

TECHNICAL APPENDIX 8.2

Kilgallioch Windfarm Extension

Protected Mammal Survey Report



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Summary

ITP Energised (ITPE) was appointed by ScottishPower Renewables to undertake a protected species survey for otter, water vole, badger, pine marten and red squirrel in relation to the proposed extension of Kilgallioch Windfarm ('the proposed Development') on an area of land to the south-west of Polbae, and north of Balminnoch (hereafter referred to as 'the Site').

The Site is predominantly comprised of coniferous plantation woodland, heath, bog, marshy grassland and improved grassland. Tarf Water flows from the north-west along the south of the Site boundary and continues south of the Site. Monandie Burn, Loch Strand and additional tributaries all flow south through the Site towards Tarf Water.

The purpose of the survey was to investigate all suitable habitat within the Site and a wider 250m study area (where accessible) for any evidence of use by protected mammals. The survey results are intended to facilitate the identification of potential constraints to development and where mitigation and/or further survey work may be required to inform a future planning application, as appropriate.

In terms of otter, a potential hover was identified in the north of the Site, on the Tarf Water. A clear entrance and slide was present from the water; however, there was no evidence identified to suggest use by otter, such as spraints or footprints. Additionally, sprainting rocks were also found along Tarf Water; the spraints were aged and comprised fish bones.

Evidence of water vole, including burrows, droppings and feeding evidence, was present on the Monandie Burn, Loch Strand and the Tarf Water. This evidence was concentrated on areas where the water was slow-moving and there was plentiful vegetation for feeding.

No evidence to suggest presence of badger was identified within the Site or 50m buffer. Anecdotal evidence comprising badger prints was identified during the peat probing surveys. The flat topography and wetland habitat, as well as the surrounding dense coniferous woodland, makes the site unsuitable for sett building. Given the high mobility of badger, they could commute and forage throughout the Site.

No evidence of pine marten or red squirrel was identified within the Study Area however there is suitable habitat such as coniferous plantation woodland for both species within the Study Area.

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 ITP Energised (ITPE) was appointed by ScottishPower Renewables to undertake surveys for protected mammals, including otter (*Lutra lutra*), water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) badger (*Meles meles*), pine marten (*Martes martes*) and red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) in relation to the proposed extension of Kilgallioch Windfarm ('the proposed Development') on an area of land to the south-west of Polbae, and north of Balminnoch (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). The Site has central Ordnance Survey Grid Reference NX 24038 69975.

1.1.2 The Site is predominantly comprised of coniferous plantation woodland, heath, bog, marshy grassland and improved grassland. Tarf Water flows from the north-west along the south of the Site boundary and continues south of the Site. Monandie Burn, Loch Strand and additional tributaries all flow south through the Site towards Tarf Water. The Site is bounded to the west and south by Tarf water and coniferous plantation woodland beyond and to the east by further coniferous plantation woodland.

1.1.3 The purpose of the survey was to investigate all suitable habitat within the Site and a wider 250m study area (where accessible) for any evidence of use by protected mammals.

1.2 Development Proposal

1.2.1 The protected mammal survey was undertaken to support a future planning application for the proposed extension of Kilgallioch Windfarm ('the proposed Development').

2 Legislation and Guidelines

2.1 Legislation

Otter

2.1.1 Otter is protected under Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and receives protection under Section 9 of the Act. Otter is also a European Protected Species and so afforded protection under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. As such, it is an offence to deliberately or recklessly:

- Capture, injure or kill an otter;
- Harass an otter or group of otters;
- Disturb an otter in a holt or any other structure or place it uses for shelter or protection;
- Disturb an otter while it is rearing or otherwise caring for its young;
- Obstruct access to a holt or other structure or place otters use for shelter or protection, or otherwise deny the animal use of that place;
- Disturb an otter in a manner or in circumstances likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species; and
- Disturb an otter in a manner or in circumstances likely to impair its ability to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or otherwise care for its young.

2.1.2 It is also an offence to:

- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal (whether or not deliberately or recklessly); and

- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any wild otter (or any part or derivative of one) obtained after 10 June 1994.

2.1.3 It should be noted that otter shelters are legally protected whether an otter is present or not.

2.1.4 Otter is also included on the Scottish Biodiversity List (SBL), where it is listed for avoidance of negative impacts (The Scottish Government, 2013) as well as listed as a mammal of high importance in the Dumfries and Galloway Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) (Dumfries & Galloway Biodiversity Partnership, 2009).

Water Vole

2.1.5 Water vole receives partial protection through its listing on Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In Scotland, this legal protection is currently restricted only to the water voles' places of shelter or protection; it does not extend to the animal itself. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that water voles use for shelter or protection; or
- Disturb a water vole while it is using any such place of shelter or protection.

