

TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTE

The purpose of this Technical Advice Note is to provide The Highland Council Ecology Team further clarification on the ornithological enhancement measures proposed for the Limekiln Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and to allow the current holding objection to be withdrawn.

The Ecology Team's comments were conveyed in a Consolation Response document (dated 9 December 2025) in response to the planning application (Reference: 25/02861/S36).

Below we provide the Ecology Team's comments, in underlined italics, and our response to each.

Planting a hedgerow around the BESS compound is unsuitable in this location as such fruit-bearing species are unlikely to survive on the site and if they do, they will have a detrimental effect on surrounding peatland through drying out.

The proposed hedgerow species includes blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and dog rose (*Rosa canina*). These were chosen as they are locally abundant and appear to thrive in the immediate environment. These species are hardy and can yield large quantities of berries from late summer to late autumn. This is an important resource both for migrant flocks of winter thrushes and resident berry feeding species. Furthermore, the flowers and blossoms of these species are a useful resource for resident finches and tits in the spring. These blossoms are an important resource for numerous pollinating invertebrates, the larvae and adults of which are in turn an excellent prey resource for breeding warblers throughout the summer which include, but is not limited to, species of conservation concern such as grasshopper warbler (*Locustella naevia*).

Given that the proposed BESS is sited in an expansive plantation of non-native Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), effects on the local substrate, especially with regard the drying out of peat, are likely to be minimal. The substrate in and around the proposed BESS is already highly modified by the presence of the mature forestry plantation. The addition of a small area of native berry producing trees and shrubs is very unlikely to have detrimental effects on the substrate at any meaningful scale.

Native hedgerow planting will provide foraging, nesting and sheltering opportunities for a variety of species of conservation interest such as linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*) and tree pipit (*Anthus trivialis*) and provide an additional winter food resource for wintering thrushes.

the siting of suggested owl and bat boxes needs careful consideration to avoid attracting species to the windfarm area, particularly given the mortality of bats and Crossbills recorded at three turbines on this site.

The siting of nest boxes will be carefully considered in respect to impacts from the current and proposed development. In the case of **barn owl** (*Tyto alba*), the specific site for the barn owl box will take into account; a reasonable safe distance from any development, the availability of structures at suitable height and with suitable cover with which to attach a box and the presence and proximity of a suitable area of open ground for hunting by barn owl. There are numerous locations several

hundred meters to the north of the BESS/operational wind farm that satisfy the above considerations which limit possible negative effects, making this the most likely option for the placement of a barn owl box. Given that the risks of providing a nesting and roosting site for barn owl can be mitigated by careful consideration of the placement of the box, there is no reason that this enhancement will result in a negative outcome.

For passerines, nestboxes are not used by **crossbill** (*Loxia spp.*), therefore crossbill are unlikely to be directly affected by the addition of nest boxes in their environment. It is probable that there will be an associated increase in the abundance of cavity nesting species in response to the placement of nestboxes in the local environment. However, this is unlikely to impact crossbill as this species is highly specialised and has evolved to inhabit forests where other cavity nesting species are present.

As with barn owl, the position and placement of nest boxes for passerines will be carefully considered. No nestboxes will be placed within the windfarm area and will instead be placed on the periphery of the development in areas of suitable woodland. Commercial conifers provide very little, if any, suitable nest cavities for these species. The intention is to provide 30 – 40 nestboxes for cavity nesting species away from the windfarm area to enhance the species richness and abundance of breeding passerines around the development. With proper consideration given to the placement of nestboxes, the possible negative impacts of their addition to the scheme can be effectively mitigated.

NRP – January 2026.