LIMEKILN WIND FARM

DEER FENCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

LIMEKILN WIND LTD

Nevis Environmental Ltd

1st Floor Beauly House Dochfour Business Centre Inverness Highland IV3 8GY

www.nevisenvironmental.com

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This document has been prepared by

Rob Mansbridge BSc (Hons), ACIEEM Ecology Consultant **Nevis Environmental Ltd**

This report has been checked by

Megan Lindeman MSc, MCIEEM, MCIWEM Environmental Manager Nevis Environmental Ltd

This report has been authorised by

Rebecca Goddard BSc (Hons) General Manager **Nevis Environmental Ltd**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nevis Environmental Ltd has been commissioned by Limekiln Wind Ltd to produce a Deer Fence Management Plan (DFMP) for the construction of a windfarm at Limekiln, near Reay, Caithness in northern Scotland. The purpose of the DFMP is to outline the monitoring and management measures required to restrict deer movement between the site and the neighbouring land; which includes the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar site, and the East Halladale Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The site is currently managed as a sporting estate with a deer fence, 2 metres in height, enclosing the site by following the site boundary. A population of red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) is maintained on site with the occasional introduction of new stock.

The Deer Management Technical Note (AMEC, 2013) concluded that the current deer fence, assuming the undertaking of immediate repairs where damage is evident, would reduce the risk of deer escaping and damaging the surrounding habitats resulting in no likely significant effect on the interest features of the designated sites.

The aim of the DFMP is to:

Ensure that the conservation objectives of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Ramsar, and East Halladale SSSI are not compromised by the encroachment of deer from the site during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of Limekiln windfarm.

In order to meet the aim of the DFMP, a twice-yearly visual inspection of the deer fence that surrounds the site will be carried out for the duration of the wind farm construction, operation, and decommissioning (as specified in paragraph 11.10.12 of the EIAR; Infinergy, 2016).

Where monitoring identifies damage to the deer fence, repairs will be scheduled immediately.

Monitoring and repair of the deer fence will be the responsibility of the wind farm owner or contracted operator.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Nevis Environmental Ltd has been commissioned by Limekiln Wind Ltd to produce a Deer Fence Management Plan (DFMP) for the construction of a windfarm near Reay, Caithness in northern Scotland, hereafter referred to as 'the site'. The purpose of the DFMP is to outline the monitoring and management measures required to restrict deer movement between the site and the neighbouring land; which includes the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar site, and the East Halladale Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located at the Limekiln Estate, Caithness, Highland; approximately 1.5 km to the south of the village of Reay and 3 km south-west of the Dounreay Nuclear Power Station; centred roughly on Ordnance Survey grid reference NC 98270 60620. The site boundary covers approximately 1,140 hectares.

The site comprises mainly commercial coniferous woodland plantation, with an area of undulating moorland and semi-improved agricultural land to the north, coniferous woodland to the east and open moorland to the west and south. The altitude within the site ranges between 40 m and 160 m; higher ground is present around Beinn Ratha, with a height of 242 m AOD, which is located approximately 1.2 km west of the site. The site is managed as a sporting estate with a deer fence, 2 metres in height, enclosing the site by following the site boundary. The location of the deer fence is shown in Figure 1.

The proposed development is to construct, and operate, 21 wind turbines with an installed capacity exceeding 50 MW.

1.3 PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

The DFMP is required to discharge Condition 23 of the Section 36 Consent which states that:

No development shall commence unless and until a Deer Fence Management Plan ("DFMP") has been submitted to and improved in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with SNH. The DFMP shall include the mitigation measures described within paragraph 11.10.12 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report entitled Environmental Statement dated June 2016. Thereafter the DFMP shall be implemented as approved.

1.4 REPORT RATIONALE

This report has been produced to ensure that the commitments regarding deer management, made in paragraph 11.10.12 of the EIAR, are carried forwards into the operational phase of the development. The DFMP will meet the requirements of condition 23 of the Section 36 consent and subsequently ensure that the project is compliant with its planning permission.

