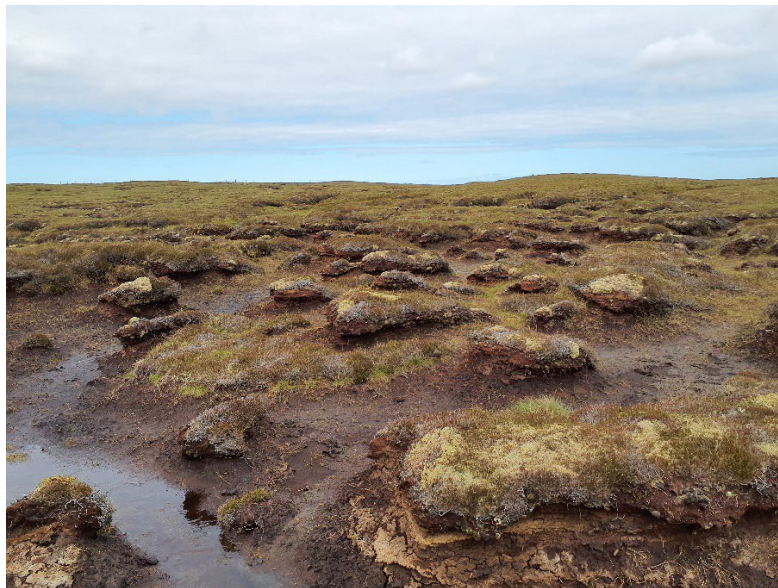


Technical Appendix 6.5: Outline Biodiversity Enhancement and Habitat Management Plan



Alba Ecology Ltd.



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Introduction

Neshion Energy Park (the 'Proposed Development') is a renewable energy development comprised of up to eight wind turbines, a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure adjacent to Sullom Voe Oil Terminal (SVT) and the Shetland Gas Plant in Shetland, Scotland. The Proposed Development is described in **Chapter 2: Proposed Development (EIAR Volume 2)**.

Neshion Ltd. ('the Applicant') is seeking consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 to construct and operate the Proposed Development. As part of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) Alba Ecology Ltd. was commissioned by the Applicant to produce an Outline Biodiversity Enhancement and Habitat Management Plan (OBEHMP) for the Proposed Development.

Chapter 6: Ecology (EIAR Volume 2) and **Chapter 7: Ornithology (EIAR Volume 2)** of the EIAR do not predict likely significant effects on any potentially important ecological or ornithological receptors. Therefore, compensation (to offset any likely significant effects), as defined in the EIA Regulations and best practice EIA guidance (CIEEM, 2018, v.13 2024), is not required. However, in light of NatureScot peatland guidance (2023, 2026) which recommends compensation/offset for peatland habitats (regardless as to whether effects are predicted to be significant or not) and given the importance of blanket bog and peatland habitats in regard to carbon storage and carbon sequestration.

There is now an overriding consensus within recent policy and guidance which sets the context that developments should not just try to avoid causing likely significant effects but also seek to provide overall ecological benefits or enhancements for biodiversity over and above design requirements for avoidance, minimisation or compensation (e.g. CIEEM, 2018). For example, the Scottish Government has recently published three important policy documents related to renewable energy planning, the climate crisis and biodiversity crisis in Scotland:

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4, 2023);
- Tackling the Nature Emergency - Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) to 2045 (Scottish Government, 2024) and
- Onshore Wind Policy Statement (Scottish Government, 2022).

The final SBS was published in 2024. It sets out Scottish Government aims to tackle the twin crises of Climate Change and Nature Emergency. It's vision encompasses three main objectives: *'(i) By 2045, Scotland will have restored and regenerated biodiversity across our land, freshwater and seas; (ii) Our natural environment, our habitats, ecosystems and species, will be diverse, thriving, resilient and adapting to climate change; and (iii) Regenerated biodiversity will drive a sustainable economy and support thriving communities, and people will play their part in the stewardship of nature for future generations.'*

NPF4 was adopted by Scottish Ministers in February 2023. It is a long-term plan for Scotland that guides spatial development, sets out national planning policies, designates national developments and highlights regional spatial priorities. It includes a range of policies that will contribute to delivering Scotland's commitment to net zero emissions by 2045 and tackling the climate and biodiversity crises.

Key NPF4 policies that this OBEHMP would comply with, if fully implemented, include:

- Policy 1 Tackling the climate and nature crises,
- Policy 3 Biodiversity,
- Policy 5 Soils, and
- Policy 6 Forestry, woodlands and trees.

The recently published Shetland Island Council (SIC) Advice Note 14: Delivery of Biodiversity Enhancement on Local Developments (2025) advises on biodiversity enhancement specifically in Shetland. In these documents, the Scottish Government and SIC recognises the need to jointly tackle the climate emergency and the nature crises throughout society. This OBEHMP demonstrates how the Proposed Development complies with these recently published policies and how it will practically and directly contribute to the delivery of these important local and national priorities.

This OBEHMP sets out the plans for habitat restoration and enhancement and will be developed further through consultation with relevant statutory agencies and interested organisations (e.g. NatureScot and SIC) to provide more detail should the Proposed Development be consented. Until then, this OBEHMP provides a summary of the aims, methods and scope of planned OBEHMP works in relation to the Proposed Development.

The objectives outlined within this OBEHMP are expected to result in significant biodiversity enhancement, as required by NPF4 Policy 3.

At the time of writing (March 2026), the location of all known important ecological and ornithological receptors has been avoided by the proposed measures within the OBEHMP. However, up to date baseline surveys would be undertaken prior to OBEHMP activities to ensure sensitive features e.g. protected species would be avoided. The approach to monitoring of the success of the OBEHMP has been outlined here but would also be developed further with key partners if consent was granted.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

As part of **Chapter 6: Ecology (EIAR Volume 2)** and **Chapter 7: Ornithology (EIAR Volume 2)**, a series of ecological and ornithological mitigation and enhancement measures have been identified and the purpose of this document is to outline what these are, where they are planned and how they will be delivered within the Site. If the Proposed Development is approved, then it is recommended that delivery of this OBEHMP is secured through a planning condition.

