PROTECTED MAMMAL SURVEY REPORT

8-2

atmos CONSULTING

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Baseline Report

Strathy Wood Wind Farm
ES Technical Appendix 8.2

Protected Mammal Survey

E.ON

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Terms of Reference

Atmos Consulting Ltd was commissioned by E.ON Climate and Renewables (E.ON) to undertake a number of protected species surveys, identified as necessary following consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and also based on an initial extended Phase I habitat survey, at a proposed wind farm development at Strathy Wood, near Strathy, Sutherland.

This report presents the findings of the protected species survey completed in relation to the proposed application site, termed the 'Site', based on a 'Mammal Survey Area' which includes a buffer of 500m to all proposed infrastructure (Figure 8-6).

The site includes a section of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands which is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar wetland of international importance. This section of the SAC is also designated as the West Halladale Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This report seeks to document the likely presence on/absence from the Site of the following species, all of which are protected by legislation, based on the outcome of a desktop study and specialist surveys:

- Otter *Lutra lutra*
- Wildcat *Felis sylvestris*
- European water vole *Arvicola terrestris*
- Pine marten *Martes martes*
- Eurasian badger *Meles meles*

It outlines the habitat suitability for the species surveyed for, and the results of baseline surveys completed at the Site.

This report details the following:

- legislative context;
- field survey methodology;
- field survey results; and
- conclusions.

Other protected mammal species found within Scotland such as the red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* were assessed to be absent from the Survey Area as the location is outside of the species known range.

1.3 Site Description

The proposed Site for the Strathy Wood wind energy development is located within an area which was previously dominated by commercial forestry (NGR NC819557). The forestry presently supports a range of transition habitats including substantial areas of broadleaved replanting, brash, felled coniferous areas and some remaining areas of mature plantation woodland with significant wind throw (9% of Phase 1 Survey Area). To

the north the survey area is bordered by the Strathy North woodland which is the site of the consented Strathy North Wind Farm with a generation capacity of up to 75.9MW.

The design of the Strathy Wood Wind Farm maximises the turbine number (22) on undesignated land, with an additional four proposed turbines located within the area covered by the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC/SPA/Ramsar and West Halladale SSSI. The European designations indicate an area of international nature conservation significance. These four turbines and associated infrastructure are located within a narrow corridor of primarily non-qualifying habitat associated with the existing track through the designated sites.

Ancillary developments will also include a permanent meteorological (met) mast, onsite extraction (from outwith the designated sites) of mineral aggregate as necessary, an underground electricity cable network, crane hard standings adjacent to each turbine, temporary site office and construction compound and a site control building.

2 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

2.1 Otter

The otter is a European Protected Species (EPS) and is protected by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended in Scotland, which transpose into Scottish law the European Community's Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). This means that it is an offence to:

- deliberately or recklessly capture, injure or kill, harass, damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a EPS or group of EPS;
- disturb a EPS while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection;
- disturb a EPS while it is rearing or otherwise caring for its young;
- obstruct access by a EPS to a breeding or resting place;
- disturb a EPS in a manner that is, or circumstances which are, likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of that particular species; and
- disturb a EPS in a manner that is, or in circumstances which are likely to impair its ability to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or otherwise care for its young.

In addition to the above, otter is listed in the Scottish Biodiversity List, the UK Biological Action Plan (BAP) identified on the Sutherland local BAP (LBAP).

2.2 Wildcat

Wildcat is also an EPS and is protected under the same legislation as the otter. As part of the UK's responsibility to address the requirements of the Habitats Directive, the Wildcat has also been listed in the SNH Species Action Framework for conservation effort to improve its habitat and reduce threats of cross-breeding with feral domestic cats. Wildcat is listed in the Scottish Biodiversity List, UK BAP and Sutherland LBAP.

2.3 Water Vole

European water vole is afforded partial protection in Scotland under section 9(4) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Section 9(4) makes it an offence "intentionally or recklessly" to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that they use for shelter or protection, or to disturb water voles while using such a place. The animals themselves are not otherwise protected in Scotland.

