



Code: UKCAL-CWF-CON-EIA-RPT-00007-7E18

Volume 7E Proposed Development (Onshore) Appendices

Appendix 3-7 Wintering Bird Survey Report Annex 2 Stakeholder
Consultation

Caledonia Offshore Wind Farm Ltd
5th Floor Atria One, 144 Morrison Street, Edinburgh, EH3 8EX



Volume 7E Appendix 3-7 Annex 2

Stakeholder Consultation

Code	UKCAL-CWF-CON-EIA-RPT-00007-7E18
Revision	Issued
Date	18 October 2024

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Annex 2 Stakeholder Consultation

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Ocean Winds update and ecological methodology
Date: 27 November 2023 06:55:12

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for the reminder and for providing the wintering bird survey note. The methodology in your report seems to be proportionate. I am on leave this week but happy to chat w/ you if you would like to discuss further.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Renewable Energy Casework Adviser/Operations Officer

NatureScot | Inverdee House | Baxter Street | Torry | Aberdeen | AB11 9QA | t: 01738 458524
NàdarAlba | Taigh Inbhir Dhè | Sràid Baxter | Torraidh | Obar Dheathain | AB11 9QA

[nature.scot](https://www.nature.scot) – Scotland's Nature Agency – Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2023 09:29
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Ocean Winds update and ecological methodology

Hi [REDACTED]

I am just following up on my below email, we plan to undertake our second wintering bird survey next week.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, November 8, 2023 3:41 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Ocean Winds update and ecological methodology [Filed 08 Nov 2023 15:41]

Hi [REDACTED],

Thank you again for your response on the wintering and breeding bird survey methodologies. As we are now within the wintering bird season, we have pulled together a

file note to outline our proposed methodology for WBS and will look to revisit the breeding bird methodology early next year. The methodology for WBS has been updated from our previous correspondence but still contain deviations from standing advice and the recommendations you outlined below. Can you please review the file note and if required, provide it to the specialists within your team.

Given we are within the wintering bird season, the proposed methodology has been undertaken for October surveys, but we would greatly appreciate your response to help inform/ confirm our approach to surveys from November onwards which will be undertaken w/c Nov 27th .

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 4:36 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Ocean Winds update and ecological methodology

Hi [REDACTED],

Apologies for the delay in getting back to you.

I understand from your note that wintering and intertidal surveys were undertaken during 2022/2023. Without a summary of the survey results and how they informed your decision for future surveys it is difficult to make any comment on your proposed methodology. It is mentioned that pre-determined sections have been identified but it is not clear if the 2022/2023 surveys informed this decision.

We usually advise that the wintering bird surveys should be undertaken twice per month. The intertidal surveys should also be undertaken twice per month, once over low water and once over high water to provide information on both the foraging (during low water) and roosting potential (during high water). For the breeding bird surveys we advise that they should cover the whole breeding season.

If you are diverging from the methods set out in the guidance the background and rationale of the survey work should be clearly set out in the EIA.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | **Renewable Energy Casework Adviser/Operations Officer**

NatureScot | Inverdee House | Baxter Street | Torry | Aberdeen | AB11 9QA | t: 01738 458524
NàdarAlba | Taigh Inbhir Dhè | Sràid Baxter | Torraidh | Obar Dheathain | AB11 9QA

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 02 October 2023 10:20
To: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Ocean Winds update and ecological methodology

Hi [REDACTED]

I am just following up on my below email regarding the wintering and breeding bird survey methodologies. Please let me know if you or your specialists have any questions.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, September 15, 2023 10:19 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Ocean Winds update and ecological methodology [Filed 15 Sep 2023 10:19]

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for your response. I've outlined the queries in the attached document. It covers methodologies for wintering bird and breeding bird surveys. We understand that these methodologies diverge from NatureScot's Standing Advice and would therefore like your guidance on the proposed. Please let me know if you need any more information or if your internal specialists would like a call to discuss anything outlined in the attached document.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, September 11, 2023 10:50 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Ocean Winds update and ecological methodology

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for getting in touch.

