

HOUSTON SOLAR PV AND ENERGY STORAGE FACILITY

Shadow Habitats Regulations Appraisal

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REPORT

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1 INTRODUCTION

RPS Consulting Services Ltd. (RPS) was commissioned by Elgin Energy Esco Ltd. 'Elgin Energy' to carry out a shadow Habitat Regulation Appraisal (sHRA) of the proposed Houston Solar Photovoltaic (PV) and energy storage facility (hereafter referred to as the Development) near Houston, Renfrewshire (Central Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: NS 43100 67252). The location of the proposed development is shown in Figure 1.

This sHRA examines firstly whether or not the proposed Development is likely to give rise to a significant effect on any European site, and secondly to assess the implications of the proposed development on European sites where likely significant effects could not be excluded at the first screening stage in the absence of mitigation measures.

The Planning Authority, in this case the Energy Consents Unit, shall be provided with this sHRA Report in support of the proposals and to assist the Planning Authority in its role as a Competent Authority fulfilling its duties in accordance with The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) otherwise known as The Habitats Regulations.

This report will assist the Competent Authority in fulfilling its duties in accordance with Regulation 43 of The Habitats Regulations, which transposes certain aspects of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC (the 'Habitats Directive').

1.1 Habitats Regulations Appraisal

The requirement and process for the consideration of potential impacts of plans and projects on European sites have followed the European Union's (EU) Habitats Directive. In terrestrial areas of the UK and territorial waters out to 12nm, the land and marine aspects of Habitats Directive and certain elements of the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) are transposed into UK law through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). These regulations are referred to as the Habitats Regulations.

The Habitats Regulations require that an HRA must be carried out on all plans and projects that are likely to have significant effects on European sites, which include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), candidate SACs (cSACs), Sites of Community Importance (SCI), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and as a matter of policy, possible SACs (pSACs), potential SPAs (pSPAs) and Ramsar Sites (listed under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance – where also designated as a European site).

It is recognised that following the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union, European sites in the UK are no longer considered "Natura 2000 sites" for the purpose of an assessment pursuant to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. However, pursuant to the relevant amendments to the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 following the departure of the UK from the EU¹, those sites still retain the same protection under UK law as they did prior to the UK's exit from the EU and the provisions of the Habitats Directive remain relevant.

According to European Commission (EC) guidance documents Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2019) and Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2021), the obligations arising under Article 6 establish a stepwise procedure as follows, and as illustrated in Plate 1.

¹ The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2019.

The three stages are:

1. Screening - to check if the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the site’s conservation objectives.
2. Appropriate Assessment - to assess the likely significant effects (LSEs) of the proposal identified in Stage 1 in more detail and identify ways to avoid or minimise any effects. To conclude if the proposal could have an adverse effect on the site integrity (AESI) or not.
3. Derogation - to consider if proposals that would have an AESI of a European site should qualify for an exemption.

Each step determines whether a further step in the process is required. If, for example, the conclusion at the end of Stage 1 is that LSE on the European site can be excluded, there is no requirement to proceed further.