In addition to the above, water voles are also listed in the Scottish Biodiversity List, the UK BAP and the Sutherland BAP.

2.4 Pine Marten

Pine marten is afforded protection in Scotland under section 9(4) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Section 9(4) makes it an offence "intentionally or recklessly" to:

- kill, injure or take a wild pine marten;
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place which such an animal uses for shelter or protection (a nest or den[1]);
- disturb such an animal when it is occupying a structure or place for that purpose[1];
- possess or control, sell, offer for sale or possess or transport for the purpose of sale any live or dead wild pine marten or any derivative of such an animal.

In addition to the above, pine marten are also listed in the UK BAP.

2.5 Badger

Eurasian badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, as amended, and by Section 11 (Schedule 6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended in Scotland). It is illegal to kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger or attempt to do so. Badger setts are protected from interference and it is an offence to obstruct access to, or any entrance of, a badger sett. In addition it is illegal to disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett.

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 was amended by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 to make it illegal to knowingly cause or permit an act which would interfere with a badger sett, and included recklessly killing, injuring or taking a badger.

In addition to the above, the badger is listed in the Scottish Biodiversity List.

[1] unless this happens in a dwelling-house. *i.e.* if a pine marten builds a den in a house.

3 CONSULTATION & REVIEW OF EXISTING INFORMATION

3.1 Consultations

A desk-based study was undertaken to determine the presence of protected mammals within or in close proximity to the Site. The following organisations and sources were used:

- Highland Biological Recording Network (HBRN);
- National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway;
- National survey of otter Lutra lutra distribution in Scotland 2003–04 (Strachan 2007);
- Strathy North Environmental Statement and Supplementary Information; and
- Strathy South Environmental Statement.

3.2 Existing Records

A number of species records were provided by the HBRN. Unless otherwise stated only those which were recorded within 2 km of the survey area and recorded in the last 10 years are detailed in this report.

No records for protected mammal species were provided from HBRN for within the Site.

The NBN Gateway website (http://data.nbn.org.uk) held records for a number of the protected mammal species from the area. Otter records are present across the area with a number of records in close proximity or within the Strathy Wood Site boundary. Wildcat records were very scant within this part of Sutherland with the closest record in Melvich approximately 10km to the north east from 2010 with all other records in excess of 25km from the Site. In addition knowledge on the 'wildness' of the cats throughout this region are not known, although any cats present in isolated locations may support a good quality phenotype (Balharry & Daniels, 1998; Daniels *et. al.* 1998; Davis & Gray, 2010; Kitchener *et. al.* 2005). No records for water vole within the Site were present on the database with all records in excess of 10km away. Pine marten records were also absent from the database with the nearest records from the Naver catchment 10km south west, although pine marten are likely to be present across the area in sections of significant woodland plantation (Balharry *et. al.* 1996). Badger records were also absent from the Strathy Wood Site with the closest records again within the Naver catchment approximately 8km to the west.

A national survey of otter distribution in Scotland was commissioned by SNH and undertaken during 2003 and 2004 (Strachan 2007). This survey included the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC which is designated in part for its otter populations. Within the SAC 94 survey sites were visited with a mean spraint count per site of 5.52 (SD = 8.04). The area was found to support evidence of otter breeding and the mean number of resting sites was identified to be 0.34 per survey site (SD = 0.82). Prey availability within the SAC was also assessed with the major prey species included salmonids, eels, sticklebacks, frogs and dragonfly larvae along with marine fish and crustaceans at some sites. Overall the SAC was assessed to be 'favourable' in terms of otter and risks were limited to road mortalities. No mink were identified during the surveys. Locations where negative results for otter signs were returned was largely

thought to be due to poor survey conditions (following heavy rain). Although the SAC does not support any coastline, evidence of otters feeding within the marine environment and subsequently commuting inland was identified, with marine feeding remains identified up to 10km inland.

The network of watercourses between the peatland lochs and pools was identified to support a number of active holts in the steep sides of the peat. At undisturbed lochs the survey located a number of otter couches, including some associated with substantial piles of spraint, suggesting a long history of use. The presence of cub tracks was observed at a number of sites, confirming breeding had taken place. The watercourses of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands are oligotrophic by nature, and the productivity is correspondingly low and the fish fauna is restricted to migratory salmonids, brown trout, eels and sticklebacks.

