Appendix 3.1: Sloy Pumped Hydro Storage Scheme: Woodland Site Visit Report

Sloy Hydroelectric Power Station

Woodland Site Visit Report

Prepared for SSE Renewables

RTS FORESTRY

Location:	*Sloy Power Station, Inveruglas, Argyll & Bute.* *Centre Grid Ref: NN321098*
Visit date & time:	*14 March 2024. 10:00am.*
Attendees:	*Seth Bird - RTS Forest Manager* *Edward McLean - SSE Renewables Hydro Environmental Advisor* *James Edmundson - SSE Renewables Project Development Engineer*
Report prepared by:	*Seth Bird (RTS Forest Manager)*

BACKGROUND

SSE Renewables are proposing a development on an area of ground adjacent to and within the ownership boundary of Sloy Power Station (Centre Grid Reference: NN 321 098). Tree clearance works are required as part of the proposed development to facilitate a material stockpile (the extent of the proposed stockpile footprint and the proposed tree clearance area is presented in Appendix 1). RTS Forestry Ltd were commissioned on the 06 March 2024 by SSE Renewables to undertake a site visit of the woodland and to provide recommendations on the following:

- The likely impact of the proposed tree clearance works on the adjacent woodland stand.
- The extent of additional tree clearance works that may be required to minimise windthrow risk.
- Restocking requirements and design to be incorporated into any future felling permission application.

The site visit was undertaken at 10:00am on Thursday 14 March 2024 by Seth Bird, RTS Forest Manager. Edward Mclean, SSE Renewables Hydro Environment Advisor and James Edmundson also attended the visit in the capacity of landowner representatives.

SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

Woodland Evaluation

A walk-through of the extent of the southern-most woodland block (3.4ha) was undertaken. SSE Renewables representatives indicated the extent of the proposed development footprint and the area of tree clearance that would be required to facilitate the development. The area to be cleared extended 1.3ha and largely comprised of Downy birch *Betula pubescens* in addition to small volumes of Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and Holly *Ilex Aquifolium*. Estimated stem density was approximately 600 stems/ha.

The area adjacent east of the proposed tree clearance area was a stand of mature, un-thinned Sitka spruce *Picea sitchensis* at an estimated density of 2000 stems/ha. The Sitka spruce stand transitioned into a stand of mature, thinned Scots pine *Pinus sylvatica* and then onto a stand of mature, thinned European larch *Larix decidua* to the east of the site, both at a density of approximately 600 stems/ha.

A thin section of native broadleaves comprised the ground between the conifer stands and the public road and screened the public road from the rest of the site.

A wet woodland extended 0.7ha in the northern-most section of the site, separated from the rest of the site by a thin stretch of open ground. The wet woodland largely comprised of Downy birch, with small volumes of Syacamore and Alder *Alnus Glutinosa*. Woodland type composition is presented in Map 1 in the appendices.

Operational Observations

The area of proposed tree clearance would leave a wind-vulnerable edge to the east in the conifer stands. As such, an extended tree clearance area would be required to ensure that windthrow risk is minimised adjacent to an active development. This would need to include the entirety of the conifer composition on the site as any encroachment into the conifer stands will increase windthrow risk throughout.

The wet woodland adjacent north and east of the proposed development stockpile (map 1) was assumed to be at minimal risk of windthrow and as such the required tree clearance area within the wet woodland will not require extension.

The 0.3ha stand of larch at the east of the site is at high risk of infection from Phytophthora ramorum, a fungal disease that is currently infecting larch trees in significant quantities in the region. As such, it is likely that a Statutory Plant Health Notice (SPHN) may be submitted to the landowner from Scottish Forestry in the near future. This would involve a legal obligation to remove trees that have been identified as carrying the disease within a time period specified by Scottish Forestry. The evaluation of the pine and spruce stands adjacent to the larch determined that removal of the larch to the east would expose the pine and spruce to a high risk of windthrow.

In respect of this, the extent of tree clearance would need to include the entirety of the conifer stand in this instance.