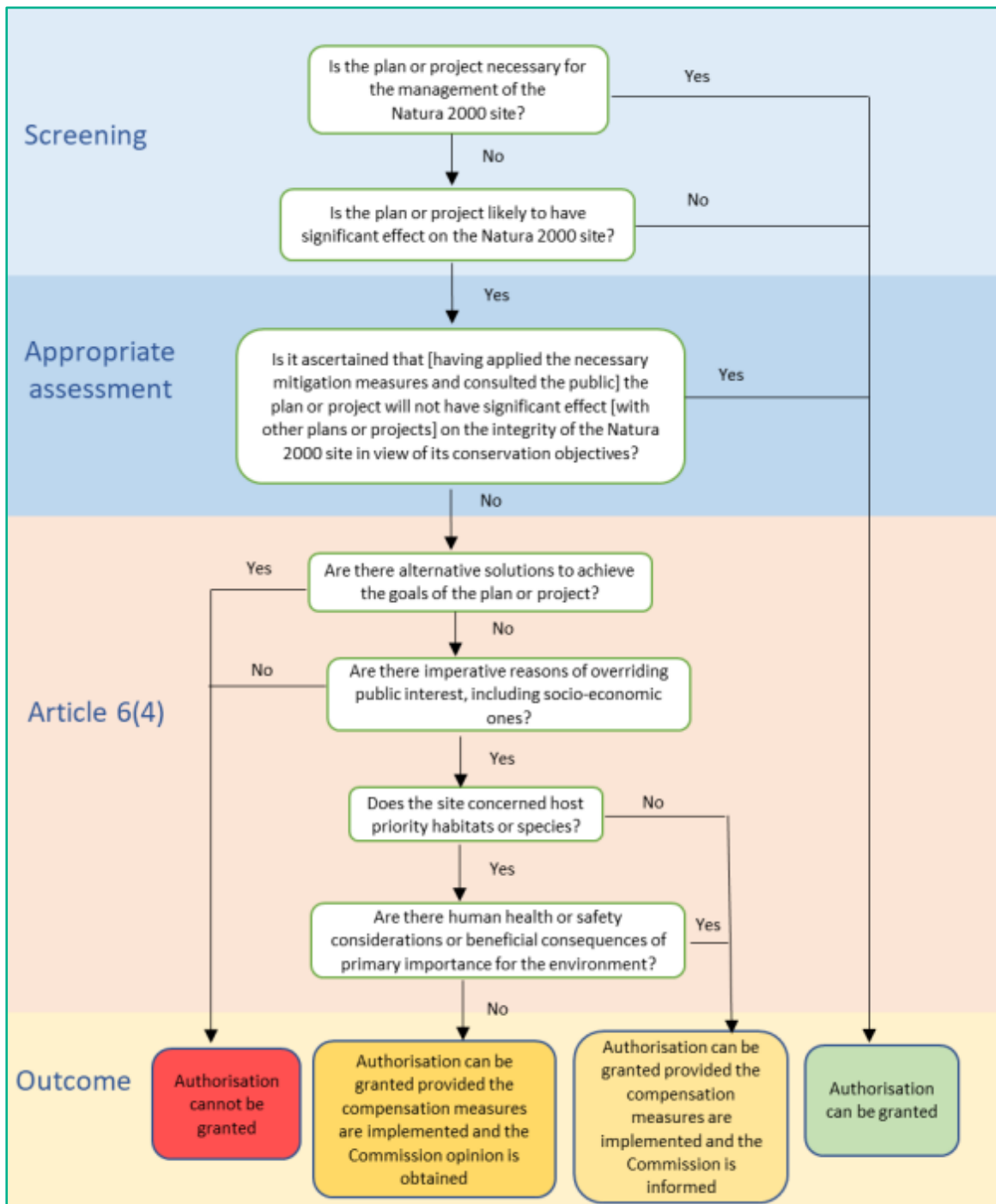


Plate 1: Stages of the HRA process (taken from EC, 2021)

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Guidance on HRA

The European Commission has published a number of documents which provide a significant body of guidance on the requirements of a HRA, most notably including, 'Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC' (EC, 2021), which sets out the principles of how to approach decision making during the process. Additional guidance was reviewed from NatureScot, the nature conservation body within Scotland.

These guidelines have been followed in the preparation of this report. The following list identifies these and other pertinent guidance documents:

- Nature and Biodiversity Cases Ruling of the European Court of Justice (European Commission (EC) (2006));
- Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EE. Clarification on the Concepts of: Alternative Solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission (EC, 2007);
- Managing Natura 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC' (EC, 2019);
- Guidance document on wind energy developments and EU nature legislation. European Commission Notice Brussels (2020) 7730 final (EC, 2020);
- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission Notice Brussels C(2021) 6913 final (EC, 2021); and
- Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA). This precautionary, rigorous and legally binding procedure protects Scotland's European sites (NatureScot, 2023).

2.2 Likely Significant Effect

The Commission's 2019 Notice (EC, 2019) advises that the appropriate assessment procedure under Article 6(3) is triggered not by the certainty but by the likelihood of significant effects, arising from plans or projects regardless of their location inside or outside a protected site. Such likelihood exists if significant effects on the site cannot be excluded. The significance of effects should be determined in relation to the specific features and environmental conditions of the site concerned by the plan or project, taking particular account of the site's conservation objectives and ecological characteristics.

The threshold for a Likely Significant Effect ("LSE") is treated in the screening exercise as being above a *de minimis* level. A *de minimis* effect is a level of risk that is too small to be concerned with when considering ecological requirements of a Habitats Directive Annex I habitat or a population of Annex II species present on a European site necessary to ensure their favourable conservation condition. If low level effects on habitats or individuals of species are judged to be in this order of magnitude and that judgment has been made in the absence of reasonable scientific doubt, then those effects are not considered to be LSEs.

Case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has confirmed that a significant effect is triggered when:

- there is a probability or a risk of a plan or project having a significant effect on a European site;
- the plan is likely to undermine the site's conservation objectives; and
- a significant effect cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information.

The requirement that the effect in question be 'significant' exists in order to lay down a *de minimis* threshold. Plans or projects that have no appreciable effect on a European site are thereby excluded. If all plans or projects capable of having any effect whatsoever on the site were to be caught by Article 6(3), activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill.