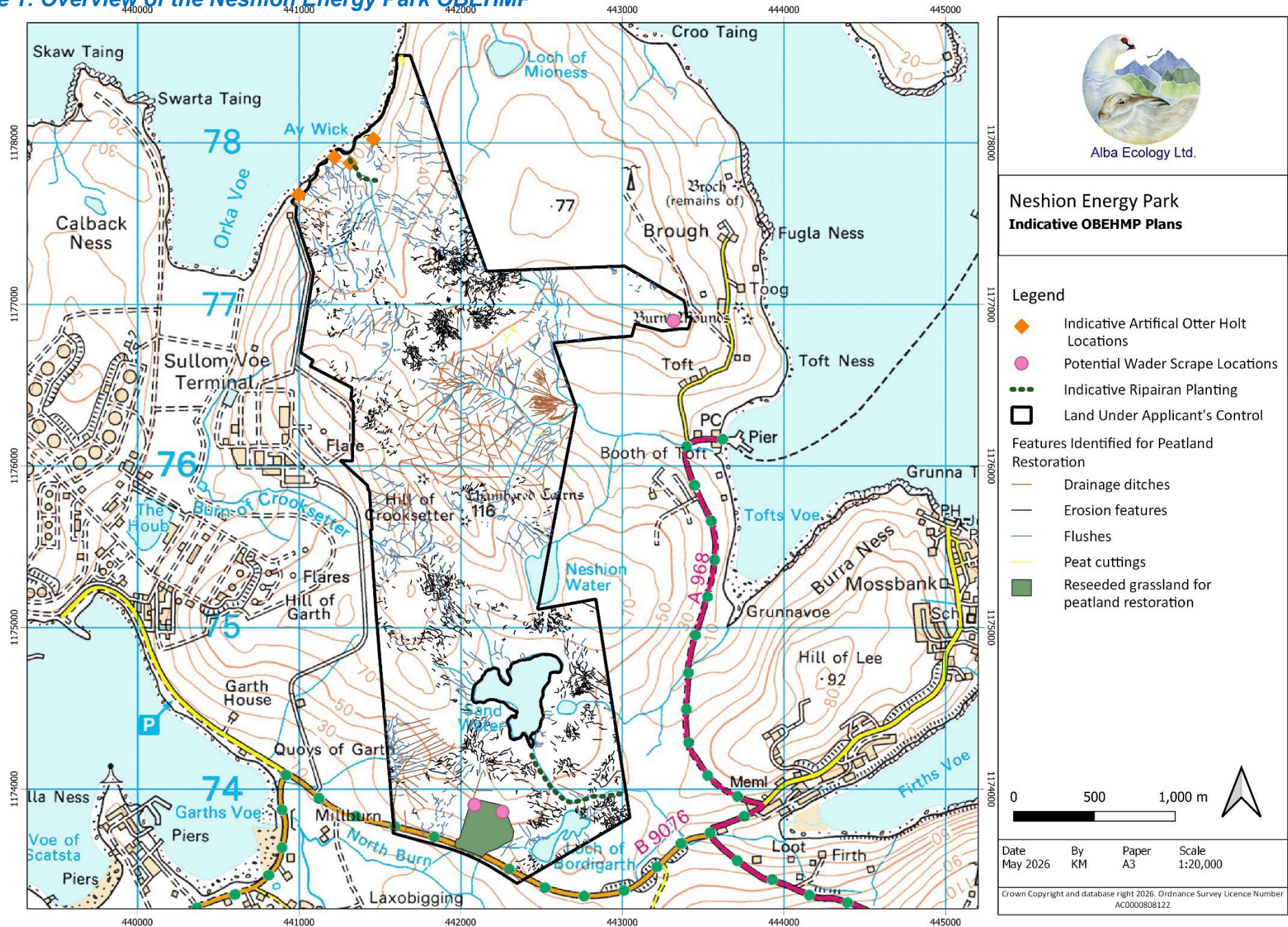
The overall aim of this OBEHMP is to conserve, enhance and restore important biodiversity (both habitats and species) around the Proposed Development. Given the generality of this overall aim, it has been subdivided into seven discrete 'Objectives' for which particular work packages and methods have been outlined.

- Objective 1: Peatland restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control;
- Objective 2: Reduce grazing pressure;

- Objective 3: Creating and strengthening nature networks both within and outside the Land Under Applicant's Control;
- Objective 4: Creation of artificial otter holts within the Land Under Applicant's Control;
- Objective 5: Removal of waste along the coastline;
- Objective 6: Creation of wader scrapes; and
- Objective 7: Offsite Biodiversity Enhancement and Habitat Management.

Figure 1: Overview of the Neshion Energy Park OBEHMP provides an overview of proposed OBEHMP actions. All potential OBEHMP areas would be surveyed prior to any work commencing to ensure that existing potentially important biodiversity is protected and considered when developing and implementing the finalised and agreed OBEHMP, whilst also establishing a 'before management baseline' dataset against which subsequent monitoring can be assessed. Specifically, this would include pre-restoration otter surveys. Most proposed OBEHMP works should ideally be undertaken between September and March (inclusive) to prevent the possibility of disturbing/harming breeding birds. However, if works do take place outside this period, then measures would be put in place to ensure that no significant disturbance of sensitive/legally protected species occurs and compliance with legal obligations towards nesting birds etc.

Figure 1: Overview of the Neshion Energy Park OBEHMP



Objective 1: Peatland Restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control

Peatland habitats are important for a number of reasons, including their potential for storing and capturing carbon. Peatlands are recognised as globally important providers of ecosystem services, including for provision of food and fibre, water supply, climate regulation, biodiversity, recreation and cultural heritage. As such, priority peatland habitats are referred to in the SBS, the Onshore Wind Policy Statement (2022) and NPF4. Policy 5 of NPF4 requires development that impacts upon peatland habitats to include peatland restoration proposals. Priority peatland habitats, as referred to in NPF4, comprise blanket bog, lowland raised bog, lowland fens, and part of the upland flushes, fens and swamps (as listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (JNCC, 1994)).

