



**Easter Aberdour  
Ecological Assessment  
June 2017**



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The following assessment was commissioned by CALA Homes (East) Ltd to accompany a planning application at Easter Aberdour for residential housing.

## **2. METHODS**

### **2.1 Information search**

GIS databases were interrogated for any protected sites within the site and a 1 km zone around the periphery of the site which was considered proportionate to the type of works proposed.

The Fife Nature Records Centre were commissioned to undertake a search for non-statutory sites and species of conservation concern in the site and a buffer of 1 km.

### **2.2 Extended Phase 1 survey**

A Phase 1 survey is a standard approach to identify and present habitats<sup>1</sup> and map their spatial extent. Signs for protected species were searched for and an assessment made of the habitats to support protected species.

The fieldwork included:

- an assessment of any structures for bat roosts
- a survey for badger setts within 30 m of the site

Fieldwork was undertaken on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 by [REDACTED].

### **2.3 Breeding Birds**

Two surveys of breeding birds were undertaken, as follows:

Visit 1, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017. 06.30 to 09.00 hr.

Slight breeze (0-5mph); no precipitation; cloud cover 4/8; visibility excellent.

Visit 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2017. 09:30 to 10:30 hr.

Slight breeze (0-5mph); no precipitation; cloud cover 8/8; visibility excellent.

Visit 1 was undertaken by [REDACTED] and visit 2 by [REDACTED]

The site was walked along the boundaries. Registrations of birds were recorded on a satellite image along with behaviour that might suggest breeding status e.g. territorial song.

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<sup>1</sup> JNCC, (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a Technique for Environmental Audit, ISBN 0 86139 636

### 2.2.1 Conditions

Access was good throughout the site and surrounds area with no impediments. Visual access to the railway embankment and sidings was very poor due to a stone wall, however badger setts were ruled out as any habitual routes into the site over the wall would have been very obvious.

### 3. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

A number of species and habitats have now become so rare or vulnerable that they are afforded protection through international/European and national law, Table 1. Other species are considered to contribute to our ‘quality of life’. Although these latter species do not benefit from legal protection, they can be key considerations in the planning process.

Activities affecting protected species must usually be undertaken under licence obtained from the appropriate body, which in Scotland is SNH.

Proposed development must be able to show that all reasonable measures have been taken to ensure that protected species are not subject to direct impacts or disturbance. Under certain circumstances, licenses can be issued to facilitate development that may affect EPS, Schedule 5 species (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) and badgers.

**Table 1** Relevant Legislation for the Protection of Habitats and Species

Form of Protection	Description
<b>The Habitats Directive - Conservation (Natural Habitats &amp;c) Regulations 1994</b>	Annex II of the Directive lists the <b>European protected species (EPS)</b> that are afforded special protection under this Directive. Otters, <b>great crested newt</b> and <b>all species of bat</b> are examples of EPS. The provisions of the Habitats Directive were transposed into Scottish law by the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994. Schedule 2 of the Regulations lists the European protected species of animals whilst Schedule 4 lists the European protected species of plants. This has been amended by the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2007.
<b>The Birds Directive</b>	Bird species listed in Annex I of the Directive regularly occur in Britain but are protected under EEC law. Member countries are required to classify as SPAs the most suitable sites for these species and also for all regularly occurring migratory species.
<b>Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended</b>	Bird species listed in <b>Schedule 1</b> , examples include barn owl. Animal species are listed in Schedule 5 and plant species listed in Schedule 8 of the WCA 1981, as amended, are protected. <b>All species of bird are protected when nesting.</b> Invasive plant species are no longer listed under

	<p>Schedule 9 and are now covered under the WANE Act 2011.</p> <p>Common lizard, slow worm and adder are protected against intentional or reckless killing and injuring</p>
<b>The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004</b>	This act places a duty on every public body to further the conservation of biodiversity consistent with the proper exercise of its functions.
<b>Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011</b>	The Act regulates invasive non-native species; changes the licensing system for protected species; strengthens protection of <b>badgers</b> ; and makes operational changes to the management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
<b>Protection of Badgers Act 1992, as amended*</b>	<b>Badgers and their setts</b> are protected. (* by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004)

## **4. STATUTORY SITES**

### **4.1 Protected sites**

The Firth of Forth protected area lies approximately to the south of the site, see Figure 1. This is designated at an international level as an SPA and RAMSAR and at a national level as a SSSI.