2.1.6 Water vole is a Priority Species on the SBL where it is listed for both conservation action and for avoidance of negative impacts. This species has suffered significant declines in recent decades, mainly due to habitat loss and degradation, population fragmentation and predation by American mink (*Mustela vison*).

2.1.7 Water vole are listed as a mammal of high importance in the Dumfries and LBAP (Dumfries & Galloway Biodiversity Partnership, 2009).

Badger

2.1.8 Badgers are fully protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011, which makes it an offence to:

- Take, injure or kill a badger;
- Possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger;
- Interfere with a badger sett;
- Sell and possess a live badger; and
- Mark and ring a badger.

2.1.9 Interfering with a badger sett includes:

- Damaging or destroying a sett or any part of it;
- Obstructing access to a sett;
- Disturbing a badger whilst it is in a sett; and
- Causing or allowing a dog to enter a badger sett.

2.1.10 Should such actions be undertaken, despite having no intention to do so, they would still be considered an offence.

2.1.11 The 1992 Protection of Badgers Act defines a badger sett as "any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger". A sett in an occupied territory is therefore classified as being in current use even if it is only used seasonally or occasionally by badgers, and it is afforded the same protection as an inhabited sett.

2.1.12 Badger are common and widespread species whose protection is owing to past persecution rather than current rarity. Badger are mentioned in several habitat action plans within the Dumfries and Galloway LBAP and are considered important to the Scottish public in the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy, but not considered to be locally threatened (Dumfries and Galloway Biodiversity Partnership, 2009).

Pine Marten

2.1.13 Pine marten (*Martes martes*) are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Additionally, certain methods of killing or taking pine martens is illegal under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended).

2.1.14 It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- kill, injure or take a pine marten;
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to a nest or den – i.e. any structure or place which such an animal uses for shelter or protection; and
- disturb such an animal when it is occupying a nest or den for shelter or protection (except when this is inside a dwelling house).

2.1.15 It is also an offence to:

- possess or control, sell, offer for sale or possess or transport for the purpose of sale any living or dead pine marten or any derivative of such an animal; and
- knowingly cause or permit any of the above acts to be carried out.

Red Squirrel

2.1.16 It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- kill, injure or take a red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*);
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to a drey or any other structure or place which a red squirrel uses for shelter or protection; and
- disturb a red squirrel when it is occupying a structure or place for shelter or protection.

2.1.17 It should be noted that this protection does not apply to areas where red squirrels only feed.

2.1.18 It is also an offence to:

- possess or control, sell or offer for sale, or possess or transport for the purpose of sale any living or dead red squirrel or any derivative of such an animal;
- release a grey squirrel into the wild; and
- knowingly causing or permitting any of the above acts to be carried out is also an offence.

2.2 Best Practice Ecological Guidance

2.2.1 As part of the protected species survey, cognisance has been taken of the following best practice guidelines and survey method publications:

Otter

- Competencies for Species Survey: Otter (CIEEM, 2013a); and
- Monitoring the Otter *Lutra lutra* (Chanin, 2003).

Water Vole

- Competencies for Species Survey: Water Vole (CIEEM, 2013b); and
- The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (Dean et al, 2016).

Badger

- Competencies for Species Survey: Badger (CIEEM, 2013c); and

- Surveying for Badgers: Good Practice Guidelines (Scottish Badgers, 2018).

Pine Marten

- Competencies for Species Survey: Pine Marten (CIEEM, 2013d);
- National Pine Marten Survey of Ireland 2005 (O’Mahony *et al.*, 2006); and
- A guide to Identifying evidence of Pine Martens in Wales (Vincent Wildlife Trust, 2017).

Red Squirrel

- Red squirrel conservation: Field study methods (Gurnell and Pepper, 1994); and
- Practical Techniques for Surveying and Monitoring Squirrels (Gurnell *et al.*, 2009).

3 Methods

3.1.1 The survey of the Site and 250m buffer was undertaken on 27-29 May 2019.

3.2 Otter

3.2.1 A thorough search was undertaken of the riparian zone and up to 20m away from the water’s edge (where suitable habitat was found to be present). Throughout the survey, overhanging banks, cavities, bankside vegetation and riparian features, such as boulders and mud, were searched for the following signs of otter use:

- Spraints – otter dung, which is used for marking territories, is often located on prominent features within the channel or on the bank (including weirs, bridges, rocks, tree roots, watercourse confluences, etc.); and
- Footprints – located in soft mud, silt or sand banks.

3.2.2 Other potential evidence of otter presence was also searched for in the survey. The following signs, when interpreted in conjunction with spraints and footprints, can provide data to support an assessment of otter activity on a site. They cannot, however, be used in isolation to definitively indicate otter presence/absence:

- Resting-up places – comprising couches (areas of flattened vegetation) or hovers (lay-up areas, including ledges under rocks or hollows under fallen trees or roots).
- Potential holt sites – holes or dens;
- Runs and trails – pathways from the water into dense cover or around bankside trees;
- Slides – down banks as an entry to waterbodies; and
- Feeding remains – e.g. remains of fish and amphibians.