A linear archaeological feature that ran north to south through the conifer stand was highlighted by SSE Renewables representatives during the site visit. This will require protection measures to be implemented as part of any future tree clearance operations and will need further consultation with the Loch Lomond & Trossachs Archaeology team to agree on the level of protection measures required.

Topography

The stand of conifers were situated on a small knoll that screened the proposed development site from the public road and Loch Lomond to the east. The topography further exposed the conifer stand to risk of windthrow, which would be exacerbated by the proposed clearance of the trees to the southwest and west of the knoll. The removal of the conifer stand however would not visually expose the proposed development to the public road due to the topographical screening in this area.

Commercial Element

An initial estimation of timber volumes and qualities was undertaken in the conifer stands in light of the requirement to include these trees in any future clearance works. Estimations are as follows:

- 0.3ha of Sitka spruce @ 450T/ha = 135 tonnes. Approximately 60% sawlog quality.
- 0.2ha of Scots pine @250T/ha = 50 tonnes. Approximately 50% sawlog quality.
- 0.3ha of larch @250T/ha = 75 tonnes. Approximately 50% sawlog quality.

These quantities were based on a visual estimation of timber volumes. Further mensuration would be required to determine more accurate volumes of the conifer stands.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Extent of Felling

Due to the lack of a wind-firm edge adjacent east to the proposed tree clearance area, it is recommended that tree clearance works are extended west to a total area of 1.96ha. To minimise windthrow risk, the felling area should include all conifer trees up to the strip of open ground to the north. A total of 0.32ha of the wet woodland to the north of the open ground will also be required to clear in order to facilitate the proposed stockpile, however the remainder of the wet woodland and the strip of native broadleaves between the conifer stand and the public road should be retained and windthrow risk will be minimal in the retained stands due to the species, stocking density and size of the trees.

Restocking Proposal

A restocking proposal was discussed during the site visit, and it was agreed that 100% of the restocking species would be native broadleaves. This proposal would seek to extend the more ecologically valuable wet woodland habitat on the property and link into the strip of native broadleaves to be retained at the east of the site.

There is an existing deer fence along the western boundary of the site, which is relatively new and in a good state of repair. It is recommended that this fence line would be extended as part of the restocking proposal to enclose the entire restocking area. This would protect any newly-planted trees from deer browsing pressure.

As part of SSERs BNG assessment, 0.4ha of the proposed tree clearance will be used to establish lowland meadow / unimproved grassland post development. SSE Renewables have identified an supplementary parcel of land (0.4ha) within their ownership as additional restocking area. The additional restocking area has been agreed and identified on SSE Renewables land to the east of the public road for this purpose.

NEXT STEPS

Felling Permission Application

A felling permission application will need to be submitted to Scottish Forestry to include:

1. Evidence of consultation with stakeholders
2. A prescription of the proposed felling and restocking works
3. Identification of 0.4ha alternative restocking site
4. Relevant supporting maps.