2.3 Mitigation Measures

In determining whether or not LSE will occur or can be excluded in the Stage 1 appraisal, measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the proposed development on European sites, (i.e., "mitigation measures") or best practice measures have not been taken into account. This approach is consistent with EU guidance and the case law of the CJEU.

EC (2021) states that "*project and plan proponents are often encouraged to design mitigation measures into their proposals at the outset. However, it is important to recognise that the screening assessment should be carried out in the absence of any consideration of mitigation measures that form part of a project or plan and are designed to avoid or reduce the impact of a project or plan on a Natura 2000 site*". This direction in the European Commission's guidance document is unambiguous in that it does not permit the inclusion of mitigation at screening stage.

In April 2018, the CJEU issued a ruling in case C-323/17 *People Over Wind & Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta* ("People Over Wind") that Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43/EEC must be interpreted as meaning that, in order to determine whether it is necessary to carry out, subsequently, an appropriate assessment of the implications, for a site concerned, of a plan or project, it is not appropriate, at the screening stage, to take account of the measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site.

The judgment in *People Over Wind* is further reinforced in EC (2019) which refers to CJEU Case C-323/17.

2.4 Consideration of ex situ Effects

The EC advises that Member States, both in their legislation and in their practice, allow for the Article 6(3) safeguards to be applied to any development pressures, including those which are external to European sites but which are likely to have significant effects on any of them (EC, 2019).

The CJEU developed this point when it issued a ruling in case C-461/17 ("*Brian Holohan and Others v An Bord Pleanála*") that determined inter alia that Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43/EEC must be interpreted as meaning that an appropriate assessment must on the one hand, catalogue the entirety of habitat types and species for which a site is protected, and, on the other, identify and examine both the implications of the proposed project for the species present on that site, and for which that site has not been listed, and the implications for habitat types and species to be found outside the boundaries of that site, provided that those implications are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the site.

In that regard, consideration has been given in this sHRA to implications for habitats and species located both inside and outside of the European sites considered in the screening appraisal with reference to those sites' Conservation Objectives where effects upon those habitats and/or species are liable to affect the conservation objectives of the sites concerned.

2.5 In-Combination Effects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that in-combination effects with other plans or projects are also considered. As set by the EC, significance will vary depending on factors such as magnitude of impact, type, extent, duration, intensity, timing, probability, cumulative effects and the vulnerability of the habitats and species concerned (EC, 2019). Whilst the Directive does not explicitly define which other plans and projects are within the scope of the in-combination provision of Article 6(3), it is important to note that the underlying intention of this provision is to take account of cumulative impacts, and these will often only occur over time.

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In that context, one can consider plans or projects which are completed, approved but uncompleted, or proposed. The EC specifically advises that *“as regards other proposed plans or projects, on grounds of legal certainty it would seem appropriate to restrict the in-combination provision to those which have been actually proposed, i.e. for which an application for approval or consent has been introduced”* (EC, 2019).

3 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Development is situated on several land parcels totalling approximately 129 hectares (ha). The northernmost land parcel (Houston North) is located approximately 520m northeast of Houston Village, and the two southernmost (Houston South) parcels are located south of the B790 Houston Road, approximately 1km east of Houston Village (Figure 1). Houston North and Houston South are separated by the River Gryfe and an additional land parcel and will be connected by a cable (Connection Area). The current land use within the Development is a combination of arable fields and grazing pasture. Much of the Development site is bordered by other arable fields or pasture, but some areas of woodland border both Houston North and Houston South.

The proposed Development includes the installation of a solar farm with approximate capacity of 75MW, battery energy storage system with approximate capacity of 25MW and associated infrastructure. Connection to the National Grid is not included in the Development. The Development is expected to include the following elements:

- Photovoltaic (PV) solar panels erected on steel frames;
- Battery energy storage facility sited on concrete plinths;
- A primary substation, comprising electrical infrastructure and associated buildings;
- Numerous inverter substation containers on concrete plinths;
- Underground main cables connecting exposed cables from the panels with the inverter substations;
- CCTV security cameras at several locations (approximately 3m high);
- Perimeter post and wire deer fencing (approximately 2.5m high);
- Internal access tracks; and
- Two temporary construction compounds (Houston North and Houston South).

The primary substation will be located within Houston South, a smaller connecting substation will be located in Houston North and an underground cable will connect the two via the Connection Area. The final route of the connecting cable is still to be determined but two options are proposed:

1. Cable on the south side of the B790/Houston Road running east for approximately 360m and then being directed southwards across agricultural land for approximately 850m. The cable would cross the River Gryfe by either overhead cable or directional drilling.
2. Cable on the south side of the B790/Houston Road running east for approximately 850m and then proceeding south along the western side of Moss Road for approximately 900m until it reaches Houston South. The cable would cross the River Gryfe via Fulwood Bridge along Moss Road.

