buildings
- w1g - Other woodland, broadleaved
- u1e - Built linear feature

Secondary codes:
16 - Tall forbs
102 - Sheep grazed
202 - Young trees - self-set
521 - Unmanaged
612 - Fence
839 - Track
853 - Mortared wall

Symbology defined by UK Habs. https://ukhab.org/ukhab-documentation/

Notes:

Drawn by: AARON.HOWARD
Checked by: Rob Gavan

Figure No. 2
Revision No. A
11 December 2024

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Scale 1:3,200 @A3

British National Grid
NGR: 252368E 844418N

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number: 01959704

Post-Development Plan

Beauly BESS

TNEI

Legend

- BNG Site Boundary
- c1a - Arable field margins
- g3c - Other neutral grassland
- g4 - Modified grassland
- h3h - Mixed scrub
- r1a - Eutrophic standing water
- u1b - Developed land, sealed surface
- u1b5 - Buildings
- w1g - Other woodland, broadleaved
- h2a - Native hedgerow
- u1e - Built linear feature
- Urban Tree

Secondary codes:
11 - Hedgerow with trees
102 - Sheep grazed
202 - Young trees - self-set
521 - Unmanaged
612 - Fence
839 - Track
848 - Sustainable drainage system

Symbology defined by UK Habs. https://ukhab.org/ukhab-documentation/

Notes:

Drawn by: AARON.HOWARD

Checked by: Rob Gavan

Figure No. 3

Revision No. A

11 December 2024

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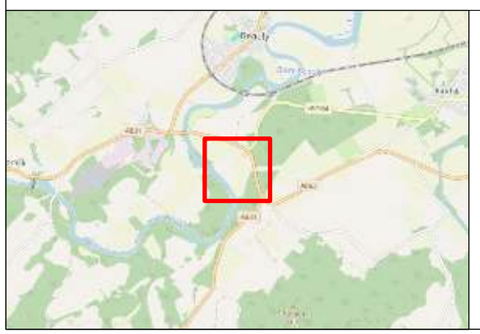
Scale 1:3,200 @A3

British National Grid

NGR: 252368E 844418N



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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A: REPORT CONDITIONS

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The performance of environmental protection measures and of buildings and other structures in relation to acoustics, vibration, noise mitigation and other environmental issues is influenced to a large extent by the degree to which the relevant environmental considerations are incorporated into the final design and specifications and the quality of workmanship and compliance with the specifications on Site during construction. Tetra Tech accept no liability for issues with performance arising from such factors.

APPENDIX B: BNG POLICY

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) is the top tier of planning policy. The Framework provides guidance to local authorities and other agencies on planning policy and the operation of the planning system.

“Policy 1 gives significant weight to the nature crisis to ensure that it is recognised as a priority in all plans and decisions. Policy 4 protects and enhances natural heritage, and this is further supported by Policy 5 on soils and Policy 6 on forests, woodland and trees. Policy 20 also promotes the expansion and connectivity of blue and green infrastructure, whilst Policy 10 recognises the particular sensitivities of coastal areas.

Protection of the natural features of brownfield land is also highlighted in Policy 9, and protection of the green belt in Policy 8 will ensure that biodiversity in these locations is conserved and accessible to communities, bringing nature into the design and layout of our cities, towns, streets and spaces in Policy 14.

Most significantly, Policy 3 plays a critical role in ensuring that development will secure positive effects for biodiversity. It rebalances the planning system in favour of conserving, restoring and enhancing biodiversity and promotes investment in nature-based solutions, benefiting people and nature. The policy ensures that Local Development Plans (LDPs) protect, conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity and promote nature recovery and nature restoration. Proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, including by restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks. Adverse impacts, including cumulative impacts, of development proposals on the natural environment will be minimised through careful planning and design, taking into account the need to reverse biodiversity loss. Development proposals for national, major or Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks, so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. Proposals for local development will include appropriate measures to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity.”