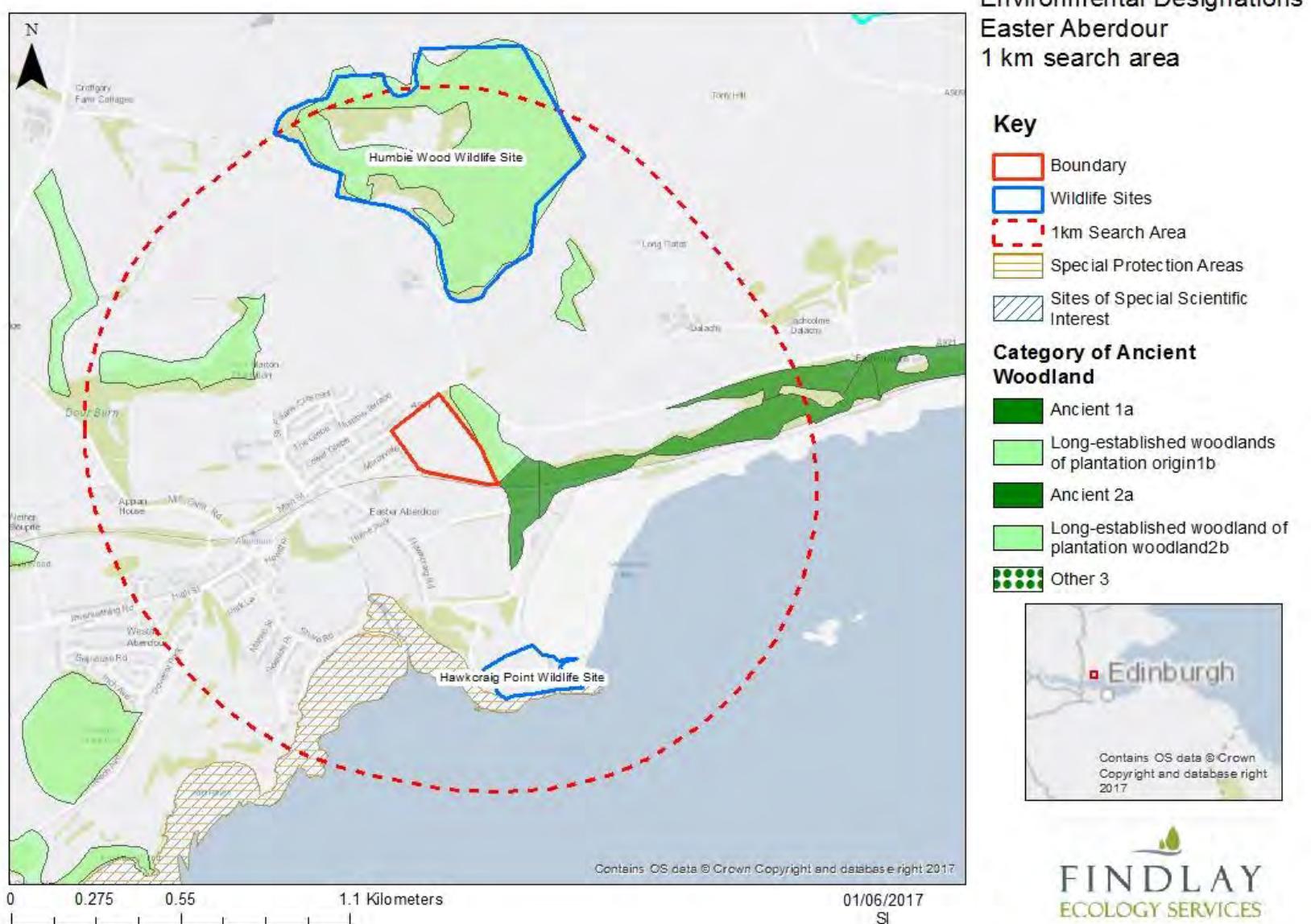
### **4.2 Wildlife Sites**

Two wildlife sites are present within 1 km of the site, Humbie Wood to the north and Hawkraig Wood to the south of the site.

### **4.3 Ancient Woodland**

Long established woodlands of plantation origin lies adjacent to the site in the east. Ancient woodland lies adjacent to the site in the south east corner.

Figure 1: Statutory and non-statutory sites within 1 km



## 5. FIELD SURVEY RESULTS

### 5.1 Habitats

See figure 2, species recorded in Appendix 1.

The dominant habitat within the site was cultivated arable land, currently under cereal. A stone wall bounded the site in the north which supported interesting flora such as stone crop species, wall rue and the locally uncommon pellitory-of-the-wall, see target note 3.

The woodland adjacent to the site was dominated by secondary growth of sycamore with occasional older, larger trees of lime, oak and wych elm. The trees and the ground were covered in a dense mat of ivy. Despite this, a good range of woodland flora was found, see target note 1.

#### 5.1.1 Target Notes

##### 1. NT19706 85848

Woodland adjacent to site. Young canopy of sycamore with much older, larger individuals of sycamore, oak and lime. A good range of woodland species, but cover very restricted due to overwhelming dominance of ivy. Species recorded: wood dock, three-veined sandwort, wood false-brome, hairy brome, herb Robert, male fern and gooseberry.

Photo 1. Adjacent woodland dominated by carpet of ivy and the non-native leopard's bane (yellow flowers)



##### 2. NT 19856 85605

Small area of woodland, photo 2 with a canopy of mature beech and sycamore with a little bracken. Ivy was not so prevalent here, much of area had thick beech litter. Lady fern, broad buckler fern, common dog violet recorded.

Photo 2. Woodland within boundary dominated by mature beech trees