It would be helpful if you can send across any specific queries you may have regarding the methodologies for the winter 2023 and 2024 season. I may need to consult our internal specialists for advice.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Renewable Energy Casework Adviser/Operations Officer

NatureScot | Inverdee House | Baxter Street | Torry | Aberdeen | AB11 9QA | t: 01738 458524 m: 07442 331132

NàdarAlba | Taigh Inbhir Dhè | Sràid Baxter | Torraidh | Obar Dheathain | AB11 9QA

[nature.scot](https://www.nature.scot) – Scotland's Nature Agency – Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba – [@nature_scot](https://twitter.com/nature_scot)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 01 September 2023 10:38
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Ocean Winds update and ecological methodology

Hi [REDACTED]

Hope you are doing well,

I wanted to reach out in the hope that we can arrange another meeting to discuss ecological aspects of the Ocean Winds project. In particular, we wanted to provide an update following the completion of the Phase 1 Habitat surveys and discuss methodologies for the winter 2023 and 2024 season. My calendar is quite free over the coming weeks so please let me know what works best for you.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
She/her/hers
Senior Consultant | Climate and Sustainability - Nature
MSc, MCIEEM

Arup
4th Floor, 10 George Street,
Edinburgh, EH2 2PF, United Kingdom
d +44 131 319 3432
[arup.com](https://www.arup.com)

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Tha am post-dealain seo agus fiosrachadh sam bith na chois diomhair agus airson an neach no buidheann ainmichte a-

File Note

Project title Ocean Winds Caledonia Offshore Wind Farm
Job number 286850-18
File reference
cc
Prepared by [REDACTED]
Date 8 November 2023
Subject Wintering Bird Survey Methodology

4th Floor 10 George Street Edinburgh EH2 2PF United Kingdom
t +44 131 331 1999
arup.com

Introduction

Thank you for your email, dated October 10th, 2023.

This technical note has been prepared in response to the pre-application consultation received with the view to clarify the points raised.

Project Overview

The Caledonia Offshore Wind Farm (OWF) Project onshore transmission infrastructure (OnTI) comprises underground cables from a Landfall Site on the Aberdeenshire coast to a new Onshore Substation in the proximity of New Deer.

The environmental impact assessment report (EIAR) which will support the Planning Permission in Principle (PPP) application for the Proposed Development will be submitted in September 2024. Subsequent Approval for Matters Specified within Conditions (AMSC) would be submitted at detailed design stage.

Response

Proposed Guidance

We have reviewed the Standing Advice and note the suggested use of the 2017 report '*Recommended bird survey methods to inform impact assessment of onshore wind farms*¹' which includes the methodologies referenced in your email. Following review, the guidance provides a useful starting point for the design of a proportionate survey programme for the OnTI of the project.

¹ NatureScot (formally Scottish Natural Heritage) (March 2017) Recommended bird survey methods to inform impact assessment of onshore wind farms. Accessed <https://www.nature.scot/doc/recommended-bird-survey-methods-inform-impact-assessment-onshore-windfarms>

It is the expert opinion of our ecology and ornithology team that the OnTI of the Project does not meet the threshold of impact to require the full level of detailed assessment as laid out in the 2017 report¹.

The OnTI works for the Project will comprise the development of a cable route and substation site. The cable circuits will be placed underground using trenching techniques, however in sensitive areas other methods may be used to minimise disturbance such as Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) at watercourse crossings. Following construction, disturbed areas will be reinstated with the only above ground permanent infrastructure being the substation site in proximity to New Deer². The construction and operation of the development will likely be considerably less disturbing to bird species than an onshore wind farm. This is because an onshore wind farm typically occupies a much larger area than the substation site, a large proportion of which is subject to potential displacement impacts for the duration of the development. Furthermore, onshore wind farms have an additional impact pathway to consider (collision risk) when compared with the OnTI. The impacts for the Project will largely be temporary in nature with the exception of the permanent substation site.

2022/2023 Wintering Bird Surveys Results

The 2022/2023 wintering bird surveys focused on potential OnTI Landfall locations and did not cover the corridor in its entirety. Surveys undertaken showed minimal qualifying interests (QI) species for Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within proximity to the Project. The largest total count over the survey season for one SPA species, European shag, was 18, and the highest single survey count for a species was 7 (Eider). The survey did however identify that designated species³, albeit in low numbers, were flying south from the coast. Anecdotal records from landowners also noted pink-footed geese or greylag geese using arable fields further inland south of the Deveron within the route corridor and in the wider landscape.

The surveys also found that species such as herring gull, oystercatcher and redshank have the potential to use fields inland from the coast, however other species recorded were confined to the coast and sea habitat.

Survey results will be presented in detail within the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) and EIAR.