See here for full details: https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/

Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance The Highland Council (2024)
www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/28840/biodiversity_enhancement_planning_guidance

The Highland Council in Scotland has implemented biodiversity policies for development proposals, aiming to enhance biodiversity and leave it in a demonstrably better state than before intervention. The guidance emphasizes the importance of on-Site enhancement, requiring a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain for medium/large-scale and major developments. While there is no set target for small-scale developments, all proposals are encouraged to incorporate measures from NatureScot’s *Developing with Nature* guidance. Until a Scottish metric is available, the guidance recommends using England's Statutory Metric to quantify biodiversity enhancements and any required off-Site offsetting. Off-Site offsetting can be delivered on land controlled by the developer, through financial payments to the Council (currently unavailable), or via third-party providers. The Council is developing area-specific enhancement opportunities guidance, and developers are encouraged to consider all biodiversity, secure long-term management and monitoring, and demonstrate the overall positive impact on biodiversity resulting from their development.

Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (The Highland Council, 2024)

Policy 2 Nature protection, restoration and enhancement:

All developments must enhance biodiversity, including, where relevant, restoring degraded habitats and building and strengthening nature networks and the connections between them. Any potential adverse impacts of development proposals on biodiversity, nature networks and the natural environment must be minimised through careful planning and design and following the mitigation hierarchy. Design and layouts must show how they have considered enhancing biodiversity, safeguarding the services that the natural environment provides and building the

resilience of nature by enhancing nature networks and maximising the potential for restoration. Non-statutory planning guidance on the provision of nature-based solutions and biodiversity enhancements, including developer contributions where appropriate, will be prepared by the Council. This guidance will be used to inform development proposals.

APPENDIX C: BASELINE CONDITION ASSESSMENT DATA

Grassland: Modified grassland

Two areas of intensively managed grassland were present across the Site. These were assessed in a single condition assessment given their uniform character. They were grazed by sheep at the time of survey. The dominant species were perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* (D) and white clover *Trifolium repens* (F).

	Condition Assessment Criteria	Criteria met (Y/N)	Notes / Justification
1	There are 6 - 8 vascular plant species per m^2 present, including at least 2 forbs **Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition.**	N	The composition was species-poor and dominated by rye grass.
2	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	N	Grazed by sheep and a consistent height.
3	Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Y	There was no scrub present
4	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Y	No physical damage is evident.
5	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens)[2].	N	There was no bare ground.
6	Cover of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is less than 20%.	Y	There was no bracken
7	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA[4]).	Y	There was no invasive species identified on Site.
	Total Criteria	**4**	**Poor**

*As the grassland failed the first criterion, it cannot achieve moderate or good condition.

Grassland: Modified grassland			
An area of modified grassland, which was not surveyed and associated with the farm buildings. As it was not surveyed it must be assumed to be in Good condition as no data is available to contradict this assessment.			
Condition Assessment Criteria		**Criteria met (Y/N)**	**Notes / Justification**
1	There are 6 - 8 vascular plant species per m^2 present, including at least 2 forbs **Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition.**	Y	No data available
2	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	Y	No data available
3	Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Y	No data available
4	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Y	No data available
5	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens).	Y	No data available
6	Cover of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is less than 20%.	Y	No data available
7	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA[4]).	Y	No data available
	Total Criteria	**7**	**Good**

Tall herb ruderal

Rank field margin between the two large fields. It is dominated by creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense* and nettle *Urtica dioica*, with a minor grass component comprising cock'sfoot grass *Dactylus glomerata*.

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criteria met (Y/N)	Notes / Justification
1	Vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live, eat and breed. A single structural habitat component or vegetation type does not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area.	N	Single unmanaged rank component.
2	The habitat parcel contains different plant species that are beneficial for wildlife, for example flowering species providing nectar sources for a range of invertebrates at different times of year.	N	The parcel contains different plant species, but these are primarily injurious.
3	Invasive non-native plant species (listed on Schedule 9 of WCA1) and others which are to the detriment of native wildlife (using professional judgement) cover less than 5% of the total vegetated area.	N	No invasive non-native species were recorded in this location, however, species were considered injurious.
	Total Criteria	**0**	**Poor**

Other broadleaved woodland

Semi-mature broadleaved woodland lines southwestern field boundary and continues west/northwest, adjacent to the River Beauly and within the buffer zone. Information included is based on recent Site photography and discussions with the surveyor. The canopy comprises oak *Quercus* sp., rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and silver birch *Betula pendula*.