Construction is anticipated to be undertaken over a 16 week period and it is anticipated that the Development will have an operating life of 40 years. After operation, all panels and associated infrastructure will be removed and the site reinstated with a scheme agreed with the Planning Authority at that time.

4 STAGE 1: SCREENING

4.1 Identification of European Sites

This screening exercise considers designated European sites within 20km of the proposed Development. The proposed Development must be screened against those European sites for which a pathway of effect can be established between a receptor and the source of an effect. The site of the proposed project is not located within the boundary of any European site of nature conservation importance. A total of five European sites were identified within 20km radius of the proposed Development (Table 1, Figure 2).

Table 1: European sites within 20km of the proposed Development

Site Name	Distance from proposed Development (km)	Qualifying features	Conservation objectives for SPAs only
Black Cart SPA	1.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whooper swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> – non-breeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained; and
Inner Clyde SPA	4.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redshank <i>Tringa tetanus</i> – non-breeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population of the species as a viable component of the site; Distribution of the species within site; Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species; Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species; and No significant disturbance of the species.
Inner Clyde Ramsar	4.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redshank – non-breeding 	
Renfrewshire Heights SPA	8.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i> – breeding 	
Loch Lomond SPA	19.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capercaillie <i>Tetrao urogallus</i> – breeding Greenland white-fronted goose <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> – non-breeding 	

4.2 Establishing LSE

The possibility of LSE is considered in this report using the source-pathway-receptor model. A ‘source’ is defined as the individual elements of the Development that have the potential to affect the identified ecological feature (or receptor). A ‘pathway’ is defined as the means or route by which a source can affect the ecological feature. An ‘ecological feature’ is defined as a qualifying feature of the SPA or SAC for which conservation objectives have been set for the European sites under consideration (Table 1).

Each element can exist independently however an effect is created when there is a linkage between the source, pathway and receptor. Table 2 reviews the potential for LSE on each of the five European sites using the source-pathway-receptor model.

Table 2: Identification of LSE for European sites within 20km of the proposed Development

Site Name	Qualifying features	Potential LSE	Take to Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment?
Black Cart SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whooper swan – non-breeding 	Whooper swan was recorded within the Site Boundary of the Development and 1.9km is within the winter foraging distance for this species (NatureScot, 2016) Therefore there is potential for LSE to occur due to the proposed Development.	Yes
Inner Clyde SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redshank – non-breeding 	Redshank was not recorded within the Site Boundary of the Development and the Site Boundary does not provide the coastal foraging habitat that redshank in the SPA use. Therefore there is no potential for LSE to occur due to the proposed Development.	No
Inner Clyde Ramsar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redshank– non-breeding 		
Renfrewshire Heights SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hen Harrier– breeding 	Hen harrier was not recorded within the Site Boundary of the Development and the habitats present are not optimum for this species. In addition, the Site Boundary is outside of the 2km core range for breeding hen harrier (NatureScot, 2016). Therefore there is no potential for LSE to occur due to the proposed Development.	No
Loch Lomond SPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capercaillie– breeding Greenland white-fronted goose– non-breeding 	There is no suitable habitat for capercaillie within the Site Boundary, whereas the habitats on site could support Greenland white-fronted goose. However, during the eight winter goose surveys, no Greenland white-fronted goose were recorded within the site boundary or flying over. Therefore there is no potential for LSE to occur due to the proposed Development.	No

4.3 Summary of Stage 1: Screening

Having considered the possibility for LSE on the European sites within 20km of the proposed Development, in the absence of mitigation, LSEs cannot be excluded for the Black Cart SPA. Therefore, the Black Cart SPA is taken forward to Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment of this sHRA.

5 STAGE 2: APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

This scientific examination and analysis of the implications of the proposed Development considers the potential LSEs that could not be excluded at the screening stage on a single European site namely, the Black Cart SPA, in view of its conservation objectives.

In assessing the implications at this second stage, further evaluation and analysis must be undertaken to characterise the impacts that may occur, and to apply measures to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects to determine whether or not AEIS will occur.

5.1 Black Cart SPA

There is a potential for LSE to occur from the loss of functionally linked land through direct habitat loss during operation and indirect disturbance during construction. The proposed Development is outside of the Black Cart SPA boundary but records of whooper swan (the qualifying feature) were recorded within the Site Boundary during field surveys in winter 2022/23 and the Site Boundary is within the 5km core winter foraging range for the species (NatureScot, 2016).

