

Appendix 6.8: Peatland Condition Assessment

EDF Energy Renewables Ltd

Dunside Wind Farm
Appendix 6.8: Peatland
Condition Assessment

Final report

Prepared by LUC

June 2023



EDF Energy Renewables Ltd

Dunside Wind Farm

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Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1.	1 st Draft	H. Embleton	S. Jackson-Matthews	S. Jackson-Matthews	30.05.2023
2.	Final	H. Embleton	S. Jackson-Matthews	S. Jackson-Matthews	13.06.2023

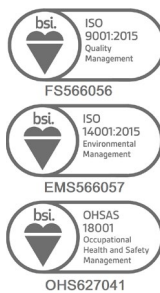
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Land Use Consultants Ltd
Registered in England
Registered number 2549296
Registered office:
250 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8RD

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Chapter 1

Introduction

- 1.1** This appendix details the methods and results of the Peatland Condition Assessment undertaken to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of the proposed Dunside Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development').
- 1.2** This appendix has been written to support Chapter 6: Ecology and the Chapter 8: Hydrology, Hydrogeology, Geology and Peat of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report) and should be read in conjunction with these chapters and Chapter 7: Ornithology.
- 1.3** This appendix supports the EclA in addition to the following EIA Report Appendices:
- **Appendix 6.1:** Desk Study and Legal Context.
 - **Appendix 6.2:** Habitats and Vegetation.
 - **Appendix 6.3:** Protected Species Survey Report.
 - **Appendix 6.4:** Bat Survey Report.
 - **Appendix 6.5:** Badger Survey Report (confidential).
 - **Appendix 6.6:** Outline Restoration and Enhancement Plan (OREP).
 - **Appendix 6.7:** Shadow Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).
 - **Appendix 8.2:** Peat Survey Report.
 - **Appendix 8.3:** Peat Management Plan.
 - **Appendix 8.4:** Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment.
- 1.4** This appendix is supported by the following figures:
- **EIA Report Figure 6.1:** Ecology Study Area.
 - **EIA Report Figure 6.3:** Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan
 - **EIA Report Figure 6.4:** National Vegetation Classification Survey Plan.
 - **EIA Report Figure 6.5:** Areas of Guidance-stated Potential Groundwater Dependency (GWDTE).
 - **EIA Report Figure 6.11:** Peat Condition Assessment Map.

Scope

- 1.5** LUC was appointed by EDF Energy Renewables Ltd to complete a suite of ecological surveys, including a Peatland Condition Assessment, to inform an EIA of the Proposed Development.
- 1.6** In March 2022 LUC submitted a Scoping Report (on behalf of the Applicant) as a means of agreeing the full scope of surveys relevant to the EIA. This included undertaking Phase 1 habitat and National Vegetation Classification surveys within the Study Area between June 2022 and September 2022 and peat depth surveys between March and September 2022.

Site Overview

- 1.7** The Site is located within the Lammermuir Hills, within the administrative boundary of Scottish Borders Council. The northern Site boundary is also the boundary between the Scottish Borders and East Lothian. The Site is approximately 6 km north of the settlement of Westruther and 7 km to the west of the settlement of Longformacus (to the nearest indicative turbine location).

1.8 The Site consists of a varied topographic setting of heavily managed moorland dominated by heather, with numerous river valleys, steep sloping hillsides and gently sloping hilltop areas which predominately drain into the Dye Water catchment (a tributary of the River Tweed). The Dye Water flows to the east through the centre of the Site and joins the Whiteadder Water downstream of the Site. Notable hills within the Site include: Meikle Law (468 m AOD) in the north-west; Byreclough Ridge (440 m AOD) in the north, Dunside Hill (437 m AOD) in the south-east, and Wedder Lairs (486 m AOD) in the west. The main land uses are sheep grazing and moorland managed for grouse shooting with the adjacent land to the north-west used for renewable energy production (the operational Fallago Rig Wind Farm).

1.9 The majority of the habitats within the Site have been influenced to varying extents by grazing pressure, recent and historical burning and artificial drainage. The Proposed Development is described in greater detail within **Chapter 3: Development Description** within the EIA Report.

Terminology and Survey Areas

1.10 The following terminology will be used throughout this Technical Appendix:

■ Site

- The whole physical process involved in the development of the land at Dunside Wind Farm including construction, operation and decommission (not associated with a particular piece of land).
- Encompasses the construction of a windfarm of up to 15 turbines and associated infrastructure. A detailed description of the Proposed Development is included **Chapter 3**.