3.3 Water Vole

3.3.1 A thorough search was undertaken in the riparian zone and up to 20m away from the water’s edge for evidence of water voles.

3.3.2 Potential evidence of water vole searched for included the following:

- Latrines – water vole droppings are often concentrated in discreet latrine sites near the nest, at range boundaries and places where they regularly enter and exit the water;
- Feeding stations and feeding remains – feeding remains in the form of neat piles of chewed lengths of vegetation are often found in runways and at haul-out platforms;
- Tunnel/burrow entrances – these are typically found along the water’s edge on top of the bank up to 5m from the water’s edge. Holes on top of the banks often have grazed ‘lawns’ around them;
- Paths and runs at the water’s edge;

- Footprints – these may be identified in soft mud or silt;
- Sightings and or sounds of water voles entering the water; and
- Droppings – while most droppings will be deposited in latrines, some may also be found scattered along runways in vegetation.

3.3.3 Specifically, for watercourses, the approximate depth and speed of water flow, the waterway width, bankside vegetation and surrounding land use, was also recorded, as these factors may determine the suitability of habitat for supporting water voles.

3.3.4 It should be noted that any single field sign recorded in isolation, especially when ambiguous (e.g. a burrow or footprints) would not be definitive in confirming presence.

3.4 Badger

3.4.1 As part of the survey, field signs including setts, day beds, badger faeces in dung pits, evidence of foraging, badger paths, scratching posts, hair and footprints were actively searched for. The survey was based on the methods described by Scottish Badgers (2018). The survey included all hedgerows, field boundaries, watercourses, paths and other linear features within the Site and an additional 250m survey buffer.

3.4.2 On identification of a badger sett, the observer noted the number of entrances, in addition to a description of the activity level and status of the sett. The status of a sett was evaluated and determined based on descriptions presented in Scottish Badgers good practice guidelines (2018), which assigns setts into one of four categories:

- Main sett (used throughout the year and constitutes the main breeding sett);
- Annexe sett (forms part of the main sett area, but is not directly linked by an underground passage to the main sett, either due to a barrier (e.g. separated by a watercourse or ditch) or by distance);
- Subsidiary sett (offers an alternative large sett complex to the main sett but is usually although not always at least 50m away and are not always obviously linked by a well-used path); and
- Outlier sett (often comprising just one or two holes and is infrequently used by badgers).

3.4.3 Each sett entrance is classified according to its degree of usage:

- Well used: are clear of vegetation and debris, sides worn smooth but not necessarily excavated recently;
- Partially used: not in regular use and have debris in the entrance; and
- Disused: not in use for some time, are partially blocked and could not be used without considerable effort.

3.4.4 It should be noted that the status of a badger sett can change over a relatively short period of time. For example, some badger social groups will move the location of the main sett to other less used setts within their territory in response to external factors, such as disturbance.

3.5 Pine Marten

3.5.1 As part of the survey (specifically within the conifer plantation woodland in the north-western part of the Study Area), field signs, including scats and potential den sites, were actively searched for. Differences between field signs of pine marten and other species can be determined in a number of different ways.

- Scat – Found in areas of woodland and forest tracks and are used as territorial markers. Pine marten scats can be differentiated from other similar species such as fox due to aroma, size and constituent parts as they tend to be made up of a variety of food including eggs, insects, berries and bone, although definitive identification can require DNA testing;
- Footprints – Pine marten are mustelids so have five toes compared to species that may be mistaken including fox and dog, both of which have four toes; and

- Den Sites – Pine martens prefer to utilise woodland habitats where they can use their climbing abilities to access tree cavities, squirrel dreys and areas of wind-throw. Evidence of use may also be seen from prey remains surrounding den sites including feathers and small mammal bones.

3.6 Red Squirrel

3.6.1 As part of the survey, all suitable red squirrel habitat within the Study Area (specifically within the conifer plantation woodland in the north-western part of the Study Area) was searched for:

- Dreys or dens (hereafter “dreys”);
- Prints; and
- Evidence of feeding activities, such as gnawed pine cones.

3.7 Survey Limitations

3.7.1 The survey was undertaken at the optimal time of year. Site conditions were suitable for survey, with no heavy rain preceding survey to potentially wash away field evidence of notable otter. As such, no survey limitations were identified.

4 Results

4.1 Otter

4.1.1 **Figure TA_8.2.1** presents the results of the 2019 otter survey, as well as relevant Target Note (TN) locations detailing further information obtained from the survey. The results are described in detail in the following section; however, the TNs are presented in full in Annex A, Table 1.