A number of SNH publications exist in relation to the distribution of wildcat within Scotland. Easterbee *et. al.* (1991) identified that the distribution of wildcats extended north to the coast and would have likely included the Strathy Wood Site. Davis & Gray (2010) identified from questionnaires, road casualties and existing records, that the distribution has probably contracted although 20 records (five of which were positively identified) were from the NC 10km grid square which encompasses the Strathy Wood Site.

Strathy North and Strathy South Wind Energy Proposals

During surveys undertaken in 2005 within the proposed Strathy North Wind Farm development immediately to the north of Strathy Wood, signs of otter, water vole and pine marten were all confirmed. Otter signs were frequent throughout watercourses with two shelter (holt or couch) identified. Pine marten signs were less common and restricted to the interior of the forest blocks. Water vole surveys identified two colonies, one within the catchments of Loch nam Braec Mor and Loch nam Braec Beag in the north of the area (2km northof the Strathy Wood turbine envelope and 1.5km north west of the northern limit of the Site at Dallangwell) and one located outwith the Strathy North site boundary within the SAC to the south west within the Alt Dhonuill Ghuinne catchment (1km west from the Strathy Wood Site).

Mammal surveys were also undertaken during 2005 across the site of the proposed Strathy South Wind Farm development. Within this area signs of otter, pine marten and water vole were identified. Otter signs were widespread although were concentrated on the banks of the Loch nan Clach and Allt nan Clach to the north west of the Strathy South study area (3.8km south west of the Strathy Wood Site) with field signs also recorded along Allt Badain, and River Strathy (within 0.5km south west of the Strathy Wood Wind Farm Site). In addition a confirmed holt was identified at NC 82880 51464 (0.5km west of the Strathy Wood Wind Farm Site) and an otter observed at Loch a' Bhroillich to the north east of the Strathy South site. A total of four pine marten scats were identified within the Strathy South site, mainly concentrated along track-side paths at points adjacent to the River Strathy. Signs of water vole were regularly found within the Strathy South site with field signs concentrated on the banks of Loch nan Clach and Allt nan Clach to the north west of the Strathy South study area. Water vole field signs were also recorded along River Strathy, and within Yellow Bog Burn and Allt Badain.

No signs of badger or wildcat were identified within the surveys undertaken for the Strathy North or South Wind Farm applications.

Strathy Wood Surveys 2009-2010

A number of protected mammal surveys were also undertaken by a local ecologist (Dr. Matteo De Luca) on behalf of the landowner during 2009 and 2010, which provide useful background information to the surveys undertaken on behalf of E.ON. These surveys consisted of a combination of desk study and field surveys concentrating on otter, water vole, pine marten, wildcat and badger.

The otter surveys undertaken during 2009 (de Luca 2009a) identified two holts which appeared to not be used at the time of the survey and 23 locations supporting spraints, one supporting footprints and two with evidence of anal jelly. The River Strathy and Uair both supported several signs, whereas the lochs (Loch na Main, Loch a' Bhroillich and Loch nan Caorach) located within the SAC supported no evidence of use by otters. Additional communications from the land owner and the surveyor identified use of the River Strathy by otters with two cubs observed on one occasion between 1995 and 1997. In conclusion the report identified that the frequency of otter signs was consistent with those reported from within the Caithness and Sutherland SAC.

Wildcat surveys were undertaken in July 2010 (De Luca, 2010b) with a walkover of the majority of the Site conducted searching for dens, scat, foot prints and scrapes. In addition an unknown number of people working on or living near the Site were asked for any information pertaining to wildcat sightings in the area. Field surveys did not identify any signs of wildcat using the Site and interviews also provided no records of the species in the area.

Water vole surveys undertaken in 2009 (De Luca 2009b)) identified a small colony on the River Strathy to the south west of the Strathy Wood Site along with a second small colony on the Uair close to the confluence with the River Strathy.