Condition Assessment Criteria		Good (3 Points)	Moderate (2 Points)	Poor (1 Point)	Points	Notes
1	**Vegetation and ground flora**	Recognisable NVC plant community and ancient woodland flora indicators present	Recognisable NVC plant community present	No recognisable NVC community	1	No recognizable NVC based on combination of canopy trees and ground flora.
2	**Veteran trees**	Two or more veteran trees per hectare	One veteran tree per hectare	No veteran trees present in woodland	1	No veteran trees present

3	**Age distribution of trees**	Three age classes present	Two age classes present	One age class present	2	Two age classes present
4	**Woodland regeneration**	Three regenerative classes present	One or two regenerative classes present	No regenerative classes present	1	Intensive browsing has hampered regeneration.
5	**Woodland vertical structure**	Three or more storeys across all survey plots or a complex woodland	Two storeys across all survey plots	One or less storey across all survey plots	1	One predominant vegetation structure during the grazing.
6	**Open space within woodland**	10 – 20% of woodland has areas of temporary open space **OR** if the woodland is <10ha the lower threshold of 10% does not apply	21- 40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space	More than 40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space	3	Woodland is less than 10 ha and has 5 % open space
7	**Amount of deadwood**	50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have standing deadwood, large dead branches/ stems and stumps	Between 25% and 50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have standing deadwood, large dead branches/ stems and stumps	Less than 25% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have standing deadwood, large dead branches/ stems and stumps	1	Less than 25 % deadwood
8	**Tree health**	Tree mortality less than 10%, no pests or diseases and no crown dieback	11% to 25% mortality and/or crown dieback or low risk pest or disease present	Greater than 25% tree mortality and or any high risk pest or disease present	3	No indication of disease

9	**Number of native tree species**	Five or more native tree or shrub species found across woodland parcel	Three to four native tree or shrub species found across woodland parcel	None to two native tree or shrub species across woodland parcel	3	Unknown so assume highest grading
10	**Cover of native tree and shrub species**	>80% of canopy trees and >80% of understory shrubs are native	50-80% of canopy trees and 50-80% of understory shrubs are native	<50% of canopy trees and <50% of understory shrubs are native	3	As above
11	**Wild, domestic and feral herbivore damage**	No significant browsing damage evident in woodland	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in 40% or less of whole woodland	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in 40% or more of whole woodland	1	Major herbivore damage
12	**Invasive plant species**	No invasive species present in woodland	Rhododendron or laurel not present, other invasive species < 10% cover	Rhododendron or laurel present, or other invasive species > 10% cover	3	No invasive species identified
13	**Woodland disturbance**	No nutrient enrichment or damaged ground evident	Less than 1 hectare in total of nutrient enrichment across woodland area and/or less than 20% of woodland area has damaged ground	More than 1 hectare of nutrient enrichment and/or more than 20% of woodland area has damaged ground	1	Significant indications of nutrient enrichment, with large stands of nettle and broadleaved dock.
		Condition	**Poor**	**Total Criteria Points**	24	

Other mixed woodland

Small blocks of mixed woodland at the entrance of the farm. Comprises a mix of Scot's pine *Pinus sylvestris*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and silver birch *Betula pendula*, with a patch, unmanaged understorey containing hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*.