5.1.1 Whooper swans within the Black Cart SPA

The Black Cart SPA supported a population of 207 whooper swan at the time of designation. The population estimate was calculated using the five year peak mean from 1993/4 to 1997/8, which represented approximately 4% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5,600 birds). The latest five year peak mean (2017/18 to 2021/22) is 24 birds (Austin *et al.*, 2023). In January 2010, NatureScot as part of a site management statement for Black Cart Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (which is the national designation that underpins the European site), concluded that the site was “Favourable, declining” as the population was estimated at 140 birds.

In the same time period, the number of birds wintering in Great Britain has increased to approximately 16,100 (Frost *et al.*, 2019), a 187% increase since 1998. Therefore, the current population of Black Cart SPA currently represents approximately 0.15% of Great Britain’s wintering whooper swan.

Within the site management statement (from January 2010), it was noted that the species has been on decline since designation, with changes in usage of the site and crop rotation noted (NatureScot, 2010).

5.1.2 Site Baseline

As summarised above, the proposed Development has potential to give rise to LSE upon whooper swan populations which potentially originating from the Black Cart SPA, through the loss of wintering foraging habitats including areas of improved grassland and arable land which are functionally linked to the SPA.

The Development site was subject to survey to establish its importance for foraging swans (and goose) populations. The Site Boundary plus a 500m buffer was surveyed once a month between October 2022 and April 2023, with two surveys in March 2023, and all observations of swans (flying over or within the site) or field signs (e.g., droppings, feathers) were recorded (Table 3: Summary of whooper swan field survey results).

Table 3: Summary of whooper swan field survey results

Survey Date	Total Count	Location of Observation	Notes
27/10/2022			No whooper swans observed
17/11/2022			No whooper swans observed
09/12/2022			No whooper swans observed
11/01/2023	2	Connection Area	Observed feeding in a field between Houston North and River Gryfe.
09/02/2023	2	Houston North	Two observed within the westernmost field.
	2	Flying over Houston North	Flying over the fields, surveyor noted different pair to above.
	2	Connection Area	Observed feeding in a field between Houston North and River Gryfe.
	6	Survey Buffer (Houston South)	Observed feeding in a field approximately 400m to the west of Houston South.
02/03/2023	2	Connection Area	Observed feeding in a field to the south of the River Gryfe.
13/03/2023			No whooper swans observed
05/04/2023	5	Survey Buffer (Houston South)	Observed feeding in a field approximately 450m to the west of Houston South.

The maximum number of birds recorded within the survey area (redline boundary and 500m buffer) on one survey visit was ten birds during the February 2023 survey, comprising four birds to the north of the River Gryfe and six birds to the south of the river, although there is potential that some of these are the same birds. Assuming that these were all different individuals, this represents up to 42% of the current Black Cart SPA population or 5% of the population at designation. There were 19 swan-days over the eight survey visits, or on average two whooper swan per visit. The usage of the site was not habitual, and birds were recorded in different fields during each survey.

5.1.3 Temporary loss of functionally linked land through disturbance and displacement

During construction of the proposed Development, whooper swan could be displaced from the entire footprint of the site, due to visual and noise disturbance. The movement of plant, machinery and people to facilitate the construction of the proposed Development could cause the birds to be disturbed and displaced. On a precautionary basis due to the disturbance sensitivity of whooper swan, the entire site boundary plus a 500m buffer is considered to be temporarily lost during construction, an area of approximately 580ha.

Whooper swan has a core winter foraging range of less than 5km (NatureScot, 2016), therefore each swan could forage over an approximate 6,361 ha, when using a 4.5km core range. The impacted area is therefore up to 9% of the potential foraging range of whooper swan from Black Cart SPA. Additionally, whooper swans from the Black Cart SPA have been described as feeding between Linwood and the SPA boundary, an area that is at least 1km south of the Development Site Boundary (Robinson *et. al.*, 2004). Therefore, although the Site Boundary is within the core feeding range of whooper swans, it is outside of the area that the flock from the SPA is considered to use for foraging.

It should be noted that the construction of the Development would not all occur over the entire site concurrently, with elements undertaken at different points throughout the 16 weeks of construction, therefore the complete loss of the 580ha is unlikely to occur. Similarly, the applicant has not specified a season when construction is likely, but whooper swans are only present during the winter months (October to early April).