■ Study Area

- The Study Area for habitats and vegetation was defined as the red line boundary plus a buffer of up to 250 m, in line with good practice guidelines. The Study Area is illustrated in **EIA Report Figure 6.1**.

Chapter 2

Methodology

Field Surveys

2.1 The peatland condition assessment has been informed by a series of habitat and vegetation surveys (See **Appendix 6.2**) and peat surveys (See **Appendix 8.2**).

Peat Condition Assessment

2.2 The NatureScot Peatland Condition Assessment¹, ²method was employed in the field to determine the condition of the peatland habitat. **Table 2.1** provides the key peatland classes and their key features.

2.3 Peat in the Scottish soil classification is described as soil with more than 60% organic carbon and exceeding 50 cm in thickness³. **Table 2.1** sets out the four peat classes.

Table 2.1: Peat Condition Classes

Peat Classes	Key Feature
Near Natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sphagnum dominated ■ No known fires (either prescribed or wild) within living memory ■ Evidence of grazing and trampling impacts is rare or absent ■ Little or no bare peat surface ■ Heather (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>) is not dominant
Modified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bare peat in small patches ■ Fires or fire history ■ Frequent impacts of grazing and trampling ■ Sphagnum mosses rare or absent ■ Extensive cover of heather (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>) or purple moor grass (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>) ■ An undesirable level of scrub which is drying out the bog
Drained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within 30 m of either an artificial drain (grip) or a re-vegetated hagg/gully system
Actively Eroding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ctively eroding hagg/gully system (most of their length having no vegetation in gully bottoms with steep bare peat 'cliffs') ■ Extensive continuous bare peat surfaces (peat "pans") ■ Extensive bare peat surfaces at former peat cutting sites

¹ NatureScot. Peat Depth and Peatland Condition Survey. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2021-06/Peatland%20Action%20-%20GUIDANCE%20-%20Peat%20depth%20and%20peatland%20condition%20survey%20guidance.pdf> [Accessed: 24.05.23]

² NatureScot. Peat Condition Assessment Guide. Available at: <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2023-02/Guidance-Peatland-Action-Peatland-Condition-Assessment-Guide-A1916874.pdf> [Accessed:24.05.23]

³ NatureScot. Advising on carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat in development managements. . Available At: [nature.scot-Advising on carbon-rich soils deep peat and priority peatland habitat in development management.pdf](https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2023-05/Advising%20on%20carbon-rich%20soils%20deep%20peat%20and%20priority%20peatland%20habitat%20in%20development%20managements.pdf) [Accessed 30/0-5/23]

Peat Classes	Key Feature
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Restoration may require a period de-stocking and exclusion of wild herbivores

2.4 Field-based assessment of a series of key indicators facilitates assignment of one of these classes to each area of peatland. These indicators include features such as:

- Sphagnum cover and vegetation condition.
- Bare peat - Is a sign of habitat damage.
- Drainage – Presence of drains cause peat to dry out by altering surface drainage and reduce the height of the water table and can change the composition of vegetation present and lead to further erosion.
- Evidence of burning – Frequent or severe fires can remove the moss layer and significantly alter vegetation composition. Fire can also penetrate the peat leading to erosion and peat loss.
- Grazing and trampling - Overgrazing and trampling can damage bog vegetation and create sites for erosion. Animals rubbing on hagsgs can also accelerate erosion and prevent re-vegetation.
- Drying and peat loss - Bare peat offers potential for accelerated erosion and drier conditions reduce Sphagnum cover and encourage non-peat-forming vegetation.
- Scrub/tree invasion.

2.5 These indicators were noted in the field by experienced ecologists, to determine the condition class of all peatland within the Study Area.

Competency

2.6 All habitat and vegetation surveys were undertaken within appropriate seasonal windows in 2022, by academically and professionally qualified LUC ecologists. The data has been assessed by ecologists with extensive experience of interpreting habitat datasets.

2.7 The peat survey field surveys were undertaken by a team of two Kaya Consulting hydrologists, with the appropriate experience of assessing hydrology, hydrogeology, geology, soil, and peat for onshore windfarms in upland environments.

Constraints and Limitations

2.8 All habitat and vegetation surveys were undertaken within appropriate seasonal windows in 2022, by academically and professionally qualified LUC ecologists. The data has been assessed by ecologists, hydrologists and hydrogeologists with extensive experience of interpreting habitat datasets.