### 3. NT 19603 85820

Wall alongside road. Has some botanical interest with the fern wall rue and also the locally uncommon pellitory-of-the-wall which grows with abundance. The fine grasses on the wall top were also potentially of interest but were not examined.

#### 5.1.2 *Invasive species*

Non-native species were present in the adjacent woodland. These were spatially restricted and included leopard's bane and hybrid bluebell.

Figure 2: Phase 1 Habitats



Phase 1 Habitat Survey  
Easter Aberdour  
May 2017

Key

- Target Notes
- 
- Boundary
- Broadleaf plantation
- Arable



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## 5.2 Protected species

No protected species were found within the site boundary or adjacent land and there was no evidence of any mammal species using the site.

The 30 m of woodland searched to the east did not contain any badger setts, latrines or foraging signs. There was evidence of lightly-used mammal paths (along with human paths) in the northern third of the woodland and a single badger hair was found on one of these paths, however there was no evidence of habitual badger activity.

Bat roost potential was present in the mature trees in the adjacent woodland.

## 5.3 Breeding birds

See Appendix 2 for bird registration maps.

Visit 1: No breeding birds or any bird species were observed using the arable crop within the site, a few individuals were observed flying over it (Appendix 1). This absence is normal for an intensive, unripe cereal crop with few ruderal plant species present.

Some birds were associated with the sites periphery. In these cases the site is relevant with respect to the space it provides to constitute the woodland edge. These were ‘possibly breeding’ in the woodland buffer due to territorial singing: chaffinch, song thrush and wren.

In the south-east area of woodland three species were registered: wren, woodpigeon and great tit. The great tit and wren were undertaking territorial singing. Based on the British Trust for Ornithology’s breeding status codes, they should be categorised as ‘possibly breeding’.