Condition Assessment Criteria	Good (3 Points)	Moderate (2 Points)	Poor (1 Point)	Points	Notes

1	**Vegetation and ground flora**	Recognisble NVC plant community and ancient woodland flora indicators present	Recognisable NVC plant community present	No recognisable NVC community	1	No recognizable NVC based on combination of canopy trees and ground flora.
2	**Veteran trees**	Two or more veteran trees per hectare	One veteran tree per hectare	No veteran trees present in woodland	1	No veteran trees present
3	**Age distribution of trees**	Three age classes present	Two age classes present	One age class present	2	Two age classes present
4	**Woodland regeneration**	Three regenerative classes present	One or two regenerative classes present	No regenerative classes present	3	Unknown so assume highest grading
5	**Woodland vertical structure**	Three or more storeys across all survey plots or a complex woodland	Two storeys across all survey plots	One or less storey across all survey plots	2	Two clear canopy structures.
6	**Open space within woodland**	10 – 20% of woodland has areas of temporary open space **OR** if the woodland is <10ha the lower threshold of 10% does not apply	21- 40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space	More than 40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space	3	Woodland is less than 10 ha and has 5 % open space
7	**Amount of deadwood**	50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have standing deadwood, large dead branches/ stems and stumps	Between 25% and 50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have standing deadwood, large dead branches/ stems and stumps	Less than 25% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have standing deadwood, large dead branches/ stems and stumps	1	Less than 25 % deadwood

8	**Tree health**	Tree mortality less than 10%, no pests or diseases and no crown dieback	11% to 25% mortality and/or crown dieback or low risk pest or disease present	Greater than 25% tree mortality and or any high risk pest or disease present	3	No indication of disease
9	**Number of native tree species**	Five or more native tree or shrub species found across woodland parcel	Three to four native tree or shrub species found across woodland parcel	None to two native tree or shrub species across woodland parcel	3	Unknown so assume highest grading
10	**Cover of native tree and shrub species**	>80% of canopy trees and >80% of understory shrubs are native	50-80% of canopy trees and 50-80% of understory shrubs are native	<50% of canopy trees and <50% of understory shrubs are native	3	As above
11	**Wild, domestic and feral herbivore damage**	No significant browsing damage evident in woodland	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in 40% or less of whole woodland	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in 40% or more of whole woodland	3	No damage.
12	**Invasive plant species**	No invasive species present in woodland	Rhododendron or laurel not present, other invasive species < 10% cover	Rhododendron or laurel present, or other invasive species > 10% cover	3	No invasive species identified
13	**Woodland disturbance**	No nutrient enrichment or damaged ground evident	Less than 1 hectare in total of nutrient enrichment across woodland area and/or less than 20% of woodland area has damaged ground	More than 1 hectare of nutrient enrichment and/or more than 20% of woodland area has damaged ground	1	Significant indications of nutrient enrichment, with large stands of nettle and broadleaved dock.
		Condition	Moderate	**Total Criteria Points**	29	

Mixed scrub			
In the northeastern edge of the field there is an area of common gorse *Ulex europaeus* and common broom *Cytisus scoparius* scrub (D)			
Condition Assessment Criteria		**Criteria met (Y/N)**	**Notes / Justification**
1	The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type - the appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches its UKHab description (where in its natural range). - At least 80% of scrub is native, - There are at least three native woody species, - No single species comprises more than 75% of the cover (except hazel *Corylus avellana*, common juniper *Juniperus communis*, sea buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* or box *Buxus sempervirens*, which can be up to 100% cover).	N	Only two woody species present.
2	Seedlings, saplings, young shrubs and mature (or ancient or veteran) shrubs are all present.	N	No all age classes present.
3	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA5) and species indicative of suboptimal condition make up less than 5% of ground cover.	Y	No data available
4	The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and or forbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat.	N	The component is too small to comprise a transitional edge.
5	There are clearings, glades or rides present within the scrub, providing sheltered edges.	Y	No data available
	Total Criteria	**2**	**Poor**