4.1.2 A potential hover was identified in the north of the Site, on the Tarf Water. A clear entrance and slide was present from the water; however, there was no evidence identified to suggest use by otter, such as spraints or footprints (TN19).

4.1.3 Additionally, sprainting rocks were also found along Tarf Water (TN16 and TN17); the spraints were aged and comprised fish bones.

4.1.4 Evidence of frogs, an otter prey species, was identified throughout the survey area.

4.1.5 The water courses within the Site are suitable for commuting and foraging by otter and the previous spraints indicate historical use by otter. However, the Study Area is unsuitable for holt construction given the flat topography, wetland habitat and dense coniferous plantation.

4.1.6 No other evidence of otter presence was identified during the survey.

4.2 Water Vole

4.2.1 **Figures TA_8.2.2-8.2.4** present the results of the 2019 water vole survey, as well as relevant Target Note (TN) locations detailing further information obtained from the survey. The results are described in detail in the following section; however, the TNs are presented in full in Annex A, Table 1.

4.2.2 Evidence of water vole, including burrows, droppings and feeding evidence, was present on the Monandie Burn, Loch Strand and the Tarf Water. Water vole presence was greatest at the north of the Site on Tarf Water and in the centre of the Site along Loch strand and Monandie Burn indicating a large population of water voles. There were also some migratory individuals in the west of the Site along Tarf Water and to the north and east of Loch Strand.

4.2.3 Evidence of water vole was concentrated on areas where the water was slow-moving and there was plentiful vegetation for feeding.

4.2.4 The water courses within the Study Area were suitable for use by water vole. Areas of the Tarf Water that were faster flowing were unsuitable for water vole, however, they were present in the slow- moving sections.

4.2.5 No other evidence of water vole presence was identified during the survey.

4.3 Badger

4.3.1 No evidence to suggest presence of badger was identified within the Site or 50m buffer during the survey.

4.3.2 Incidental evidence comprising badger prints was identified in the east of the Site (NX 25148 69246) during the peat probing surveys on the 2nd October 2019 (see **Table TA_8.2.1**).

4.3.3 The flat topography and wetland habitat, as well as the surrounding dense coniferous woodland, makes the site largely unsuitable for sett building. Given the high mobility of badger, they could commute and forage throughout the Site.

4.4 Pine Marten

4.4.1 No evidence of pine marten was recorded during the survey. Pine marten could use the coniferous plantation woodland within the Study Area to forage, commute and construct dens (particularly in areas of wind-throw).

4.5 Red Squirrel

4.5.1 No evidence of red squirrel was recorded during the survey. Squirrels could use the coniferous plantation woodland within the Study Area to forage and construct dreys.

4.6 Incidental Records

4.6.1 Due to the large Study Area, difficult ground conditions and the variety of different studies taking place in relation to the proposed Development, a log of all incidental sightings was kept to record sightings of protected or otherwise notable species. All incidental species sightings are presented in **Table TA_8.2.1** below.

Table TA_8.2.1: Incidental Records of Protected or Otherwise Notable Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Species Protection	Record Details
Common lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	Limited protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).	Six individuals recorded across two separate survey visits.
Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>	Limited protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).	Three sightings were recorded during three separate Site visits, one of which consisted of a juvenile adder. Local residents have also expressed knowledge of adder being located throughout the Site (pers. comms.)
Common frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	Limited protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).	Three individuals recorded across three separate survey visits.
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	Fully protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011	Collection of badger prints found at a gate at the High Eldrig farmhouse, in the east of the Development Area (Grid Ref. NX 25148 69246). Recorded during a survey visit in early October.