Visit 2: No birds were observed in association with the arable crop, with just the occasional magpie flying over. The woodland supported similar species to that found in visit one, with singing wren, robin and chaffinch, all ‘possibly breeding’. The housing adjacent to the site in the west supported a noisy colony of house-sparrows.

## **6. PROTECTED SPECIES**

The following discusses both the results of the data search and the results of the extended Phase 1 field survey.

### **6.1 Bats**

The records search had a single roost record of 100 bats in a house adjacent to the site in the north west of the site. Mature trees were present in the woodland adjacent to the site which suggested potential for bat roosts.

### **6.2 Badgers**

The records search returned one badger sett record but this was over 100 m from the boundary. No badger setts were found on the site or within 30 m of connected habitat and there was minimal field evidence of badger.

### **6.3 Red squirrel**

Red squirrel are present in the area. The closest record being approximately 2 km to the SW on the Aberdour golf course (<https://scottishsquirrels.org.uk/squirrel-sightings/squirrel-sighting-map/>). The records search included one record from 1996 of red squirrel in the search area.

### **6.4 Great crested newt**

The records search did not include any records of great crested newt. The nearest recorded breeding population is just over 2 km from the site boundary to the north east at Dunearn Loch (<https://species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0000080156> ).

No suitable habitat was present on the site and no ponds were noted from satellite images or OS maps to 250 m of the site.

### **6.5 Birds**

The records search returned numerous bird records. In the 1 km square NT19, bird records associated with the SPA were recorded on the coast. Other than this, there were records of woodland edge birds as expected, and a colony of house-sparrows were associated with adjacent housing.

## **7. DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 Protected sites**

The proposed site is approximately 700 m from the protected Firth of Forth. The records search did not indicate that the proposed site is used by wintering/passage waterfowl. The site is sided by woodland and housing which doesn't suggest optimum habitat for wintering/passage waterfowl, additionally the site is small in context with the Forth valley landscape. No impacts are therefore predicted on the qualifying interest of the Firth of Forth Natura site.

The wildlife sites are both distant (closest point 380 m) from the proposed site with no ecological connectivity. No impacts are predicted.

The proposed site bounds ancient woodland (long-established woodland) to the east. Ancient woodland lies to the south east. Impacts and mitigation are as follows:

- i) Construction adjacent to the woodland has potential to damage edge trees. A specialist arborist report has been prepared which identifies the root zone and contains a recommended dwelling stand-off distance. The recommendations in the arborists report will mitigate damage from construction to the adjacent ancient woodland.
- ii) There are potential permanent, post-construction impacts on the woodland edge from tipping of garden waste, spread of non-native species such as hybrid bluebell as well as recreational use.

The woodland is currently very modified having a non-native canopy; it is also excessively clothed with ivy leaving little scope for a more extensive woodland ground flora to develop.

Mitigation is therefore advised to design the housing/woodland interface to avoid tipping of garden waste and other debris into the woodland. Potential options include houses facing the woodland, avoiding back gardens bounding the woodland edge, having a mown/managed strip between the housing and woodland.

## **7.2 Habitats**

The arable habitat was not associated with any features of note such as intact hedges or mature boundary trees. The traditional stone wall bounding the north of the site had some botanical interest and as much as possible should be retained; the wall-flora should not be removed.

## **7.3 Protected species**

There were no records of protected species associated with the site and no evidence of protected species were found.

There was potential for bat roosts in the mature trees in the adjacent woodland. These trees should be surveyed for bat roosts if they are to be felled or have any sort of tree works such as limbing or crown reduction.

A pre-construction check for badger setts would be prudent.

All species of bird are protected while nesting so site clearance work should be undertaken out with the bird breeding season (March – July inclusive). If this cannot be achieved, then checks for nesting birds should be undertaken immediately prior to clearance and any active nests should be protected with a buffer area. This latter approach may lead to delays in progress of the development.