All of the blanket bog habitat surveyed as part of the Proposed Development has been subject to some degree of modification through e.g. climate change and nitrogen deposition, as well more local impacts (**Technical Appendix 6.2: Habitat Survey Report (EIAR Volume 4)**). Most of the blanket bog habitat was in a Modified state with large areas severely impacted by dewatering leaving large areas of exposed, bare peat. There were also frequent and deep erosion features as well as drainage ditches and peat cuttings. Some areas were in Near-Natural condition, and the ambition of the peatland restoration would be to restore the surrounding peatland to a similar Near-Natural condition as these areas are likely to be actively forming peat. **Figure 6.4: Peatland Condition Assessment (EIAR Volume 3a)** illustrates the baseline peatland condition across the wider habitat Study Area (**Technical Appendix 6.2: Habitat Survey Report (EIAR Volume 4)**).



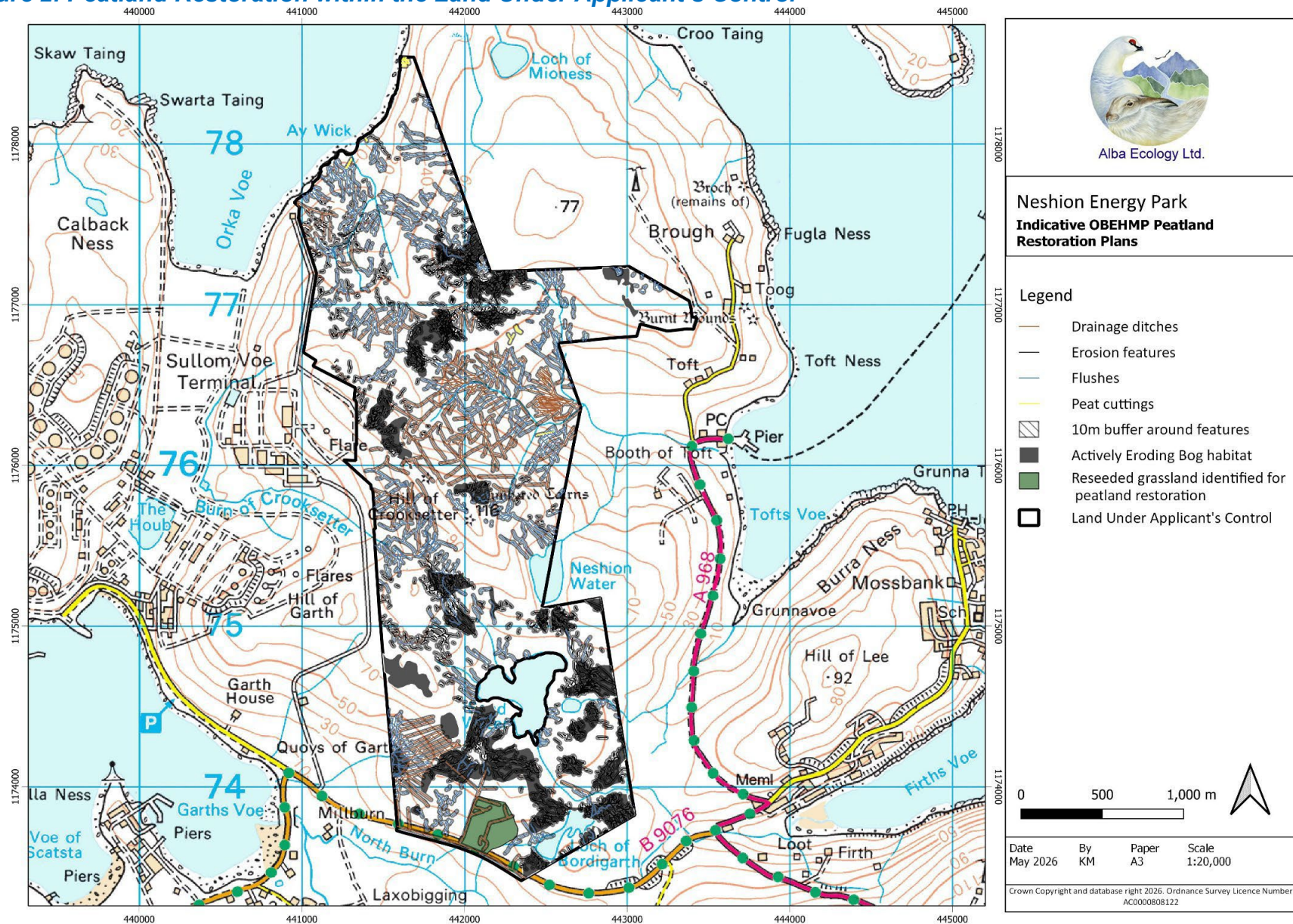
Photos 1 and 2: An example of Near-Natural blanket bog, and Actively Eroding bog within the Land Under Applicant's Control, June 2025.

In accordance with policy and best practice guidance, the areas identified as having the highest importance, Near-Natural blanket bog, have been totally avoided by the design layout.

There is substantial potential for large landscape-scale peatland restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control, over and above reduced grazing pressure (Objective 2), specifically sensitive blocking of water escape routes around areas which are considered to have once had numerous bog pools. Hagg reprofiling/infilling, gully and drainage ditch blocking and peat cutting reprofiling/infilling are also all suitable peatland restoration techniques for use within

the Land Under Applicant's Control (**Figure 2: Peatland Restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control**).

Figure 2: Peatland Restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control



Sensitive Bog Pool Restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control



Photos 3 and 4: Examples of areas that have dewatered leaving bare exposed peat where bog pools were likely to have previously been numerous. The two photos show different degrees of erosion in the Land Under Applicant's Control 2022 and 2025.