5 Conclusion

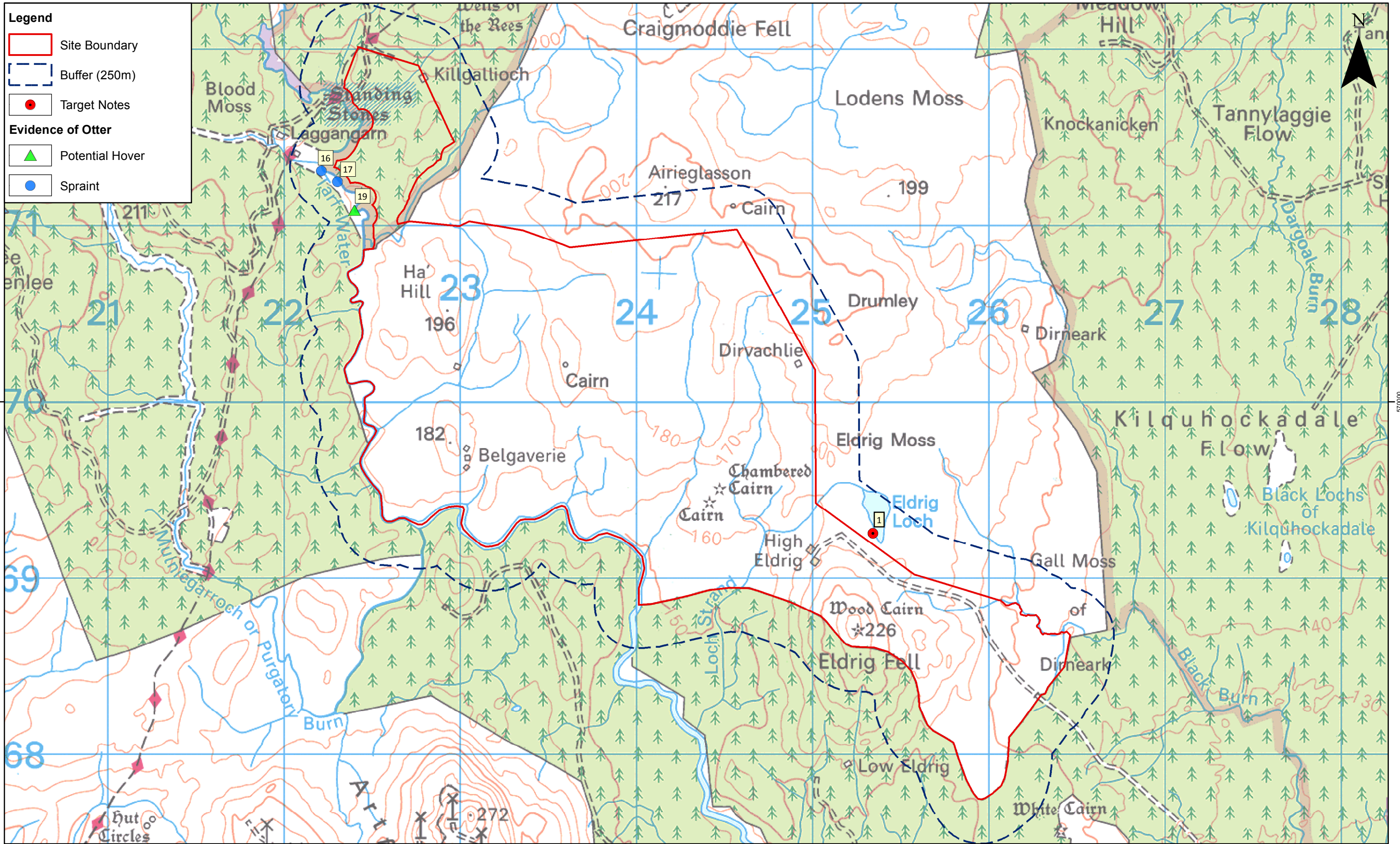
- 5.1.1 Otter have previously used Tarf Water and could also use the other water courses within the Study Area to forage and commute. The Site is largely unsuitable for holt construction given the flat topography, wetland habitat and surrounding dense coniferous plantation.
- 5.1.2 Water vole are present throughout the Site and 50m buffer, along the Tarf Water, Monandie Burn and Loch Strand.
- 5.1.3 Incidental evidence confirming the presence of badger was identified in the east of the Site boundary. No further evidence of badger was identified within the Site boundary and 50m buffer. As badger are a highly mobile species they could forage and commute throughout the Site.
- 5.1.4 No evidence of pine marten or red squirrel was identified within the Study Area however there is suitable habitat, such as coniferous plantation woodland, for both species within the Study Area.

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Figures

Figure TA_8.2.1: Evidence of Otter



Rev	Date	By	Comment
A	07/10/2019	AG	First Issue.