2023 Phase 1 Habitat Survey Results

The phase 1 habitat surveys were completed between June and September 2023 on a route corridor running from the coastline to New Deer, of approximately 500m wide. The results found that over 70% of the route comprised of arable fields and a further 20% comprised of grassland habitats. From our experience working across Aberdeenshire, this is representative of the wider landscape in the region and provides abundant suitable habitat for wintering bird species.

Review of Guidance, Research and Similar Developments.

² There will also be small areas for maintenance access such as link boxes and transition joint bays.

³ E.g., Pink-footed geese, herring gull, oystercatcher, redshank

In the NatureScot report, '*Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs)*⁴' it summarises that pink-footed and greylag geese have a core range of 15 to 20km from SPA's for which they are QI. The Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Loch SPA and Ramsar for which pink-footed geese are a QI is approximately 21km from the proposed development. The Moray and Narin Coast SPA for which both species are QI is over 25km from the proposed development. This means that the proposed development is beyond the foraging range of both SPAs. The distribution of both species has been mapped in Mitchell 2012⁵, and whilst the detail of these maps is poor, there does appear to be the potential for both species to be present within the route corridor, reflected by the fact that suitable habitats are present in large areas within and near the proposed development.

A review of the onshore impact assessments of projects in the same geographical area, such as Moray East and Moray West Windfarms, found no impacts to wintering bird species from the onshore elements of their respective developments. The construction, operation and decommissioning aspects of these developments are very similar to that of the OWF development, as are the habitats and protected species under consideration.

Proposed Survey Methodology

Following a review of NatureScot guidance and results of the 2022/2023 Wintering Bird Surveys we are proposing the following updated methodology. Please also see the figures within the supporting Appendix for reference.

- 1) Undertake dedicated Vantage Point (VP) at the Landfall location (Appendix Figure 1), which will further add to the 2022/2023 Wintering Bird Surveys results. This VP survey would be undertaken for four hours, ensuring that the watch covers either high or low tide. The survey start times would be fluctuated to ensure both high and low tide are surveyed multiple times over the winter season. These surveys would also include intertidal species.
- 2) Undertake a walking transect that covers the Landfall location and would run south in a loop to approximately 2km inland (Appendix Figure 1). This survey would further cover the VP location and record other wintering bird species such as herring gull, redshank and oystercatcher that may use the inland habitats.
- 3) Undertake driving transects of the remainder of the corridor. As noted in the 2017 report¹, road transects can be used to undertake goose feeding distribution surveys. The road network is sufficient enough to cover the cable corridor and if necessary following the initial driven transect if there are any non-visible fields, these will be accessed by foot to support the results of the driving transects.
- 4) A dedicated transect around the substation site (Appendix Figure 2). This will cover the area of permanent habitat loss from the substation site, as well as marshy grassland present in this area.

These surveys will be undertaken once a month through the wintering season, November to February. Due to the delay in starting the wintering bird surveys, only the VP survey and driven

⁴ NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage) (June 2016) *Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs): Guidance*. Accessed <https://docslib.org/doc/13331851/mapping-the-distribution-of-feeding-pink-footed-and-iceland-greylag-geese-in-scotland>.

⁵ Mitchell, C. 2012. *Mapping the distribution of feeding Pink-footed and Iceland Greylag Geese in Scotland*. Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust / Scottish Natural Heritage Report, Slimbridge. 108pp

transects will be completed in October. These driven transects will cover the substation site, however the dedicated walking transect of the substations site cannot be completed within October. The whole methodology proposed above will be completed from November onwards.