2.9 Given the topographically challenging nature of the Study Area, local variations in vegetation communities, and seasonal constraints, detailed mapping of all NVC sub-communities would be particularly challenging and time-consuming. As such, NVC data was often mapped to community level only, unless there was a specific reason to record the sub-community. This is not considered to be a significant constraint to the assessment because habitats of conservation interest⁴ are commonly identified on the basis of their NVC communities and are largely unchanged by additional information on sub-communities.

2.10 While care has been taken to collect and review habitat data, it is not possible to account for any changes that may occur in the intervening period between data collection and submission of the EIA Report.

⁴ NatureScot. Advising on carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat in development managements. . Available At: nature.scot-Advising on carbon-rich soils deep peat and priority peatland habitat in development management.pdf [Accessed 30/0-5/23]

Chapter 3

Baseline and Interpretation

Peat Habitats

3.1 Peat is present throughout the Study Area, however owing to the geological structure of the Study Area and the extensive practice of burning, the majority of the Study Area consists of peat depth ranging from <0.25-0.5 m. Areas of deeper peat were localised to gentle sloping hills in the south (Upper Knowe), south-west (Meikle Namels Ridge), north-west (Meikle Law) and north (Byreclough Ridge) where peats deposits ranged from 0.5->2 m.

3.2 *Sphagnum* spp. cover across the Study Area was rare, often occurring as small patches <1 m², indicating the majority of peatland to be 'modified', according to the guidance^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. Additionally, areas of bare peat were common, generally comprising small patches, as well as extensive patches as a result of recent burning, both which are indicative of 'modified' conditions. Land management practices are responsible for the majority of the peatland within the Study Area being classified as 'modified'. Sheep graze within the Study Area and are likely to have contributed to modifying sensitive habitats by trampling and fertilising habitats through their urine and faeces, both contributing to fragmenting Sphagnum carpets. However, the majority of habitats within the Study Area have been heavily influenced by historical and continued burning.

3.3 This is particularly evident when considering that the most common and widespread habitat was H9 dry heath which accounted for 37% of the Study Area. H9 is the least natural form of upland heath, which is produced and maintained by intensive management. However, across the Study Area there are small, fragmented areas of semi-natural condition peatlands supporting a variety of priority habitats and species.

3.4 A detailed account of the Study Area's vegetation communities is provided in **EIA Report Appendix 6.2** and **EIA Report Figures 6.3 and 6.4**.

Peat Survey

3.5 The Carbon and Peatland 2016 Map⁵ indicates large areas of the high ground in the north and south of the Site are Class 5 peatland, with smaller areas of Class 4 peatland at lower elevations. The relevant Class descriptions are below:

- Class 4 – Area unlikely to be associated with peatland habitat or wet and acidic type. Area unlikely to include carbon-rich soils.
- Class 5 – Soil information takes precedence over vegetation data. No peatland habitat recorded. May also include areas of bare soil. Soils are carbon-rich and deep peat.

3.6 The steepest slopes within the Site are classed as non-soil (Class 2) and the lower lying sections of the site around the base of the river valleys are classed as mineral soil (Class 0), with no peat indicated. There are no areas of Class 1 or 2, nationally important, priority peatlands within the Site.

3.7 The Phase 1 and Phase 2 Peat Surveys undertaken (See **Appendix 8.2**) collected data from a total of 3,088 probes for the Proposed Development and the results summarised below:

- 38.1% of probes were recorded as having a depth of less than 25 cm. These probes are not classified as peat.
- 43.1% of probes were recorded as having a peat depth of between 25-50 cm. These probes are classified as organo-mineral soils and not formally considered to be peat.
- 16.2% of probes were recorded as having a peat depth of between 50-100 cm.
- 2.7% of the probes were recorded as having a peat depth of over 100 cm.

⁵ NatureScot. Carbon and Peatland Map 2016. Available at: https://map.environment.gov.scot/Soil_maps/?layer=10 [Accessed 30/05/23]

3.8 A total of 15 cores were taken across the survey area, all in areas at or adjacent to proposed infrastructure. It was determined that the acrotelm layer was between 10 cm and 40 cm. Clay was the dominant source of base material. The condition of the majority of peat found across the site was found to be poor with muirburn, trampling, grazing and drainage causing much of the peat surveyed to be dry and eroding.