Much of the areas mapped as Actively Eroding and dry modified bog were considered likely to once have held frequent bog pools. **Technical Appendix 6.2: Habitat Survey Report (EIAR Volume 4)** states *"It is considered likely that historically these areas were filled with bog pools and bog-mosses which have been lost through draining of the bog habitat and erosion. Historically these areas were likely to be similar to the areas mapped as blanket bog with bog pools (M17b:M2) but the pools have been lost leaving bare eroding peat. Sometimes these two stages were very close together or a transition was apparent"*.

Sensitive restoration in these areas, including blocking locations where dewatering has occurred with peat dams and blocking and reprofiling surrounding erosion gullies and drainage ditches would help to rewet these areas and allow bog pools to become permanent and deep. It is considered prudent that areas identified as Near-Natural blanket bog and areas of frequent pools should also be considered candidates for this sort of sensitive restoration to ensure that water is retained in these areas. This restoration would increase the breeding pools and the abundance of insects such as crane fly, which are a vital food source for breeding waders, such as curlew, whimbrel, snipe, lapwing, golden plover and dunlin.

Peatland Restoration – Erosion Gullies and bare peat within the Land Under Applicant's Control

Peatland restoration of erosion gullies and bare peat surface is not just good for carbon storage and reducing climate change, but it also improves water quality, stops soil erosion, may help reduce the risk of wildfire, and helps reduce downstream flooding (with restored bogs holding back more water in the upper catchment than would otherwise be the case in a degraded bog system).

The main aim of this form of peatland restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control will be to arrest or limit peat erosion and carbon loss, to encourage revegetation of bare peat surfaces and encourage a return to a more natural drainage pattern. The aim of peatland restoration is to eventually allow areas of the peatland to become wetter and to have an increase in cover of peat forming species giving the potential for active peat formation (i.e. carbon sequestration).



Photo 5: An example of erosion gullies within the Land Under Applicant's Control, July 2022.

Peatland Restoration – Drainage Ditch Blocking within the Land Under Applicant's Control

Baseline surveys within the Land Under Applicant's Control show evidence of artificial drainage ditch features (**Technical Appendix 6.2: Habitat Survey Report (EIAR Volume 4)**). Some were clearly drains, but some had flush like vegetation in them. Hydrological assessment confirmed these were not natural groundwater flushes but were assessed as being old drainage lines (**Chapter 8: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Soils (EIAR Volume 2)**).

Drainage ditches cause adverse impacts such as:

- Drying of the surrounding bog vegetation by lowering water tables in proximity to the ditches.
- Loss of young birds, including wader chicks, which fall into and cannot get out of steep-sided moorland grips.
- A reduced number of invertebrates, which are a food source for a variety of breeding birds, including waders.
- An increased incidence of flooding and flash flooding in downstream watercourses caused by greatly increased water run-off speed.
- An increase in erosion and siltation of downstream watercourses and associated destruction of fish spawning habitat.



Photos 6 and 7: Example of a drainage ditches within the Land Under Applicant's Control, some of which had flush vegetation within them, July 2023.

Blocking drainage ditches helps to reduce water table drawdown, encourage revegetation (on potentially important habitats of high conservation value), increase carbon sequestration, reduce erosion, and minimise the knock-on effect of hydrological change downstream (e.g. reduce risk of soil erosion and flash flooding). Importantly at this site, the blocking of drains will help to restore the water table and prevent water loss from important areas that once had bog pools.

Peatland Restoration – Cessation of Peat Cutting and Peat Cutting reprofiling/infilling within the Land Under Applicant's Control

Baseline surveys of the Land Under Applicant's Control show evidence of historic peat cutting (**Technical Appendix 6.2: Habitat Survey Report (EIAR Volume 2)**) Peat cutting is the practice of removing peat from bogs for use as fuel or for horticultural purposes. It has been a widely used practice for providing fuel across Shetland for many generations.

Peat cuttings cause adverse impacts such as:

- Removal of peat stores (i.e. release of carbon).
- Creation of an erosion face.
- Drying out of the surrounding bog vegetation by lowering the water table in proximity to the cutting.

Reprofiling and infilling of peat cutting helps to reduce water table drawdown, encourage revegetation (on important habitats of potential high conservation value), increase carbon sequestration, reduce erosion, and minimise the knock-on effect of hydrological change downstream.



Photo 8: An example of peat cuttings within the Land Under Applicant's Control, July 2022.

The cessation of peat cutting has been agreed (and therefore guaranteed) within the Land Under Applicant's Control.

Peatland Restoration - Reseeded Grassland within the Land Under Applicant's Control

Baseline surveys within the Land Under Applicant's Control show evidence of grassland communities being present over deep peat (**Technical Appendix 6.2: Habitat Survey Report (EIAR Volume 4)**). The practice of stripping bog vegetation and reseeding with grassland

mixes was historically common in Shetland to create pasture and appears to have occurred within the Land Under Applicant's Control.



Photos 9 and 10: Reseeded grassland over deep peat.

Removing the grassland vegetation and seeding with locally sourced seed from the local area would restore blanket bog habitat to areas that are currently grassland.

Peatland Restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control – Metrics and Calculations:

Peatland features, such as erosion features, drainage ditches, 'flushes' and peat cuttings have been mapped in detail (**Technical Appendix 6.2: Habitat Survey Report (EIAR Volume 4)**). All of these features mapped within the Land Under Applicant's Control (**Figure 2: Peatland Restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control**) are proposed for restoration as part of the OBEHMP except where they coincide with the permanent parts of the Proposed Development Footprint.

Figure 2: Peatland Restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control shows where all the peatland restoration is proposed. A 10 m buffer for rewetting peatland has been included for relevant restoration work and the permanent land-take has been removed. The 10 m buffer is the same indirect buffer used in the land-take calculations in **Chapter 6: Ecology (EIAR Volume 2)**. Although it is noted that in Peatland Action a 30m buffer is used for peatland restoration. The proposed peatland restoration includes:

- Sensitive restoration of all of the areas mapped as Actively Eroding within the Land Under Applicant's Control. This will result in the restoration of c. 84.5 ha of bog habitat.