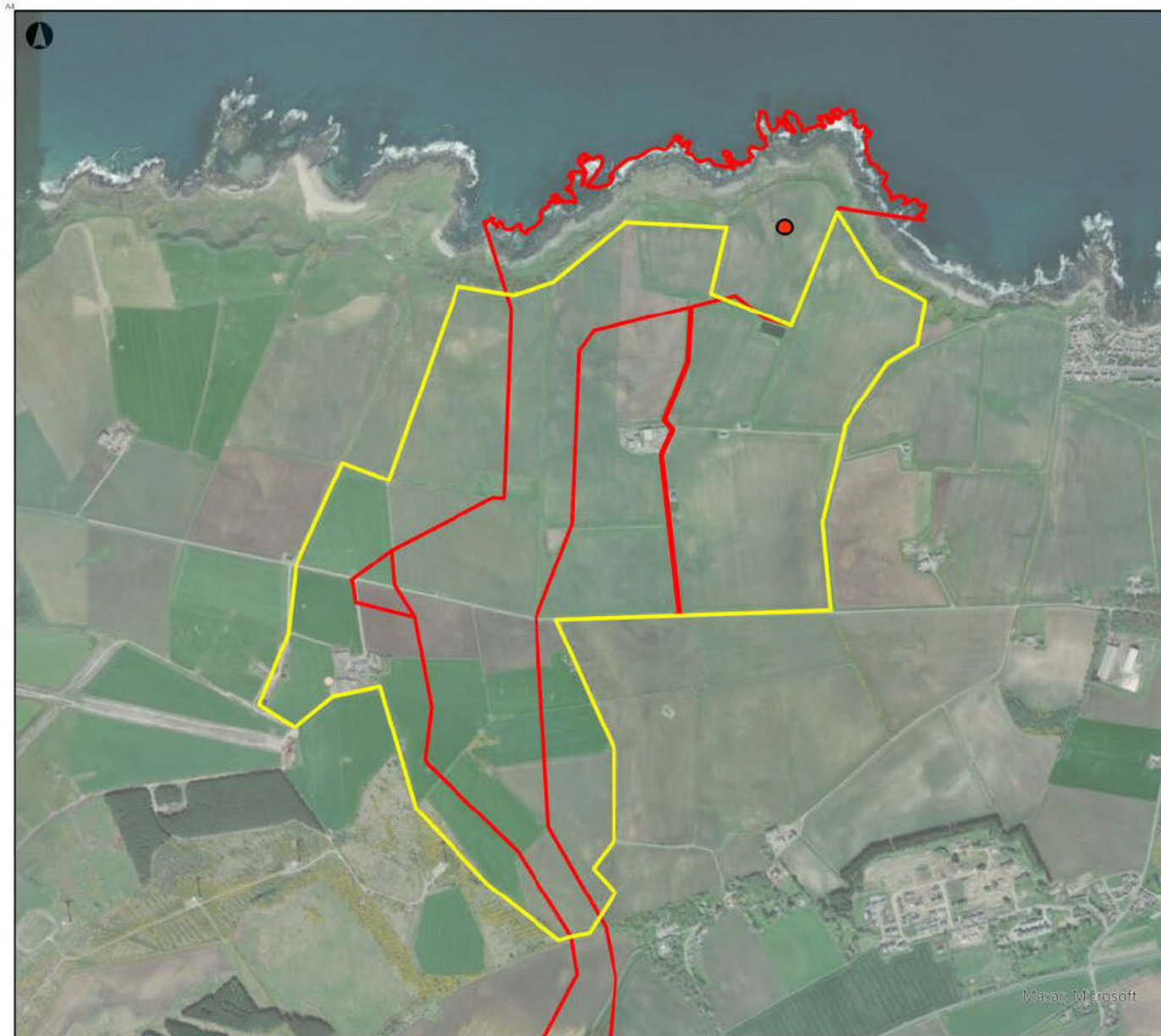
Conclusion

We believe this is a proportionate methodology for the Project and would gather the information required regarding use of the OnTI area and adjacent land by wintering bird species to produce a robust assessment for EIA and HRA purposes. The updated methods ensure that the whole of the route corridor is being assessed for its potential to support wintering bird species throughout the wintering season.

We would welcome follow up correspondence on receipt of this note either by email communications or a pre-application meeting should that be preferred.

Given we are within the wintering bird season, the above methodology will be undertaken for October surveys but we would greatly appreciate your response to help inform our approach to surveys from November onwards.

Appendix



Legend

- Vantage Point
- Transect Wintering Bird Surveys
- Red Line Boundary

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1	26/10/2023	NM	GS	-	-
Rev	Date	By	Chkd	Appd	Authd

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4th Floor, 10 George Street,
Edinburgh, EH2 2PF,
United Kingdom
www.arup.com

Client
Ocean Winds

Job Title
Caledonia Offshore Wind Farm

Drawing Title
**Wintering Bird Survey Methodologies
Northern Transect and Vantage Point**