Pine marten surveys undertaken in 2010 (De Luca 2010c) identified a total of three pine marten scats. In addition the landowner confirmed that between 1994 and 1998 pine marten breed within the roof space of the garage at Braerathy Lodge, located within the centre of the Strathy Wood Site.

A survey for signs of badgers (setts, latrines, foraging) was undertaken during 2010 (De Luca 2010a) across the Strathy Wood Site. No evidence of badgers were identified and combined with lack of sightings in the area it was concluded that the species was absent from the Site.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Otter

During the protected mammal surveys in July and August 2011 a survey for all otter signs within the survey area was undertaken. All relevant areas within the Site could be surveyed, with watercourses and ditches examined from both banks or within the channel where possible.

The whole of the Site and surrounding area was surveyed in accordance with the approach outlined in the Scottish Natural Heritage "Otters and Development" guidance document (SNH, 2010). During the walkover survey, a thorough check for otter resting places i.e. holts (dens) or couches (above ground resting places) was undertaken by an ecologist experienced in otter survey.

Otter surveys usually rely on the interpretation of field signs rather than direct observation of the animals themselves, although in rare instances direct observation of otter has been possible; particularly in remote locations. The following field signs were sought, with those which can be regarded as definitive, i.e. they provide certain confirmation of the presence of this species, marked with an asterisk. Field signs sought included:

- otter spraint (faeces)*;
- otter holt (den);
- footprint*;
- couch (resting place above ground); and
- pathways and slides into water.

Evidence of otter sign/activity recorded during the survey was geo-referenced using a handheld GPS, with the feature of interest target noted and photographed.

4.2 Wildcat

A walk-over survey of the survey area was undertaken to determine the presence of features which wildcat might use as dens and to identify any physical evidence that these sites are being used. Wildcat occupy dens in hollow trees, rock crevices, rabbit burrows, disused badger setts, under fallen debris or in old fox earths. Sites such as these were checked for signs of use including scats, claw marks and paw prints. All signs or suitable den sites were noted and marked using GPS with the feature of interest target noted and photographed.

4.3 Water Vole

During the protected mammal surveys in July and August 2011 a survey for all water vole signs within the survey area was undertaken. All relevant areas within the survey area could be surveyed with watercourses and ditches examined from both bank or within the channel where possible.

The survey work was undertaken based on a presence/absence approach adapted from the "Water vole conservation handbook" (Strachan and Moorhouse, 2006) with

additional reference to recent publications (e.g. Ryland and Kemp, 2009). Active searches were conducted for water vole sign, including:

- droppings;
- burrows;
- latrines;
- feeding stations;
- lawns;
- footprints and pathways.

Evidence of water vole sign/activity recorded during the survey was geo-referenced using a handheld GPS with the feature of interest, target noted and photographed.

4.4 Pine Marten

A walkover survey for pine marten was also undertaken with the survey area. All suitable habitat was surveyed for signs of pine marten including scats, footprints and den sites, with any signs geo-referenced using a handheld GPS with the feature of interest target noted and photographed. Identifying evidence of pine marten is often very difficult and even where signs are absent the presence of pine marten cannot be ruled out. It is worth noting that identifying pine marten scats is difficult (Davison et al. 2002) so a combination of field signs and habitat information was used in conjunction with visual scat identification to assess the distribution of pine martens with the survey area.

4.5 Badger

Although through consultations the likelihood of badgers being present within the survey area is thought to be low, in conjunction with other protected mammal surveys signs of badgers were also searched for across the survey area. The survey comprised a search for setts and other signs of badger activity, e.g. latrines, dung pits, pathways and foraging signs.

4.6 Limitations

Some areas of the plantation woodland had been subject to extensive wind throw making movement through the woodland difficult and some areas were avoided on health and safety grounds due to a high degree of hanging dead wood.

All other areas of the Site (including access routes) including a 250m buffer were accessible.

There were no other limitations to the mammal surveys with all surveys being undertaken at an appropriate time of year. Prior to surveys some rainfall had occurred and although the river level was slightly raised it was assessed that the degree of impact this had on surveys was not significant.

