

## DRAFT 2

### [Protection of Ramsar sites]

#### [Coul Links – implementation of Scottish Government policy on protecting Ramsar sites]

1. This note [clarifies] [provides guidance on] how the Scottish Government expects its policy on the protection of Ramsar sites to be implemented.
2. Ramsar sites are wetlands designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as waterfowl habitat.
3. The Scottish Government’s policy on how nationally important land use planning matters should be addressed across the country is Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) published in 2014.
4. The policy on the protection of Ramsar sites (and other nationally or internationally important sites) is set out in SPP, in particular paragraphs 203, 204, 211 and 212.
5. This protection is achieved through co-designation of Ramsar sites with Natura sites and/or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): ‘All Ramsar sites are also Natura 2000 sites and/or Sites of Special Scientific Interest and are protected under the relevant statutory regimes’ (SPP, paragraph 211).
6. The policy on protecting Natura sites – sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) – and on the protection of SSSIs (and other national designations) are in SPP paragraphs 207-210 and paragraph 212.
7. Paragraphs 202-206 of SPP set out policy on the approach to development management, including considerations to be given to the protection of nationally or internationally significant landscape or natural heritage resources.
8. Where Ramsar interests [coincide with] [are the same or are closely aligned with] Natura qualifying interests [protected under an SPA or an SAC], the interests are given the same level of (legal) protection as Natura sites.
9. Where Ramsar interests are not the same as Natura qualifying interests [but instead match SSSI features], these are to receive protection under the SSSI regime.
10. [The nature and scope of the assessment of the impacts on Ramsar interests is an assessment which is sufficient to provide an appropriate understanding of the impacts to inform a decision.]
11. [The nature and scope of the assessment in relation to Coul Links is currently a matter for consideration as part of the process before the Reporters.]

**Commented [CK(1):** Alternative titles – need to decide if, at this juncture, this guidance is general or specific to Coul Links.

**Commented [CK(2):** drawing ‘interests’ and the language here and in the next two paragraphs from the SNH guidance