Scale at A4
1:15,000

Drawing Status
For Review

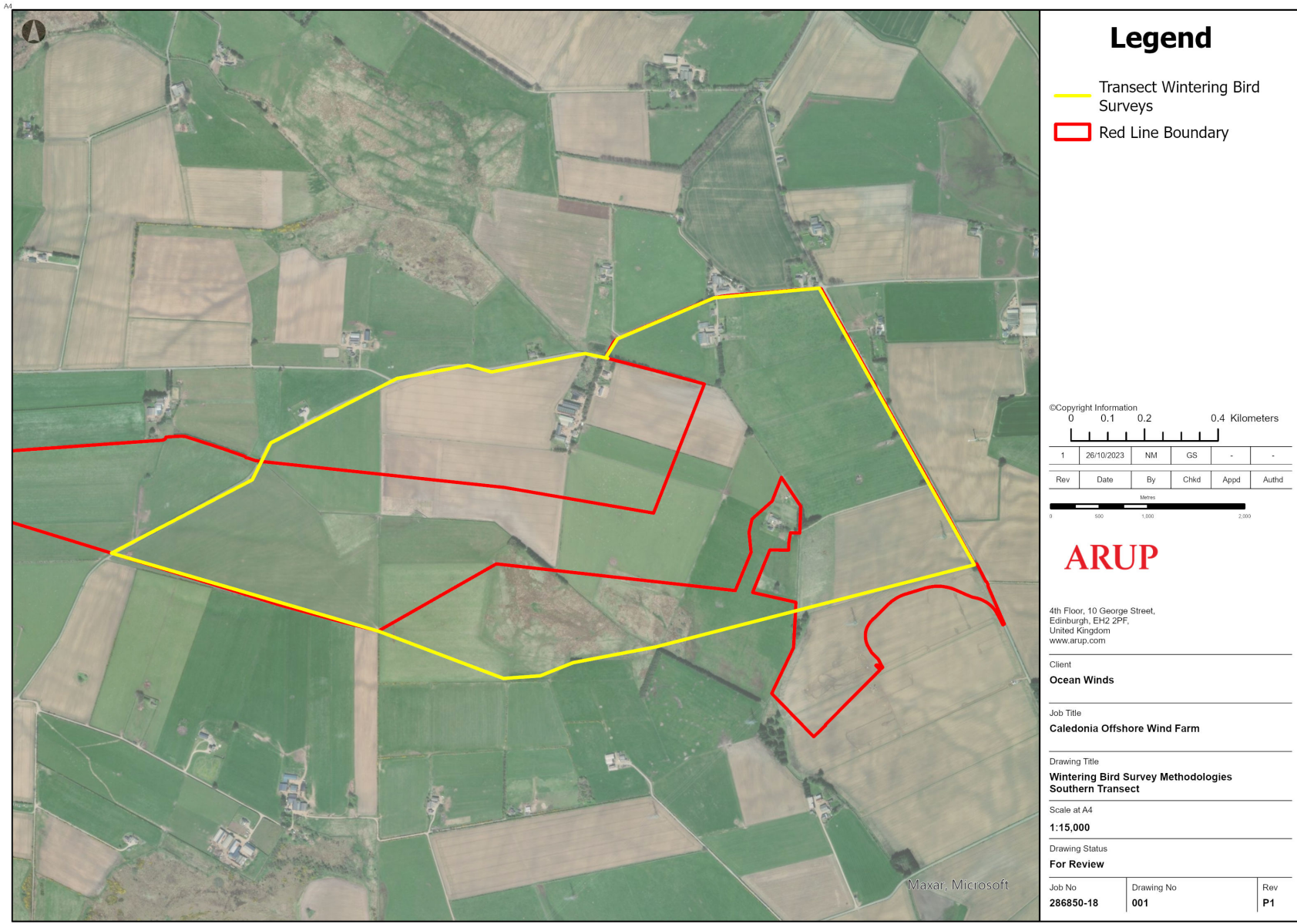
Job No	Drawing No	Rev
286850-18	001	P1

Job number

286850-18

Date

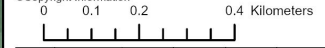
8 November 2023



Legend

- Transect Wintering Bird Surveys
- Red Line Boundary

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Client

Ocean Winds

Job Title

Caledonia Offshore Wind Farm

Drawing Title

**Wintering Bird Survey Methodologies
Southern Transect**

Scale at A4

1:15,000

Drawing Status

For Review

Job No	Drawing No	Rev
286850-18	001	P1

Caledonia Offshore Wind Farm
5th Floor, Atria One
144 Morrison Street
Edinburgh
EH3 8EX

www.caledoniaoffshorewind.com