Peatland Condition

3.9 Local topography on the Site affects the peat distribution, with the hillslopes generally too steep and well drained to support the formation of peat. The tops of the hills throughout the Site are gently rolling, with most of the peat present in poorly drained natural low points on this plateau. Most of the drainage on Site is natural, though some small areas of artificial drainage are present, with small cut channels observed in the peat. Peat is assessed in detail in **EIAR Report Chapter 8**.

3.10 The majority of habitats within the Study Area are dominated by a mosaic of heath, marshy grassland and modified bog that are heavily modified by human influences: muirburn is practiced across much of the Site, which is also grazed by sheep and deer.

3.11 Peatland condition at the turbine and main Site compounds and substation locations were assessed following NatureScot guidance, where they were sited on peat substrates⁶. Where possible, the design process has avoided siting infrastructure in areas of deep peat. The condition of peatlands at the proposed turbine and key infrastructure locations is presented in **Table A.1, Annex A**.

3.12 The majority of turbine locations, substation and site compounds are sited on areas not considered to be peatland as peat soils were less than 50 cm deep.





3.13 Although the locations of turbines T2, T4 and T15 are largely located within an area of shallow peat, at all of these locations there are very small areas of the turbine footprint that encroaches into peat between 51-100 cm in depth, this is considered to be 'shallow peat' and is of low sensitivity in accordance with **EIAR Chapter 8**. Further interpretation of the peat resource within the Site is provided in **Appendix 8.2: Peat Survey Report**.

⁶ Substations 1 and 2, some proposed borrow pits and the proposed battery storage areas are therefore excluded from assessment.

Appendix A





Peat Condition Assessment Table

Table A.1: Peatland Condition Assessment

Infrastructure	Peat Depth Range (cm)	NVC Communities	Notable Features	Peatland Activity and Condition	Quality	Comments	Photo
T1	31-50 cm	M19, M20, H12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dry dwarf shrub heath/ Dry modified bog habitat. ■ Influenced by burning ■ Impacts of grazing and trampling ■ Sphagnum mosses absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Area comprised of Dry dwarf shrub heath/ Dry modified bog habitat. Turbine location is within and area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. ■ Heather density is sparse with grasses growing between. light to moderate grazing. intensive burning both recent and a few years old. 	
T2	0 – 100 cm	H9, M20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dry dwarf shrub heath/ Dry modified bog habitat. ■ Influenced by burning ■ Impacts of grazing and trampling ■ Sphagnum mosses absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Peat-forming considered unlikely due to current land management practices ■ Modified 	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Area comprised of Dry dwarf shrub heath/ Dry modified bog habitat. ■ Turbine location is largely within an area of shallow deposits however there are small areas of peat >50 cm to the north and east of the turbine location. ■ Young heather growth present. Light to moderate grazing, intensive burning both recent and a few years old. 	
T3	0 – 50 cm	M20, H12, H9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dry heath/acid grassland/ Dry modified bog habitat ■ Influenced by burning ■ Impacts of grazing and trampling ■ Sphagnum mosses absent ■ Drains present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Area comprised of Dry heath/ acid grassland and dry modified bog habitat. Turbine location is within and area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. 	
T4	0 – 100 cm	M19, M20,H12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dry dwarf shrub heath/ Dry modified bog habitat ■ Influenced by burning ■ Impacts of grazing and trampling ■ Sphagnum mosses sparse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Peat-forming considered unlikely due to current land management practices ■ Modified 	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recently burned and burned a few years ago patches throughout. ■ Heather approx. 80% cover and appears mostly lightly grazed although some areas are heavily grazed. ■ Turbine location is largely within an area of shallow deposits however there are small areas of peat >50 cm to the north of the turbine location. 	