As whooper swan could still access approximately 91% of their potential foraging range, including the area that the SPA population is recorded as primarily using, it is unlikely that if construction occurs over 16 weeks within winter that there would be an adverse effect on the on the conservation objectives of whooper swan

(the qualifying feature) of the Black Cart SPA. Therefore, in the context of the site's conservation objectives, the condition of qualifying species interest features as a viable component of the European site and the availability of foraging areas for the qualifying features will be maintained. Overall, the temporary loss of functionally linked land through disturbance and displacement is considered to result **in no potential for an AESI on the habitat and bird interest features of the Black Cart SPA.**

5.1.4 Permanent loss of functionally linked land

During the operation of the proposed Development, some land parcels within the Site Boundary (e.g., Houston South and Houston North) will be permanently lost as a foraging area for whooper swan during the 40 year lifespan of the Development. The total area potentially lost due to installation of the PV panels and substation is approximately 116ha, of which 112ha is suitable for whooper swan grazing (arable and grassland).

As stated above the potential core foraging range of whooper swan is approximately 6,361ha (using a 4.5km core range), and therefore the permanent loss of 112 ha is 1.8% of potential foraging area. Therefore, whooper swans from Black Cart SPA still have 98.2% of their foraging range to use.

There usage recorded during the site specific survey included just two whooper swans within the arable land to be lost, whereas the other 17 sightings consisted of birds using the survey buffer and Connection Area, both of these areas will still be useable to the species.

Therefore, in the context of the site's conservation objectives, the condition of qualifying species interest features as a viable component of the European site and the availability of foraging areas for the qualifying features will be maintained. Overall, the permanent loss of functionally linked land is considered to result **in no potential for an AESI on the habitat and bird interest features of the Black Cart SPA.**

5.2 In-combination with other plans and projects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that in-combination effects with other plans or projects are considered. Two projects were identified from Renfrewshire Council's planning website and the Energy Consent Unit of the Development for which an assessment of the impact on the Black Cart SPA was undertaken. Details of the plans and projects are provided within .

Both of the other solar farms applications included HRAs due to the close location to the Black Cart SPA, and both projects have conditions placed upon them that construction cannot occur between October and April to protect the whooper swan. The overhead line application did record whooper swan flights, but mostly in the River Clyde and not at flight risk height and therefore no HRA was undertaken for Black Cart SPA. Therefore, there is no potential for impact during the construction of the proposed Development in-combination with other plans and projects.

During operation the Inchinnan Solar Farm it would lead to a permanent loss of approximately 23ha and the Walkinshaw Gardens, Barnsford Road - Solar farm would lead to a permanent loss of approximately 17ha of foraging habitat. In combination, the proposed Development and the previously consented solar farms would lead to a potential permanent loss of 152ha of functionally linked land, this is approximately 2.4% of the total core foraging range of whooper swans.

When the effects of the proposed project are considered in-combination with other plans and projects within the vicinity, no significant additional habitat loss or disturbance risk has been identified on SPA-associated whooper swan that would result in an adverse effect on the conservation objectives of the Black Cart SPA.

Table 4: Projects assessed for in-combination effects on the Black Cart SPA

Project Name (planning reference)	Development	Decision and date	Assessment of SPA?	Approximate distance from proposed Development (km)	Approximate distance to Black Cart SPA (km)
Inchinnan Solar Farm (22/0582/PP)	Erection of 14.3 MW solar park and associated infrastructure.	Approved 24th Jan 2023	Yes, concluded no AESI in HRA, subject to mitigation during construction.	2.8km	0.75km
Walkinshaw Gardens, Barnsford Road - Solar farm (22/0746/PP)	Erection of 19.9 MW solar park and battery storage facility.	Approved 6th April 2023	Yes, concluded no AESI in HRA subject to mitigation during construction.	3.7km	0.1km
Erskine to Devol Moor 132kV Overhead Line Replacement (ECU00002085)	Installation of a new 16.9km 132kV overhead line between Erskine and Devol Moor.	Yet to be decided	Yes, no potential impact on the SPA. No HRA undertaken.	3.5km	3.0km

6 CONCLUSION

This report has assessed the proposed Development as described in Section 3, having regard to relevant HRA legislation outlined in Section 1 and methodological guidance outlined in Section 2.

A Stage 1 screening appraisal was completed in Section 4 to determine whether or not LSEs on any European site could be excluded as a result of the construction or operation of the proposed Development.

From the findings of the screening stage appraisal, the possibility of LSE upon whooper swan from the Black Cart SPA could not be excluded due to the proposed development being within connectivity distance for this species (NatureScot, 2016) and the species being recorded in low numbers during the site specific survey.

