

# **BLOCH WIND FARM: TECHNICAL APPENDIX 7.5 SPECIES PROTECTION PLAN**

## **Report to Renewable Energy Systems Ltd**

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## Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
PRE-CONSTRUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION PHASE SURVEYS.....	1
MITIGATION MEASURES.....	2

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## INTRODUCTION

1. As set out in the EIA Report Chapter 7: Ecology, a Species Protection Plan (SPP) will be implemented to ensure compliance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act and Badgers Act (a) to avoid any impacts to species specially protected under Schedule 5 of that Act and the Badgers Act, and (b) to avoid any damage to active setts/holts/hibernacula.
2. There are records of a range of specially protected species using the site, including nine species of bat, badger and otter.
3. All of the available locations of records of all protected species (from the desk study and the field surveys) were avoided in the design of the proposed development so that there are no records of any of these species in any areas where they would be likely to be affected by the proposed development.
4. Given the habitats present, however, it is possible that some, particularly badger and otter, could move into the potential impact zone in the future.
5. An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be appointed to implement this SPP.

## PRE-CONSTRUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION PHASE SURVEYS

6. Pre-construction protected species surveys will be undertaken by the ECOW immediately prior and during any construction works to ensure compliance with the nature conservation legislation. It would include specific surveys of all species specially protected from disturbance under Schedule 5 of the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act and the Badgers Act (including otter and badger), and of species occurring within areas likely to be directly affected by construction works (ground works and vegetation clearance).
7. The surveys will follow the same standard methodologies used for the EIA Report baseline surveys. For otter, this will include a detailed inspection of all watercourses within and adjacent to (within 200m) the proposed development footprint that could potentially support otters will be undertaken within one month prior to the commencement of construction. All of the following signs of otter activity will be recorded and mapped where encountered:
  - footprints;
  - feeding evidence;
  - spraints;
  - holts; and
  - couches or resting places.
8. The badger check surveys will cover all of the proposed development construction areas where there will be any ground works plus a 100m buffer. Surveys will follow standard SNH-recommended methodology<sup>1</sup> and will record/map details of any of the following signs:
  - Badger setts and associated soil excavation
  - Badger latrines and dung pits
  - Badger footprints
  - Badger hairs
  - Badger paths
  - Evidence of Badger foraging activity

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<sup>1</sup> Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989). Surveying Badgers. Mammal Society.  
Scottish Natural Heritage (2003). Best Practice Guidance - Badger Surveys. Inverness Badger Survey 2003. Commissioned Report No. 096.

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9. The ECoW will additionally make checks for reptiles that could be affected immediately ahead of construction of all areas of ground works where reptiles may occur, to ensure that no reptiles are killed during construction and that no breaches of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) occur.
  10. Ongoing surveys through the construction phase will be informed by results of the pre-construction surveys detailed above. These would focus on the key species that could potentially be affected during construction, including otters and badgers. Surveys would take the form of specific checks for these species (using the same survey methods as described above) in areas that would be directly affected by the construction works.

## **MITIGATION MEASURES**

11. All construction staff and contractors will be informed of the SPP in a toolbox talk that will form part of the site induction.
12. If any evidence of any protected species listed on Schedule 5 or any active badger setts were found within the zone around the proposed development footprint in which they might be disturbed, then further searches will be undertaken to confirm their status in the area, and appropriate buffers applied dependent of the species involved (or micro-siting away from the areas used by these species).