5 SURVEY RESULTS

5.1 Otter

The otter surveys during July and August 2011 revealed extensive signs of use by the species.

The main feature of the Survey Area with respect to suitable habitat for otters is the Strathy River valley and a tributary, the Uair. The Strathy is a moderately sized watercourse which drains a significant portion of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC to the south. Within the Survey Area the River Strathy is fast flowing with numerous riffles and small rapids located along its course with only the more upstream sections supporting areas of calm slower flowing water. In general the Strathy is approximately 10m in width with a highly variable depth.

The Uair watercourse is significantly smaller and also drains a section of the Caithness and Sutherlands Peatlands SAC. The channel is again fast flowing with numerous small rapids and riffles. This river also supports a number of areas with sections of large woody debris from previous forestry operations along the banks.

Both rivers are known to support populations of Atlantic salmon, brown trout, eel and lamprey along with invertebrate species.

In addition to these rivers, a number of other unnamed watercourses are present within the Survey Area, along with a number of lochs.

The surveys identified 33 single spraints and two regular sprainting sites (middens), predominantly in close proximity to the watercourses. In addition five holts and a single couch were identified, along with six locations where otter footprints were present in mud or sand. Location details of these signs are presented in Figure 8-6.

These locations of holts did not correspond to those identified in 2009, although the holts identified in 2009 were assessed to be disused and were in the banks of the River Strathy within relatively soft substrate. No sign of these structures were apparent during the 2011 surveys and it was assumed that these structures have deteriorated over time. The 2009 surveys identified the majority of signs along the River Strathy, with additional signs on the Uair. This distribution of signs was similar to those identified during 2011, although number of signs was greater and more widely distributed during the 2011 surveys.

Of the five holts identified in 2011, none appeared to be used regularly and two appeared to have no use within the past twelve months or so (located at 282490 959546, 282580 957693). A single holt was located in close proximity to the holt identified during the 2009 surveys.

Although only a single couch was identified during the survey it is possible that areas of brash located within close proximity of either the main rivers (Strathy and Uair) or minor watercourses may also offer suitable resting places. It was not possible to inspect all areas within dense brash. The couch that was identified did not show signs of recent or regular activity but provided a small sheltered area beneath brash adjacent to the Uair tributary which showed signs of large mammals flattening the vegetation. This was attributed to otter based on the location of the sign and low likelihood of use by deer.

5.2 Wildcat

The Survey Area supports a variety of habitats including watercourses, coniferous plantations, broadleaved plantations and a variety of more open habitats. Although these habitats offer some degree of suitability for wildcats to hunt and den within, these were not assessed as being of optimal quality. In addition on a larger landscape level these blocks of forestry associated with the River Strathy are isolated within a very open upland landscape, which is generally not favoured by the wildcat.

Surveys across the area did not identify any signs of wildcats or feral cats being present. A number of sections of the Survey Area may provide some opportunities for denning, especially within the areas of forestry that have high wind throw but no evidence to suggest this is the case was identified.

5.3 Water Vole

The majority of the River Strathy and Uair are unsuitable to support water vole populations due to the fast flowing nature of the watercourse. However, the Site supported a number of smaller burns and drainage ditches with associated riparian vegetation which offer suitable habitat for the species both in terms of burrowing and foraging resources. In addition the upper reaches of the River Strathy and Uair within the adjacent SAC supported slower flowing sections of calm water and suitable bank substrate for water vole colonies to establish (Figure 8-6).

The survey identified only a single location supporting water voles, which was located within the upper reaches of the River Strathy within the south west of the Survey Area. This stretch of river had nine groups of burrows (of up to 10 burrows in each case). Two of these groups of burrows also supported fresh latrine sites.

No signs of water voles were identified along any of the smaller ditches and burns or lochs within the Survey Area, although some of these would provide habitat suitable for dispersal.

5.4 Pine Marten

The Strathy Wood Site was formerly dominated by coniferous plantations but over the last decade or so has undergone significant felling and replanting with broadleaved species, although a number of coniferous plantation areas remain within the Site. Outwith the Survey Area to the north and south west large areas of coniferous woodland remain. This provides extensive suitable habitat for pine martens although it is recognised that within such landscapes denning opportunities can be restricted due to lack of over-mature trees supporting rot holes.