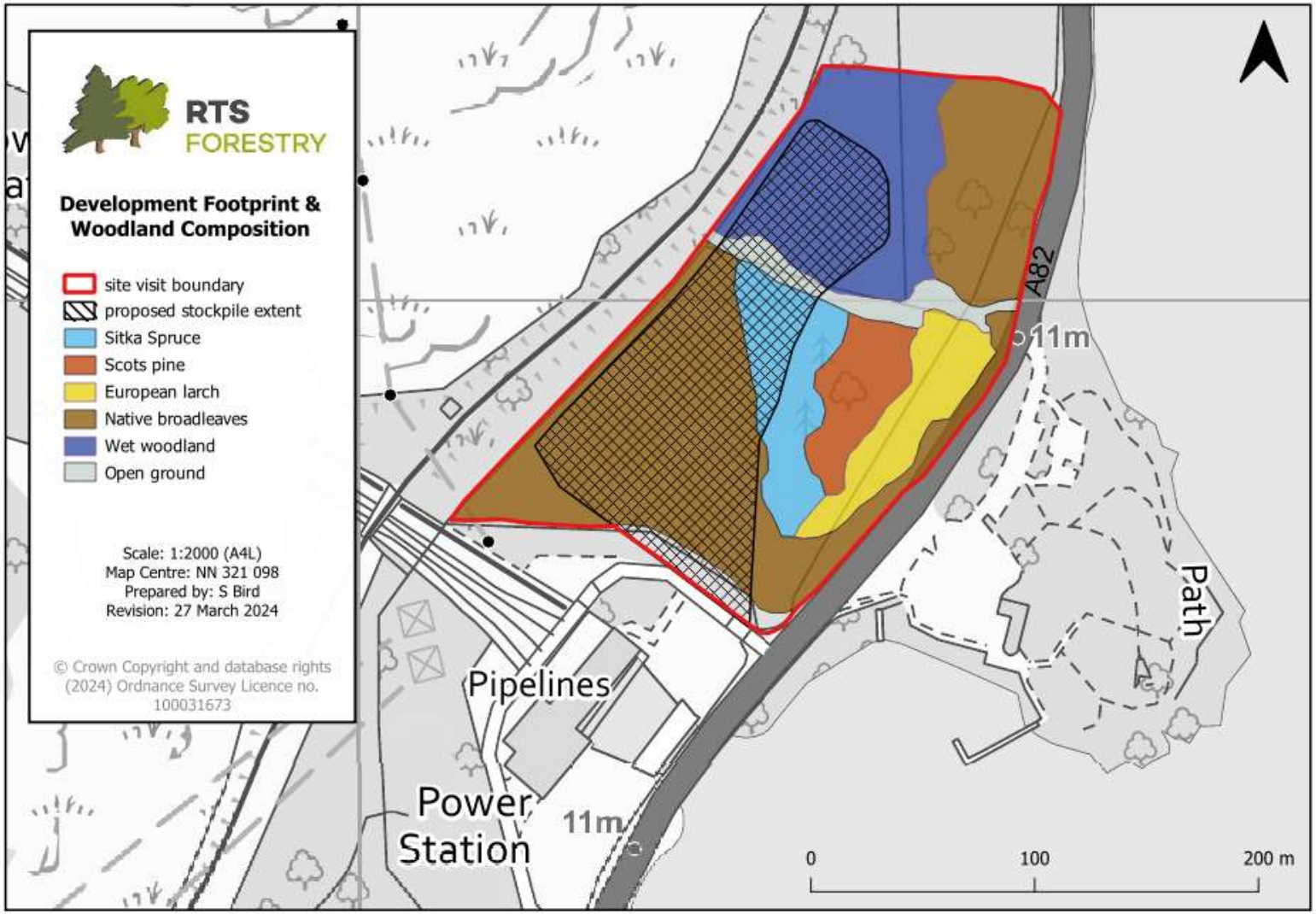
As a mandated agent, RTS Forestry can be instructed to undertake this process on behalf of SSE Renewables if required.

As discussed during the site visit, the conifer stand will provide some economic return on the tree clearance works and with good access to the site via the Sloy Power Station main access, extraction of timber can be easily facilitated.

RTS Forestry can provide a standing timber price for the conifer stand. Alternatively, a standing timber sale tender invitation can be produced and distributed to interested parties.

APPENDICES

1. Map showing development footprint and woodland composition.
2. Map showing extent of required additional tree clearance.
3. Photographs.