- Reinstating 8.5 ha of reseeded grassland into blanket bog habitat.
- Restore all c. 52.0 km of erosion features and gullies within the Land Under Applicant's Control to arrest or limit peat erosion and carbon loss, to encourage vegetation cover of the peatland, return to encourage a natural drainage pattern and improve overall biodiversity.
- Block all c. 27.7 km of drainage ditches and c. 40.9 km of historic drains with flush like habitat in the Land Under Applicant's Control to restore the natural drainage pattern of the peatland and encourage revegetation and improve biodiversity.
- Restore all c. 0.8 km of peat cutting by infilling lost peat, reprofiling edge, and encouraging vegetation cover of the peatland and a return to a natural drainage pattern.
- The restoring of erosion features, peat cuttings, drainage ditches, and flushes like features would rewet an estimated 213.4 ha of habitat around the mapped features within the Land Under Applicant's Control.

Combined, and accounting for overlap, and removing of the permanent land-take from the calculations, with there would be an estimated total of c. 247.9 ha of peatland restoration. There is a predicted 38.3 ha of habitat lost/indirectly impacted by the Proposed Development. Therefore, the direct peatland restoration identified within the Land Under Applicant's Control would be c. 6.4x times the amount predicted to be lost. It is important to note that the 38.3 ha losses is likely to be an overestimation of impacts, due to the use of e.g. 10m indirect buffer, even on e.g. upslope gradients, in addition further mitigation is proposed at the detailed design stage to reduce direct losses.

The Applicant is willing to secure and implement best practice peatland restoration techniques within the Land Under Applicant's Control in consultation with relevant organisations and agencies that have particular expertise in this matter (e.g. NatureScot and SEPA) in accordance with this OBEHMP. The full plans for this would be developed further, post-consent, through site specific visits and consultation with experienced peatland restoration specialists. Monitoring of the peatland restoration would be included within the plans (see Monitoring Section). Post-consent targeted baseline surveys would ensure there is an avoidance of sensitivities such as cultural heritage features.

The specific details, such as the exact type of restoration for each gully, would need to be agreed with the land manager, contractors and through discussion with NatureScot prior to any restoration work commencing. This would include ensuring gullies are suitable for restoration (in terms of gradient and other concerns such as health and safety). Particular care would need to be taken to avoid any wetter areas of blanket bog where bog pools are already established. This would be best implemented on the ground with contractors and the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) informed by the technical data presented in the EIAR.

Best practice techniques would be agreed with the contractor and in discussion with the NatureScot peatland management team but are likely to include hagg reprofiling and mulching, and where the gully floor is incising, gully blocking, ditch blocking and possibly infilling of areas with peat won from the construction of the Proposed Development. It is recognised that there

is plenty of experience and expertise locally on restoration techniques that work well in Shetland. For more details refer to the Outline Peatland Management Plan (**Technical Appendix 8.5: Outline Peat Management Plan (EIAR Volume 4)**).

This peatland restoration would not only benefit the peatland habitats, but are anticipated to benefit the wider biodiversity, which is compliant with Policy 3 of NPF4.

The peatland restoration would be undertaken from the commencement of the construction phase.

Summary of Peatland Restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control

Within the Land Under Applicant's Control the OBEHMP aims to:

- Sensitively restore c. 84.5 ha of bog of Actively Eroding bog.
- Reinstating 8.5 ha of reseeded grassland into blanket bog habitat.
- Restore c. 52.0 km of erosion features and gullies.
- Block all c. 27.7 km of drainage ditches and c. 40.9km of historic drains with flush like habitat.
- Restore c. 0.8 km of peat cutting.

Combined, this would result in an estimated total of c. 247.9 ha of peatland restoration within the Land Under Applicant's Control.

Objective 2: Reduction in Grazing Pressure within the Land Under Applicant's Control

In addition to the peatland restoration opportunities identified in Objective 1 the management of grazing animals i.e. sheep, would greatly benefit the peatland habitat within the Land Under Applicant's Control and allow for the peatland restoration to be successful. Measures or mechanisms to manage the sheep, to allow for effective blanket bog restoration, would undoubtedly be required by NatureScot and be guaranteed through legal agreement.

Discussion with the Applicant suggests there are currently c. 350 sheep grazing on the Land Under Applicant's Control throughout the summer and autumn months.



Photos 11 and 12: Example of sheep trails in blanket bog habitat within the Study Area, 2025.

Reduced grazing pressure on blanket bog habitats is known to have significant beneficial impacts, not just on vegetation, but on the wider ecosystem (e.g. Evans *et al.* 2015). For example, at Glen Finglas reduced grazing intensity resulted in increased insect and spider species richness and increased mammal density (Evans *et al.* 2015). Recent studies have also demonstrated an increase in priority bird species richness and abundance in areas with reduced sheep grazing (Malm *et al.*, 2020).

Appropriate grazing management of bogs helps to maintain peatland habitats in good condition. Some grazing is known to contribute to bog habitats by helping the maintenance of an open character and providing a diverse wetland surface in terms of structure and species composition. However, the actual number of sheep a particular site can sustain without damage will depend on a range of factors including habitats, topography, soils, altitude, climate and other land uses in the area.

To allow for natural peatland regeneration and restoration to occur on a site, lower grazing densities are required, at least for the peatland restoration establishment period.

To allow for the proposed peatland restoration work to be completed (Objective 1) and allow an establishment period for recovering vegetation, sheep could be removed or reduced in number from the Land Under Applicant's Control for the first two to five years and then stocking density of sheep maintained at a low density for a sustained period beyond initial peatland restoration i.e. the lifetime of the wind farm. The condition of the blanket bog would be closely monitored throughout and the stocking density adjusted as required. A total of 505ha of bog habitat is within the Land Under Applicant's Control and would benefit from these measures

(Technical Appendix 6.6: Peatland Habitat Restoration Opportunities for Neshion Energy Park (EIAR Volume 4)).

The OBEMP aims to:

- Remove or reduce the number of sheep from within the Land Under Applicant's Control for the first 2-5 years to allow peatland vegetation to recover from historic grazing pressure and to allow peatland restoration (Objective 1) to establish, with regular monitoring of the condition of the bog to inform future stocking densities.