## APPENDIX 1. Species recorded.

<i>Latin</i>	English
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False-oat grass
<i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i>	Wall rue
<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>	Lady fern
<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>	Wood false-brome
<i>Bromus sterilis</i>	Sterile brome
<i>Chaerophyllum temulum</i>	Rough chervil
<i>Circaea lutetiana</i>	Enchanter's nightshade
<i>Claytonia sibirica</i>	Pink purslane
<i>Doriconum sp.</i>	Leopard's bane
<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>	Broad buckler fern
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male fern
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb robert
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
<i>Hyacinthoides hybrid</i>	Hybrid bluebell
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Dog's mercury
<i>Moehringia trinerva</i>	Three-veined sandwort
<i>Papaver sp.</i>	Poppy species
<i>Parretaria judaica</i>	Pellitory-of-the-wall
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Smooth meadow-grass
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough meadow-grass
<i>Quercus sp.</i>	Oak
<i>Ribes uva-ursae</i>	Gooseberry
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Wood dock
<i>Sedum sp.</i>	Stonecrop species
<i>Stachys arvensis</i>	Field woundwort
<i>Stachys palustris</i>	Marsh woundwort
<i>Tilia sp.</i>	Lime
<i>Ulmus glabra</i>	Wych elm
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Common dog's violet

APPENDIX 2. Bird registration maps



Breeding Bird Survey  
Visit 1  
Easter Aberdour  
May 2017

Key

- ★ Territorial Song
- Present
- Flying
- Calling
- Boundary



  
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Breeding Bird Survey  
Visit 2  
Easter Aberdour  
June 2017

Key

- ★ Territorial Song
- Flying
- Calling
- Boundary



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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 22 March 2019 14:55  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: PPA-250-2312 - Land to the south of Main Street, Aberdour - Missing document request  
**Attachments:** 1701519SCR AGREED.pdf

Dear [REDACTED]

I appreciate that this request has been made to Fife Council, however given the urgency of the situation I trust it is appropriate for me to send you a copy of the requested EIA Screening Opinion (attached).

Kind regards

[REDACTED]  
Director

### **HolderPlanning**

Tel. [REDACTED]  
Direct. [REDACTED]  
Mobile. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

5 South Charlotte Street  
Edinburgh  
EH2 4AN

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 22 March 2019 14:47  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** PPA-250-2312 - Land to the south of Main Street, Aberdour - Missing document request

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to previous correspondence in respect of the above case. On reviewing the case the reporter has noted he does not appear to have received a copy of the EIA screening opinion referred to at paragraph 1.4.3 of the council committee report of 4 July 2018.

The reporter would be obliged if a copy of the EIA screening opinion could be forwarded as a matter of urgency. You may be aware that the case officer, [REDACTED] is currently on leave until Tuesday 26 March, and in this light I would be grateful if you could forward this directly to me, as soon as possible, in her absence.

I have copied this email to the appellant's agent for their information.

Kind regards



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Tha am post-d seo (agus faidhle neo ceanglan còmhla ris) dhan neach neo luchd-ainmichte a-mhàin. Chan eil e ceadaichte a chleachdadh ann an dòigh sam bith, a' toirt a-steach càraichean, foillseachadh neo sgaoileadh, gun chead. Ma 's e is gun d'fhuair sibh seo gun fhiosd', bu choir cur às dhan phost-d agus lethbhreac sam bith air an t-siostam agaibh agus fios a leigeil chun neach a sgaoil am post-d gun dàil.

Dh'fhaodadh gum bi teachdaireachd sam bith bho Riaghaltas na h-Alba air a chlàradh neo air a sgrùdadhbh airson dearbhadh gu bheil an siostam ag obair gu h-èifeachdach neo airson adhbhar laghail eile. Dh'fhaodadh nach eil beachdan anns a' phost-d seo co-ionann ri beachdan Riaghaltas na h-Alba.

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