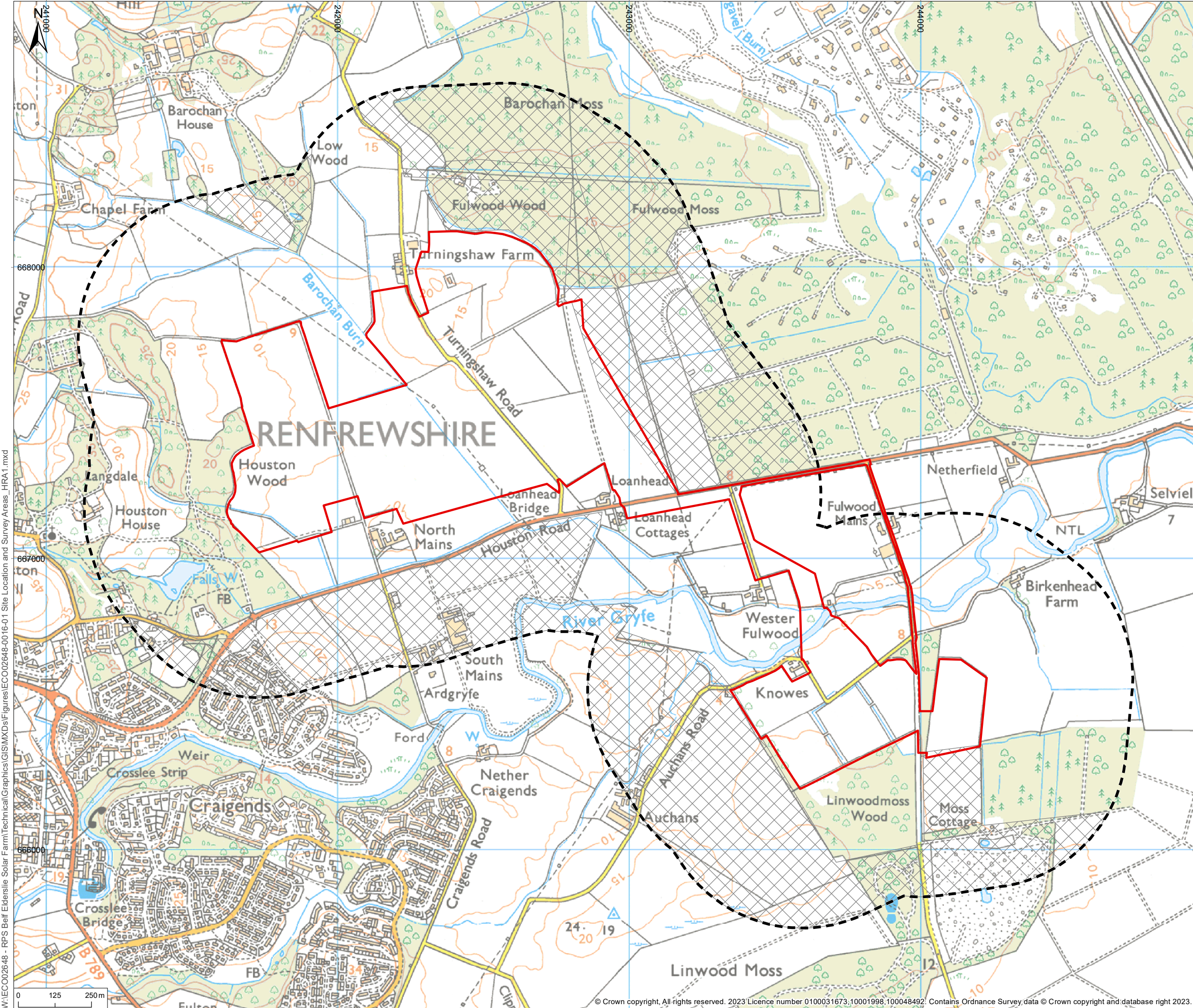
Based on a review of the available evidence, there is considered to be **no potential for an AESI on the interest features of any European/Ramsar sites either alone and/or in-combination with other plans and projects** through the loss of functionally linked land (temporally and permanently). It is therefore considered that the proposed works can be undertaken in adherence with the requirements of the Habitat Regulations.

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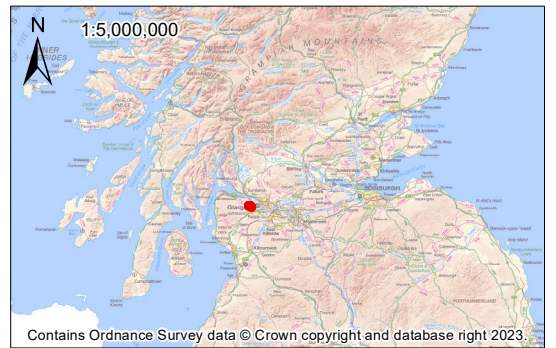


FIGURES



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- Legend**
- Site boundary
 - Wintering goose and swan survey area (500m buffer)
 - No access