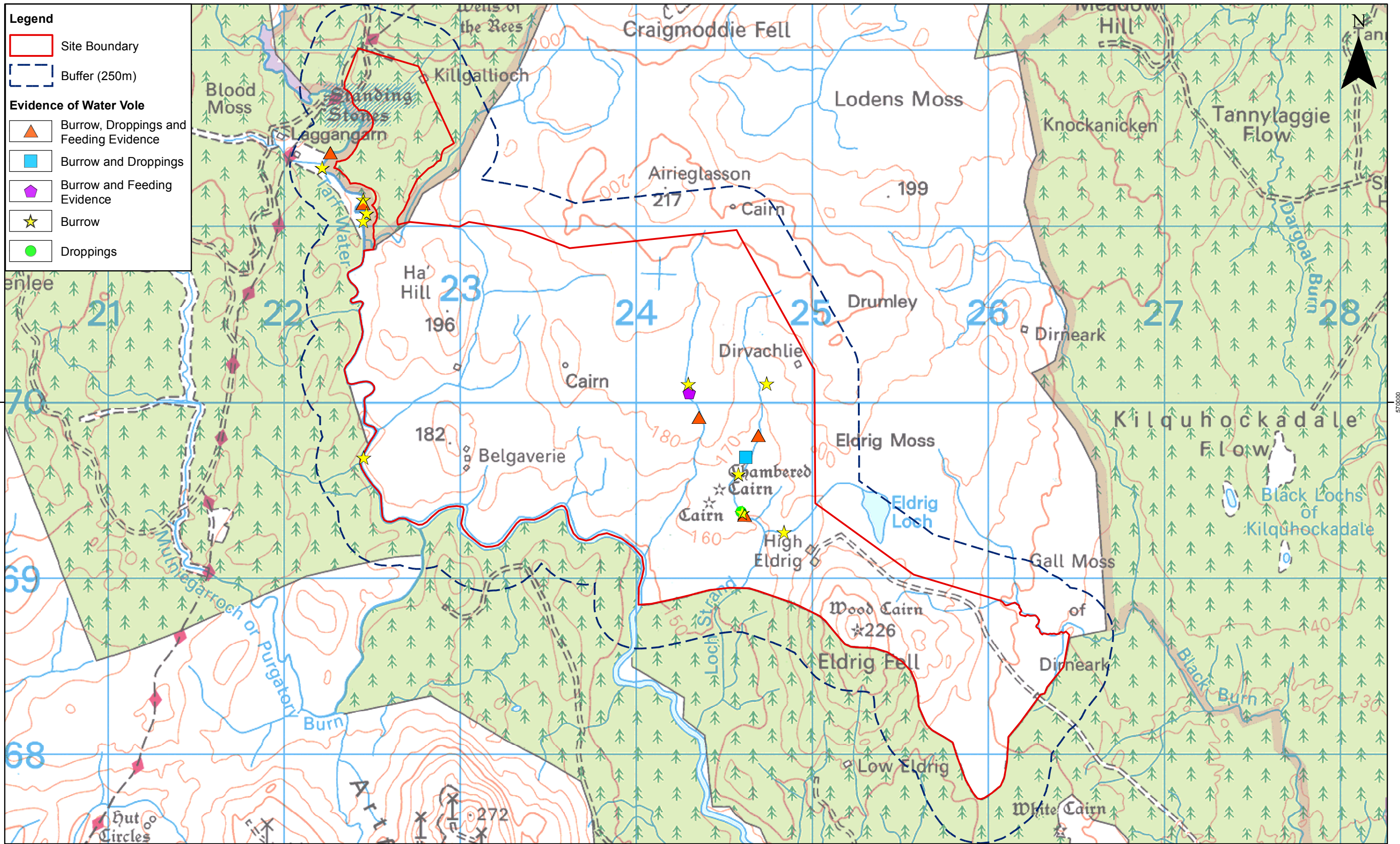
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Kilgallioch Windfarm Extension
EIA Report: Figure TA_8.2.1
Evidence of Otter

Drg No	EDI_1706_EIAR	
Rev	A	Datum: OSGB36
Date	07/10/19	Projection: TM
Figure	TA_8.2.1	

Figure TA_8.2.2: Evidence of Water Vole



Rev	Date	By	Comment
A	07/10/2019	AG	First Issue.