APPENDIX D: BIODIVERSITY CALCULATIONS

Table D.1. Habitat loss and retention

Habitat Type / UKhab code	Total Area (ha)	Total Units	Area Lost	Area Enhanced	Area Retained	Units Retained
Modified grassland (g4)	0.330	1.98	0.000	0.000	0.330	1.98
Modified grassland (g4)	4.002	8.00	0.000	0.000	4.002	8.00
Modified grassland (g4)	12.217	24.43	3.150	0.000	9.072	18.14
Tall herb ruderal (g416)	0.140	0.28	0.000	0.000	0.140	0.28
Buildings (u1b5)	0.214	0.00	0.000	0.000	0.214	0.00
Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)	0.758	0.00	0.000	0.000	0.758	0.00
Other woodland; mixed (w1h)	0.395	3.16	0.000	0.395	0.000	0.00
Other woodland; broadleaved (w1g)	0.295	1.18	0.000	0.295	0.000	0.00
Mixed scrub (h3h)	0.018	0.07	0.000	0.000	0.018	0.07
Arable field margins (c1a)	0.122	0.49	0.000	0.000	0.122	0.49
Grand Total	**18.49**	**39.59**	**3.150**	**0.690**	**14.66**	**28.97**

Table D.2. Habitat Enhancement

Habitat Type / UKhab code	Area Enhanced	Distinctiveness Enhancement	Condition Enhancement	Mechanism for Enhancement	Units Generated
Other woodland; mixed (w1h)	0.395	NA	Moderate - Good	-Increase species-richness through stock planting of native individuals. - Ground flora management to reduce prevalence of species indicative of nutrient enrichment. - Increase quantity of standing and grounded deadwood through selective felling and creation of brash piles.	4.26
Other woodland; broadleaved (w1g)	0.295	NA	Poor - Moderate	- Fence area to prevent sheep grazing, which is reducing natural regeneration and causing herbivore damage.	2.00

Habitat Type / UKhab code	Area Enhanced	Distinctiveness Enhancement	Condition Enhancement	Mechanism for Enhancement	Units Generated
				-Increase species-richness through stock planting of native individuals. - Ground flora management to reduce prevalence of species indicative of nutrient enrichment. - Increase quantity of standing and grounded deadwood through selective felling and creation of brash piles.	
Total Area	**0.690**			**Total Units Generated**	**6.27**

D.3. Habitat Creation

Habitat Type / UKhab code	Area Created	Created Condition	Description of Creation	Units Generated
Developed land; sealed surface	0.395	NA	The main Site component is to the southeast and comprises the BESS with associated infrastructure.	0.00
Developed land; sealed surface	0.101	NA	Associated access tracks.	0.00
Other neutral grassland	0.718	Good	Species-rich meadow mixture of a neutral composition along the eastern and southern perimeters. This will be subject to appropriate management to establish and maintain a structurally diverse sward.	6.04
Other broadleaved woodland	0.192	Poor	A band of woodland will be planted along the northwestern corner as screening. This will be greater than 5m wide but will unlikely establish a substantial understorey and ground flora. As such it has been assumed in poor condition.	0.64
Other broadleaved woodland	0.166	Moderate	A planted band of broadleaved woodland will be positioned along the southern boundary of the Site and will act as an additional buffer to the riparian woodland which runs along the River Beauly. It will be planted with individuals that match the canopy species of the adjacent woodland.	0.78
Sustainable Urban Drainage	0.356	Good	A sustainable urban drainage system will be located to the west of the Site. This will be fed by a Site drainage network from the north. The banks of the SUD will be seeded with species indicative of pond edges to provide niches and a nectar source for invertebrates.	1.20
Trees (small x 6)	0.024	Moderate	Six native tree species will be planted to the south of the Site within the area of species-rich grassland.	0.07

Habitat Type / UKhab code	Area Created	Created Condition	Description of Creation	Units Generated
Total Area	**3.15**		**Total Units**	**8.65**

D.4. Hedgerow Creation

Habitat Type / UKhab code	Length Created	Created Condition	Description of Creation	Units Generated
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	0.449	Moderate	A hedgerow will be planted as a boundary feature to the northeast west of the Site. It will run from the A862 south between the two field components. It will be planted with native shrub species and contain standard trees.	3.77
Total Area	**0.449**		**Units Generated**	**3.77**