RTS
FORESTRY
Development Footprint &
Woodland Composition
site visit boundary
proposed stockpile extent
Sitka Spruce
Scots pine
European larch
Native broadleaves
Wet woodland
Open ground
Scale: 1:2000 (A4L)
Map Centre: NN 321 098
Prepared by: S Bird
Revision: 27 March 2024
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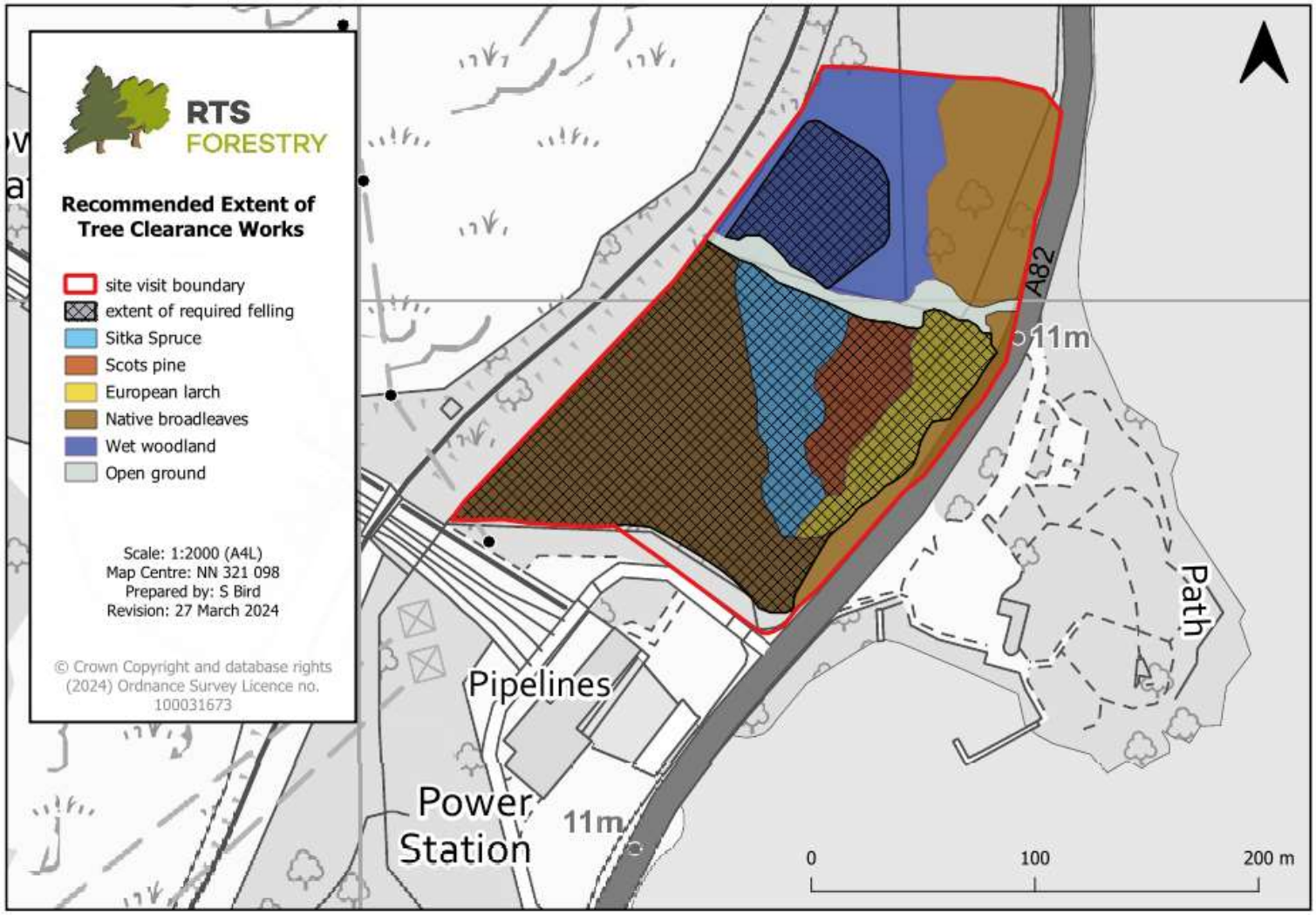
A82
11m
Path
Pipelines
Power Station
11m
0
100
200 m


RTS
FORESTRY
Recommended Extent of
Tree Clearance Works
site visit boundary
extent of required felling
Sitka Spruce
Scots pine
European larch
Native broadleaves
Wet woodland
Open ground
Scale: 1:2000 (A4L)
Map Centre: NN 321 098
Prepared by: S Bird
Revision: 27 March 2024
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A82
11m
Path
Pipelines
Power Station
11m
0
100
200 m

APPENDIX 3 – Photographs

Photo 1 – Native woodland looking east towards spruce stand.

Photo 2 – Open ground boundary looking southeast towards larch stand.

Photo 3 – Thinned Scots pine looking west towards spruce stand.

Photo 4 – Un-thinned spruce stand looking west.