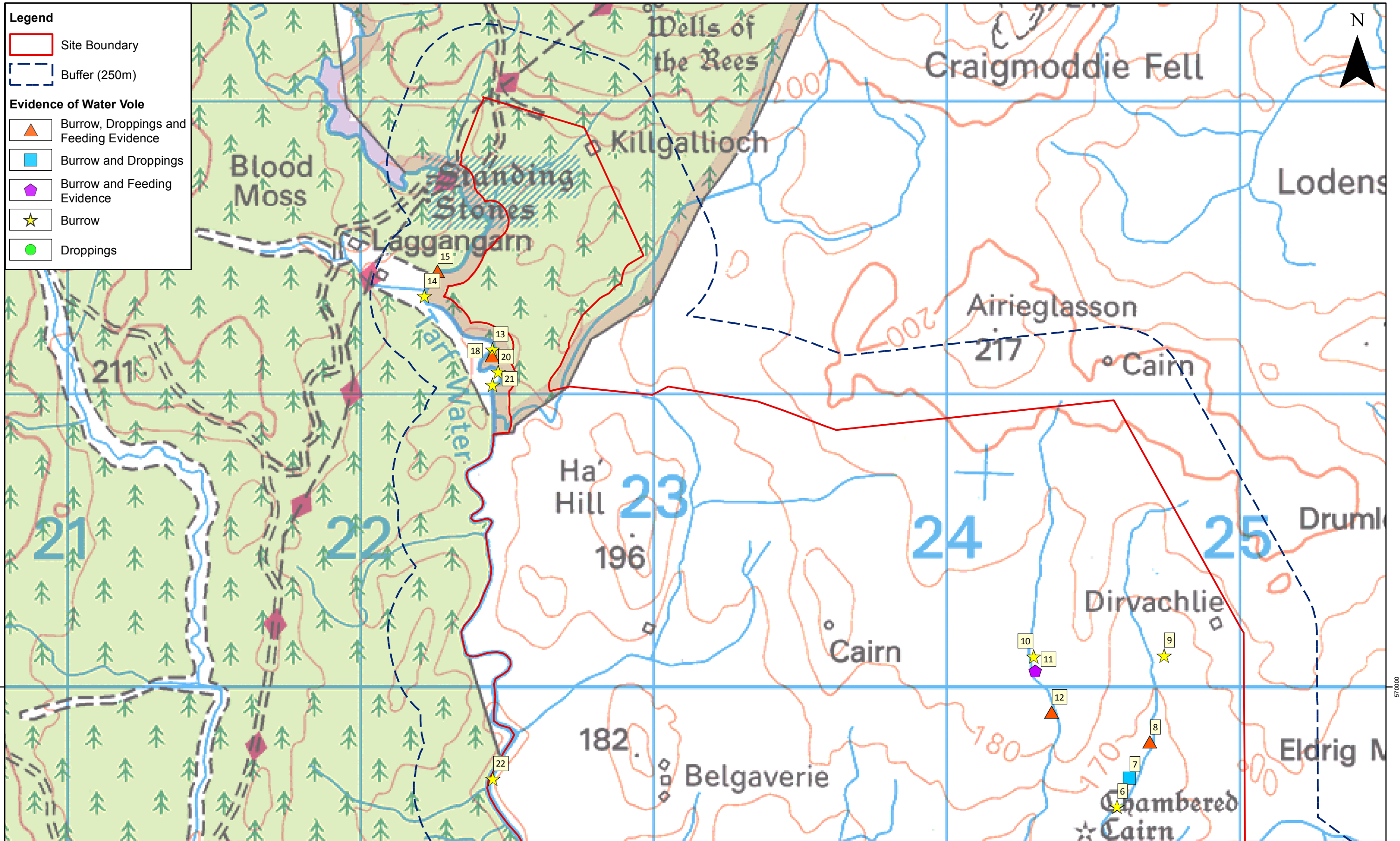
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Kilgallioch Windfarm Extension
EIA Report: Figure TA_8.2.2
Evidence of Water Vole

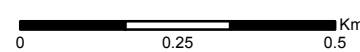
Drg No	EDI_1706_EIAR	
Rev	A	Datum: OSGB36
Date	07/10/19	Projection: TM
Figure	TA_8.2.2	

Figure TA_8.2.3: Evidence of Water Vole (West)



Rev	Date	By	Comment
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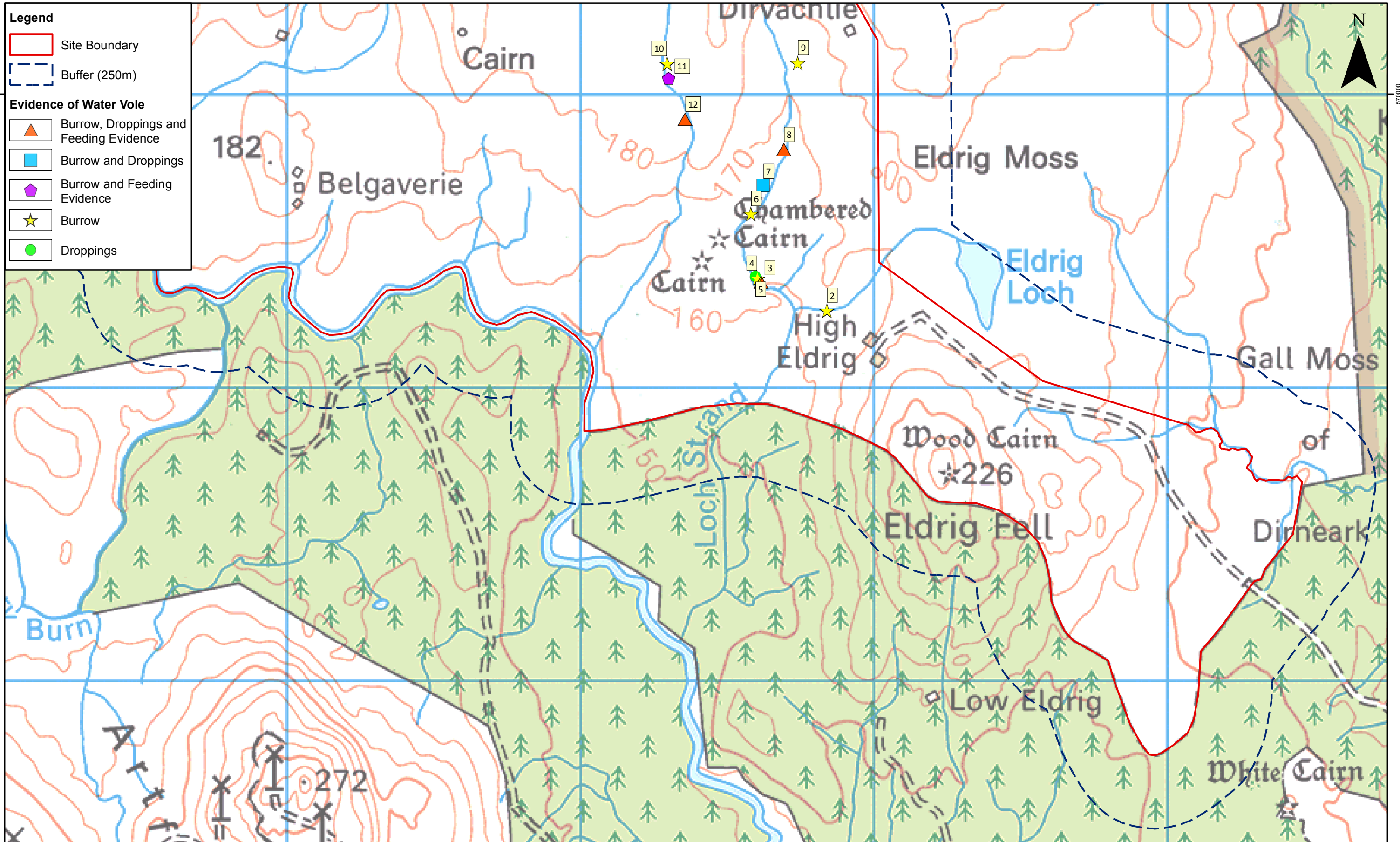
Kilgallioch Windfarm Extension