The Applicant is willing to support a condition that secures removal of sheep on the Land Under Applicant's Control for the first 2 years, post restoration, and that monitoring is undertaken to inform future stocking densities in consultation with relevant land managers/owners and agencies (e.g. NatureScot).

Objective 3: Creating and Strengthening Nature Networks within and around the Land Under Applicant's Control

Tackling the Nature Emergency - Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to 2045 (Scottish Government, 2023) has a commitment to “*Ensure that every local authority area has a nature network of locally driven projects improving ecological connectivity across Scotland*”. The overarching purpose of the ‘nature network’ commitment is connecting habitats and species at a landscape scale, improving ecological connectivity, creating functioning, healthy and robust ecosystems which mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change and provide multiple benefits for society. In addition, Policy 3 of NPF4 promotes the strengthening of nature networks and Policy 6 of NPF4 advocates the enhancement and expansion of woodland.

This OBEHMP objective will demonstrably deliver on these policies.

The SIC Advice Note 14 Delivery of Biodiversity Enhancement on Local Developments recognises the benefits of planting native trees in appropriate locations with suitable management and considers this ‘a good biodiversity enhancement option’ (SIC, 2025).



Photo 13: Example of a suitable location for riparian planting within the Study Area, 2025

There were no trees or shrubs recorded in the Study Area (**Technical Appendix 6.2: Habitat Survey Report (EIAR Volume 4)**). However, scrubby trees and shrubs are common in

Shetland, including along riparian corridors. There is scope within the OBEHMP Land Under Applicant's Control to produce new functioning nature networks (also known as 'wildlife corridors'), consisting of carefully targeted riparian tree/scrub plantings. Functional wildlife corridors are seen as critical to allow biodiversity to move in response to a rapidly changing climate and such practical action should be seen as directly helping to strengthen both regional nature networks in Shetland as well as delivering on Scottish Government national biodiversity strategy priorities. In coastal areas of Shetland, small patches of scrubby trees also provide shelter, foraging and resting places for migrant birds.

The creation of new functioning nature networks would be c. 0.95 km long concentrated in the following locations within the Land Under Applicant's Control (Figure 3):

1. Aywick Burn; and
2. Burn of Sandwater.

There will be no loss of planting as a consequence of the Proposed Development, and so all the planting relating to creating and strengthening nature networks is considered biodiversity enhancement.



Photo 14: Area suitable for riparian planting within the Study Area, 2025

The riparian planting along the two burns would be c. 2-10 m wide on either side and for c. 0.96 km in total (**Figure 3: Indicative Locations of Riparian Planting, Artificial Otter Holts and Wader Scrapes**). The species planted would comprise of rowan, grey willow, downy birch, grey and eared willow and potentially alder in wetter areas. These would be sourced locally with advice from Shetland Amenity Trust. Although planting would be constrained (and therefore avoided) in some areas by e.g. important cultural heritage features and deep peat. The riparian planting would be stock fenced to ensure tree/scrub establishment was successful.

The multiple benefits and value of native riparian woodland for nature conservation, landscape and ecosystem services has long been recognised. Riparian woodlands play a hugely important role on helping to maintain the health and productivity of rivers and burns as well as being valuable wildlife corridors. For example, they:

- protect riverbanks and help stabilise aquatic edge habitats, many of which have become unstable due to extreme climate change derived weather events. Protecting and stabilising the riverbanks benefits invertebrates and fish;
- cool (help regulate) water temperatures, which is now seen as of critical importance to aquatic species (including trout and salmon) threatened by extreme climate change derived temperatures;
- control bank erosion by reducing sediment runoff entering watercourses;
- capture and recycle mineral nutrients;
- supply invertebrates with woody debris and leaf-litter, helping to kickstart the aquatic food chain for fish;
- provide shade and cover for fish to allow them to hide from predators;
- increase biodiversity both directly and indirectly by providing links between different patches of isolated woodland habitats – so called wildlife corridors; and
- store carbon.

The riparian planting would be undertaken in the first planting season from the commencement of the construction phase.

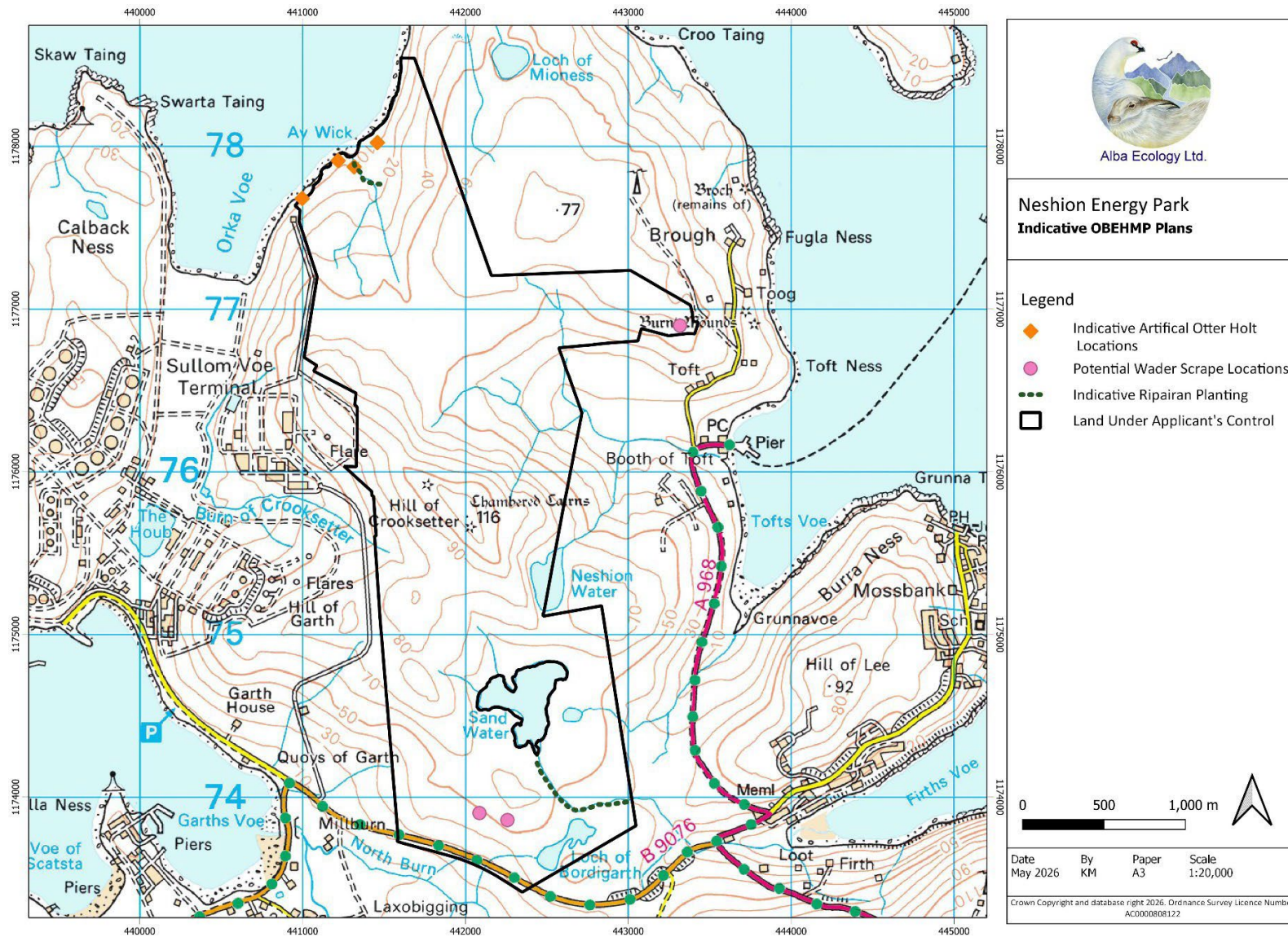
The OBEHMP aims to provide:

- Riparian native woodland planting for c. 0.96 km (c. 2-10 m wide) along the burns.

Targeted baseline surveys of the indicative nature network routes would be undertaken post consent to ensure that any areas of e.g. deep peat and cultural heritage features are deliberately avoided by planned planting.

The Applicant is willing to fund and implement the creation of these woodland/scrub nature networks in consultation with relevant organisations and agencies that have particular expertise in this matter (e.g. NatureScot; Shetland Amenity Trust). Baseline surveys would ensure there is an avoidance of specific constraints such as cultural heritage features. Monitoring of planting success will be included within the plans (see Monitoring Section).

Figure 3: Indicative Locations of Riparian Planting, Artificial Otter Holts and Wader Scrapes



Objective 4: Creation of Artificial Otter Holts

Otter is a European Protected Species (EPS). Otters currently use the coastline around the Proposed Development and waterbodies within the Study Area for foraging and resting sites.



Photo 15: A coastal otter, Shetland.

At least four artificial holts would be located within the Study Area, two along the coastline and one along Aywick Burn and one in suitable location beside an unnamed burn in the north of the Study Area. **Figure 3: Indicative Locations of Riparian Planting, Artificial Otter Holts and Wader Scrapes** provides indicative locations for the artificial otter holts within the Land Under Applicant's Control. These would be placed in suitable locations, constructed following NatureScot advice.



Photo 16: Suitable location for an artificial otter holt, 2025

Artificial holts should be placed in an undisturbed area, free from flooding and close to a good food supply (NIEA, no date). The type of artificial holt required would depend on the type of natural holt used. For the Study Area, stone or brick are considered the most suitable material. The artificial holts would include more than one entrance/exit to provide escape routes and have a thick turf/soil mound over the top to provide some noise protection.

Construction of artificial holt

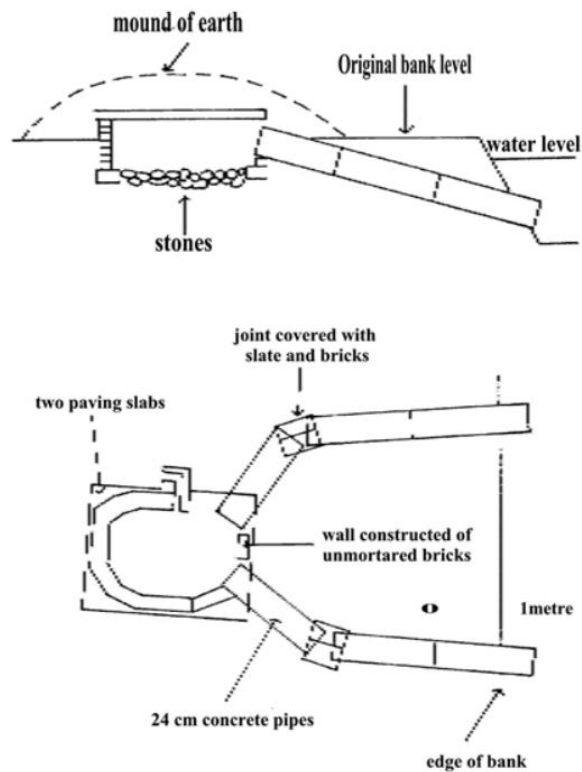


Figure 4: An example of an artificial holt design (from IOSF, 2020).

The OBEHMP aims to provide:

- Install a minimum of four artificial otter holts in suitable locations, two along the coastline and one along the Burn of Aywick and one along an unnamed burn. This would benefit otter and meets Policy 3 of NPF4.

The Applicant is willing to fund and implement the installation of four otter holts during the construction phase in consultation with relevant organisations and agencies that have particular expertise in this matter (e.g. NatureScot and SIC).

Objective 5: Removal Waste along the Coastline



Photos 17 and 18: Waste was evident along the Coastline, 2025.

There was multiple evidence of debris and waste washing up on the coastline. It was a mixture of plastic waste, old fishing nets, ropes and pots washed up on the shoreline. This debris could pose a threat to birds and otters. Safe disposal of the rubbish would clean up the area and make more and safer space for otter and birds and would support the wider ecosystem. This would meet Policy 3 of NPF4.