During the survey a total of eight scats consistent with pine martens were identified. These were distributed fairly evenly throughout the Survey Area. In addition the historic den site within the roof space of Braerathy Lodge appeared to still be in use, with an adult seen to enter it during a bat roost emergence survey in August 2011, although use as a breeding den could not be confirmed (Figure 8-6).

Additional records for pine marten were also obtained during bat activity roost and assessment surveys. On bat activity surveys (7th August 2012) a juvenile pine marten was observed to pass along the track (NC 81171 55226) close to the chimney. In addition during bat roost assessment surveys of the internal roof void at Braerathy Lodge a

significant number of scats consistent with pine marten were identified throughout the roof void. This confirmed the historical observations that pine marten utilise the building for shelter.

5.5 Badger

Although badgers are present throughout the majority of Scotland some areas of the Highlands support only sparse populations, this is especially the case in the far north of Caithness and Sutherland. The Survey Area supported sub optimal habitat in general with no areas of farmland or grassland which are likely to support a high density of earthworms or other invertebrates which dominate the diet of badgers within the UK.

A search of the entire Survey Area identified no signs of badger being present with no setts, foraging signs, latrines or footprints identified.

6 SUMMARY

The mixture of habitats present on the Strathy Wood Site and within the surrounding landscape provide suitable habitat for a range of species including otter, pine marten and water vole.

Activity of otter was extensive along the main watercourse with additional signs along sections of the smaller unnamed watercourses within the Survey Area. From the results it is assessed that otter will range across the entire Survey Area on a relatively regular basis with activity from foraging and commuting focussed along the River Strathy and Uair. As otter is one of the qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC it can be stated that even though not included within the designation, the rivers and watercourses within the Site play a role in maintaining the otter population for which the area is designated, and as such contribute to the maintenance of that internationally important population. In addition free and regular movement of otter individuals between the Strathy Wood Site and the SAC will certainly occur.

At a number of locations both within and outwith the Site places of shelter were identified. These included two holt structures which were deemed inactive and three further holts identified as probably being used on an infrequent basis.

As a result any development within the Survey Area will need to ensure that the conservation objectives of the adjacent Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC are maintained with respect to otters which are a qualifying interest of the designation.

No signs of wildcat were identified during the surveys and information available suggests that the chances of wildcat being within the Survey Area are very low. As a consequence it is assessed that at the time of the survey wildcats are absent from the Survey Area. It should be noted that the Survey Area supports some suitable habitat, albeit suboptimal and the possibility of wildcats moving into the area at some point in the future should not be entirely ruled out.

Only a single water vole colony was identified during the 2011 survey within the upper reaches of the River Strathy outiwth the Site to the south west. The water vole colony identified in 2009 at the confluence of the Uair and River Strathy could not identified during these recent surveys. It is likely that the wider area supports a metapoplulation of water voles (Harrison, 1994; Aars *et al*., 2001) which will suffer periodic local extinctions and colonisations due to local changes in hydrology and habitats. The population identified outwith the Site to the south west was present both during the 2009 (De Luca 2009b) surveys for Strathy Wood and also the Strathy South surveys during 2005 which extended to this location.

Pine marten were identified as being present with a small number of scats identified along with the presence of a den confirmed within the roof of the Braerathy Lodge. No other den sites were identified across the Survey Area. These results reflect similar levels of activity to that identified in the 2010 surveys (De Luca 2010c) and also resemble similar activity levels to 2005 surveys within the proposed Strathy North and Strathy South developments. Although the identification of pine marten scats is difficult the observation of an individual using Braerathy Lodge combined with the location of scats suggests that the identification accuracy would be relatively high in this instance.

No signs of badger were identified during the surveys and due to the lack of signs identified within the previous Strathy Wood surveys, and those conducted throughout

the Strathy North and Strathy South survey areas, suggest that badgers are absent from the Strathy Wood Site and probably the wider Strathy catchment.

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