EIA Report: Figure TA_8.2.3

Evidence of Water Vole (West)

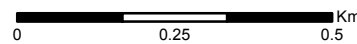
Drg No	EDI_1706_EIAR	
Rev	A	Datum: OSGB36
Date	07/10/19	Projection: TM
Figure	TA_8.2.3	

Figure TA_8.2.4: Evidence of Water Vole (East)



Rev	Date	By	Comment
A	07/10/2019	AG	First Issue.

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Kilgallioch Windfarm Extension




EIA Report: Figure TA_8.2.4





Evidence of Water Vole (East)





Drg No	EDI_1706_EIAR	
Rev	A	Datum: OSGB36
Date	07/10/19	Projection: TM
Figure	TA_8.2.4	





Annex A





Table 1: Target Notes


Target Note (TN)	Grid Reference		Description	Plate
1	225347	569245	Eldrig Loch is present north of the Site boundary.	
2	224840	569261	A water vole burrow was present on Loch Strand.	
3	224616	569359	A water vole burrow with droppings and grass clippings was present on Loch Strand.	

Target Note (TN)	Grid Reference		Description	Plate
4	224603	569371	A water vole burrow facing away from water was present on Loch Strand.	
5	224596	569378	Water vole droppings were present along the edge of Loch Strand.	
6	224581	569591	Water vole burrows present on Loch Strand.	
7	224623	596988	Old burrow with droppings at entrance and cobwebs across hole present on Loch Strand.	

Target Note (TN)	Grid Reference		Description	Plate
8	224693	569811	Water vole burrows, droppings and clipped grass present on Loch Strand.	
9	224741	570106	A water vole burrow was identified on Loch Strand.	
10	224296	570103	A water vole burrow was identified on Monadie Burn.	
11	224301	570054	A water vole burrow with pathway and grass clippings was identified on Monadie Burn.	

Target Note (TN)	Grid Reference		Description	Plate
12	224357	569914	A water vole burrow with grass clippings and droppings was identified on Monadie Burn.	
13	220738	564831	A water vole burrow was identified on Tarf Water.	
14	222217	571333	Three water vole burrows were identified on Tarf Water.	
15	222262	571418	Several water vole burrows with droppings and grass clippings were identified on Tarf Water.	

Target Note (TN)	Grid Reference		Description	Plate
16	222213	571311	An old otter spraint was identified on Tarf Water.	
17	222303	571250	An old otter spraint was identified on Tarf Water.	
18	222448	571130	A water vole burrow with grass clippings and droppings was identified on Tarf Water.	
19	222400	571087	A hover and slide down to Tarf Water.	
20	222469	571074	Large water vole burrow leading into Tarf Water.	
21	222450	571030	A water vole burrow identified on Tarf Water.	

Target Note (TN)	Grid Reference		Description	Plate
22	222451	569685	Water vole burrow leading into Tarf Water.	



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