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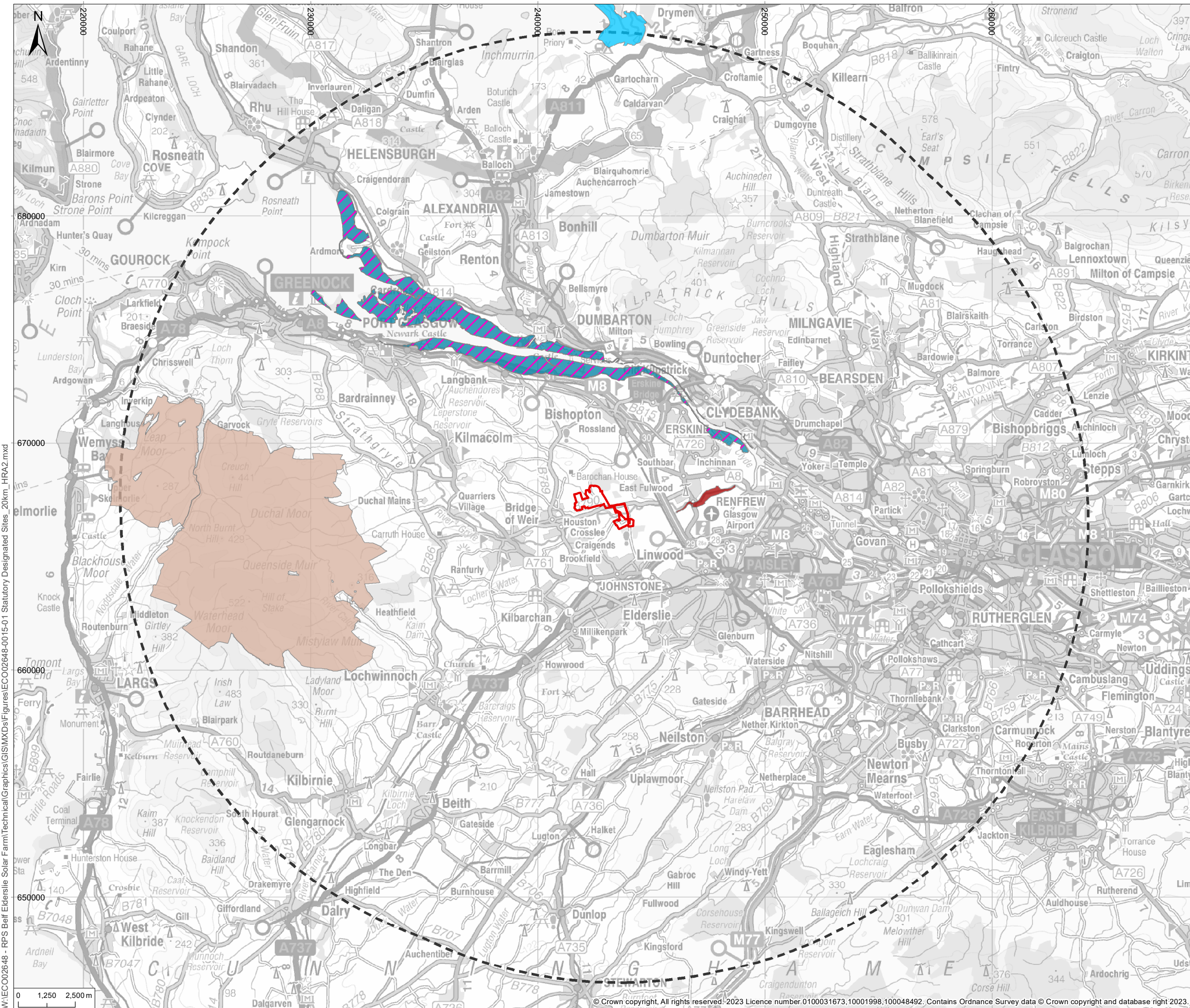
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 Project **Houston Solar Farm**
 Title **Site Location and Survey Areas**

Status **FINAL** Drawn By **KAG** PM/Checked By **NW**
 Project Number **ECO02648** Scale @ A3 **1:12,500** Date Created **JUN 2023**
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- Legend**
- Site boundary
 - Search area (20km buffer)
 - Inner Clyde Ramsar Site
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)**
- Black Cart
 - Inner Clyde
 - Loch Lomond
 - Renfrewshire Heights

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Project **Houston Solar Farm**

Title **Statutory Designated Sites within 20km**

Status **FINAL** Drawn By **KAG** PM/Checked By **NW**

Project Number **ECO02648** Scale @ A3 **1:160,000** Date Created **JUN 2023**

Figure Number **2** Rev **-**

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