2 CURRENT MANAGEMENT

2.1 CURRENT DEER MANAGEMENT

The site is managed as a sporting estate with a deer fence, 2 metres in height, enclosing the site by following the site boundary. A population of red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) is maintained on site with the occasional introduction of new stock. The population in 2016, as reported in 'Chapter 11 – Ecology' of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) (entitled Environmental Statement; Infinergy, 2016) was estimated to be approximately 100 deer which equates to 9 deer per km².

As reported in the EIAR (Infinergy, 2016), and evidenced in the Deer Management Technical Note (AMEC, 2013), the deer fence is currently inspected, and repairs undertaken, on a regular basis.

The Deer Management Technical Note (AMEC, 2013) established that the deer fence surrounding the site complied with the red deer fencing specifications (minimum height of 1.8 m and a maximum mesh size of 200 mm x 300 mm) outlined in the Forestry Commission Technical Guide on Forest Fencing (Trout and Pepper, 2006), and that the fence was considered strong enough to prevent deer movements during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the windfarm. It was concluded that the deer fence, assuming immediate repairs where damage is evident, would reduce the risk of deer escaping and damaging the surrounding habitats resulting in no likely significant effect on the interest features of the designated sites.

2.2 MANAGEMENT RATIONALE

The development of the wind farm and associated habitat management measures will result in a reduction in the total area of suitable habitat available to deer; as such the management of the deer fence is required to restrict the movement of deer from the site to the surrounding land, in particular the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Ramsar, and East Halladale SSSI. Blanket bogs are a priority feature of the designations for these sites.

Deer can cause substantial deterioration in the quality of the blanket bog habitat, and other designated features, through trampling, especially in wet areas where stags like to wallow, and through damage to heather by grazing. As noted in the EIAR (Infinergy, 2016), the population density within the site (~9 deer/km²) is greater that in the surrounding Sandside and Shurrery estates (~4-6 deer/km²).

If deer movement became unrestricted, the greater population density and increased disturbance from works associated with the proposed development would likely cause a net movement of deer from the site to the surrounding estates; thus putting additional pressure on the interest features of the designated sites.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the DFMP is to:

Ensure that the conservation objectives of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Ramsar, and East Halladale SSSI are not compromised by the encroachment of deer from the site during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of Limekiln windfarm.

The following objectives are proposed to achieve these aims:

Continuation of the current controls on deer movements between the site and surrounding land, including regular monitoring and maintenance of the deer fence surrounding the estate.

4 MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The following monitoring and management measures are proposed to meet the objectives of the DFMP.

4.1 MONITORING

A twice-yearly visual inspection of the deer fence that surrounds the site will be carried out for the duration of the wind farm construction, operation, and decommissioning (as specified in paragraph 11.10.12 of the EIAR; Infinergy, 2016).

The entire perimeter of the fence will be walked by a surveyor, who will record any damage to the fence, to be scheduled for immediate repair. Where any damage to the fence is noted, the following information will be recorded:

- ✓ Observation identification reference.
- ✓ Grid reference, in British National Grid.
- ✓ Date and time.
- ✓ Description of fault.
- Category (Red = damage to extent that fence not stock proof immediate repair. Orange = fence damaged but still stock proof - repair within 6 months. Green = early signs of damage, still stock proof – monitor.)
- ✓ Photograph of damage.

Monitoring of the deer fence will be the responsibility of the wind farm owner or contracted operator.

4.2 MANAGEMENT

Where the monitoring measures outlined in section 4.1 identify damage to the deer fence, repairs will be scheduled immediately.

Where damage is only minor and can be repaired with basic lightweight hand tools that can be carried at the time of survey (such as pliers to reconnect a snapped wire) this will be carried out at the time of recording.

Where damage is more substantial, a fencing contractor will be employed to repair the fence to an appropriate standard so as to meet the red deer fencing specifications (Trout and Pepper, 2006).

All fence repairs will be the responsibility of the wind farm owner or contracted operator.

REFERENCES

AMEC Environment & Infrastructure UK Limited (2013), Limekiln Wind Farm – Technical Note: Deer Management

Infinergy (2016), Limekiln Wind Farm Resubmission Environmental Statement: Chapter 11 – Ecology.

Trout and Pepper (2006), Forestry Commission Technical Guide on Forest Fencing

FIGURES

Figure 1 – Deer Fence Location



LIMEKILN WIND FARM

Legend Site Infrastructure





Figure 1 - Deer Fence Location



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