The OBEHMP aims to provide:

- Remove the waste from the coastline with annual removal of waste for the lifetime of the Proposed Development. This would clean up the area and make more space for biodiversity.

The Applicant is willing to fund and implement the removal of waste along the coastline of the Study Area during the construction phase in consultation with relevant organisations and agencies that have particular expertise in this matter (e.g. SIC).

Objective 6: Wader Scrapes

The creation of three wader scrapes within the Land Under Applicant's Control is likely to be beneficial to breeding waders already present and potentially beneficial to rarer species not currently present (**Figure 3: Indicative Locations of Riparian Planting, Artificial Otter Holts and Wader Scrapes**). Wader scrapes typically provide both adult waders and their precocial (independent) chicks with rich foraging opportunities, as well as adjacent taller vegetation for chicks to hide from predators in. Given the range of species already present

within the area, multiple wader species are likely to benefit from the creation of these two wader scrapes. Wader scrapes provide rich feeding areas, and the open muddy areas can be particularly beneficial during dry summers, when such ephemeral wet habitats are severely limited.

The RSPB has plenty of experience of creating wader scrapes and they could be approached to provide best practice advice, guidance and expertise.



Photo 19: Downslope from sheiling @ HU 42383 76378. Potential site for new a new wader-pool in thick rushy and grassy sward. Might attract breeding black-tailed godwit, a high priority species not currently present. Lies within Land Under Applicant's Control.

The OBEHMP aims to provide:

- Create three wader scrapes within the Land Under Applicant's Control.

The Applicant is willing to fund and implement the creating of wader scrapes using best practice guidance (e.g. from RSPB).

Objective 7: Offsite Biodiversity Enhancement and Habitat Management

Shetland has a vast amount of peatland restoration and biodiversity enhancement potential. There are a number of organisations, both public and private, that already contribute to offsite measure implementation. Crofters and farmers have successfully taken up works with Peatland ACTION and funding of restoration through the Peatland Code carbon credits. There is currently no agreed Shetland-wide strategy for implementing a long-term programme of peatland restoration works even though degraded peatlands are one of the largest carbon emitters for the region.

Various private developers and companies have successfully reached agreements for habitat management and peatland restoration of privately owned land. There is potential for additional offsite peatland restoration near the Proposed Development or further afield in Shetland. These sites would be dependent upon agreements with landowners and tenants to obtain land rights to restore peatlands, long-term reduction in sheep grazing densities, compensation in line with the Peatland Code for lost crofting revenues, and ongoing monitoring of implemented measures.

Some publicly funded organisations are limited in what enhancement they can deliver. For instance, Peatland ACTION funding does not allow for the creation of wader pools or riparian planting which are highly appropriate biodiversity enhancement measures for Shetland. They would require separate funding to be able to incorporate these measures into their works.

The RSPB is trialling a range of crop management and species on the edge programmes targeted towards crofters and farmers as a means of supporting biodiversity. These include re-wilding and flower meadows.

This OBEHMP aims to provide:

- Pathways for offsite peatland restoration with the agreement of landowners and tenants.
- Project linked environmental fund which could provide monetary support for projects like additional biodiversity enhancement measures (such as wader pools and riparian planting) to augment Peatland ACTION restoration sites.
- Provide offsite, but connected biodiversity enhancement where possible, such as additional riparian planting (e.g. along Sodlers Burn; and Burn of Grunnavae) and wader scrapes in suitable location near the Land Under Applicant's Control.

The Applicant is committed to identifying and funding suitable offsite peatland restoration and biodiversity enhancement within Shetland, in consultation with relevant organisations including NatureScot and RSPB.

MONITORING

In order to monitor progress of the OBEHMP it would be necessary to regularly monitor the effectiveness and success of the restoration/enhancement measures implemented. To do this an initial assessment of baseline conditions would be required prior to work commencing (establishing the baseline pre-construction, including illustrative photos), followed by regular post restoration monitoring. **Table 1** outlines the proposed monitoring schedule before and after implementation. It is recommended that this monitoring is agreed with NatureScot and SIC as part of the planning conditions.

OBEHMP Objective	Type of Monitoring	Method	Why	Frequency
Objective 1	Efficacy of peatland restoration measures	Visual inspection	To ensure peatland restoration measures have been successful.	Pre-restoration, 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years.
Objective 1	Birds	Moorland bird surveys.	To demonstrate whole ecosystem change.	Pre-restoration, 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years.
Objective 1 & 2	Vegetation	The percentage cover of Sphagnum & indicator plant species, bare peat & vegetation height	To demonstrate effective reduction in sheep allowing for peatland restoration to establish. There should be feedback	Pre-restoration, 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years.

OBEHMP Objective	Type of Monitoring	Method	Why	Frequency
		with the use of quadrats.	to monitor sheep numbers.	
Objective 3	Efficacy of tree planting	Visual inspection	To ensure tree growth has been successful.	1, 3, 5, 10 years.
Objective 3	Fences	Visual inspection	To ensure fence marking has been successful.	1 and 5 years.
Objective 4	Artificial otter holt checks	Visual inspection	To ensure artificial holts are installed and maintained.	1, 5 and 10 years after installation.
Objective 5	Coastal walk	Visual inspection	To ensure the coastline is clear of waste.	Annual for the lifetime of the Proposed Development.
Objective 6	Wader scrape	Visual inspection	To ensure creation of habitat has been successful.	1, 3, 5, 10 years.
Objective 7	Depending on finalised Objective 7 plans the type of monitoring are likely to be similar to the above (i.e. types of monitoring for Objective 1-4)	Depending on finalised Objective 7 plans methods are likely to be similar to the above methods (i.e. methods in Objective 1-4)	Depending on finalised Objective 7 plans the reason for monitoring is likely to be similar to the above (i.e. reasons for monitoring Objective 1-4)	Depending on finalised Objective 7 plans frequency of monitoring is likely to be similar to the above (i.e. frequency in Objective 1-4)

Table 1: The type and frequency of ecological monitoring recommended for the OBEHMP

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