Appendix A
Peat Condition Assessment Table

Appendix 6.8: Peatland Condition Assessment
June 2023

Infrastructure	Peat Depth Range (cm)	NVC Communities	Notable Features	Peatland Activity and Condition	Quality	Comments	Photo
T5	<25 cm	H9, M20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dry dwarf shrub heath/ Dry modified bog habitat. ■ Influenced by burning ■ Impacts of grazing and trampling ■ Sphagnum mosses absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Area comprised of Dry dwarf shrub heath/ Dry modified bog habitat. ■ Turbine location is within and area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. ■ Young heather growth present. light to moderate grazing. intensive burning both recent and a few years old. 	
T6	0 – 50 cm	H9, H12, U4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Heather is dominant ■ Sphagnum mosses absent ■ Influenced by burning ■ Impacts of grazing and trampling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Area comprised of Dry dwarf shrub heath habitat. ■ Turbine location is within and area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. 	
T7	31-50 cm	M20, U4, H12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lightly grazed ■ Sphagnum mosses absent ■ Influenced by burning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Area comprised of Dry heath/ acid grassland and dry modified bog habitat. ■ Turbine location is largely within an area of shallow deposits there are small areas of peat 50-100 cm outwith the turbine location to the south. 	
T8	0-50 cm	H9, M20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Heather is dominant ■ Grazing pressure noted ■ Sphagnum mosses absent ■ Influenced by burning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Area of dry dwarf shrub heath/ Dry modified bog habitat. ■ Areas newly burned, areas of bilberry where heather grazed out present in vicinity. ■ Turbine location is within and area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. 	
T9	31-50 cm	M20, M25, U2, M19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Heather is frequent ■ Grazing pressure noted ■ Sphagnum mosses sparse ■ Influenced by burning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dry modified bog/. Marshy grassland habitat - acid grasses, mostly <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> and <i>molinia</i> growing throughout with blaeberry to a lesser extent. heather appearing occasionally in small patches. unmanaged and not grazed. ■ Turbine location is within and area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. 	Photo not available
T10	31-50 cm	U2, M20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High grazing pressure noted. ■ Heather is frequent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Acid grassland/ dry modified bog habitat ■ Turbine location is within and area of shallow deposits and 	Photo not available

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Peat Condition Assessment Table

Appendix 6.8: Peatland Condition Assessment
June 2023

Infrastructure	Peat Depth Range (cm)	NVC Communities	Notable Features	Peatland Activity and Condition	Quality	Comments	Photo
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sphagnum mosses sparse 			not considered peatland.	
T11	0 – 30 cm	M20, M19, M23, H9, H12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High grazing pressure and old signs of burning noted Small patches of heather are frequent Sphagnum mosses absent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry modified bog/ marshy grassland Turbine location is within an area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. 	
T12	0 – 50 cm	M19, M20, H12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grazing pressure noted Small patches of heather are frequent Sphagnum mosses are sparse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry dwarf shrub heath/ E1.8 Dry modified bog habitat - mosaic of Heather and deer grass dominant Turbine location is within an area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. 	
T13	0 – 30 cm	M20, U2, H12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sphagnum moss frequent but is very dry Heather is frequent Grazing pressure noted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry heath/acid grassland/ Dry modified bog habitat Turbine location is within an area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. 	
T14	0 – 50 cm	H9, U2, M20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heather and grasses are dominant Grazing pressure noted Sphagnum mosses frequent but dried out Influenced by burning Area influenced by man made drainage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry modified bog/ Acid grassland (unimproved) habitat Turbine location is within an area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. 	
T15	0-100 cm	M23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sphagnum moss occurs occasionally but is very dry Heather is dominant Grazing pressure noted Evidence of burning in the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peat-forming considered unlikely due to current land management practices Modified 	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry heath/acid grassland/ Dry modified bog/ marshy grassland habitat. Turbine location is largely within an area of shallow deposits however there is a small area of peat 50-100 cm to the west of the turbine location. 	
Substation	N/A	H9, U4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry dwarf shrub heath Heather is dominant Grazing pressure noted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location does not show presence of peat soils and not considered peatland. 	Photo not available
Construction Compound (CC4)	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry dwarf shrub heath/ Acid grassland (unimproved) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location does not show presence of peat soils and not considered peatland. 	Photo not available

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June 2023

Infrastructure	Peat Depth Range (cm)	NVC Communities	Notable Features	Peatland Activity and Condition	Quality	Comments	Photo
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Heather is dominant ■ Grazing pressure noted 				
Construction Compound (CC3)	25-50 cm	M20, M25, U2, M19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Heather is frequent ■ Grazing pressure noted ■ Sphagnum mosses sparse ■ Influenced by burning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Not peatland 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dry modified bog/. Marshy grassland habitat - acid grasses, mostly <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> and <i>Molinia</i> growing throughout with blaeberry to a lesser extent. heather appearing occasionally in small patches. unmanaged and not grazed. ■ Compound location is within and area of shallow deposits and not considered peatland. 	