

**RWE Renewables UK Dogger Bank
South (West) Limited**

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South (East) Limited**

**Dogger Bank South Offshore
Wind Farms**

**Guillemot and Razorbill Compensation Site
Secondary Shortlist Refinement Report**

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Development Consent Order (DCO)	An order made under the Planning Act 2008 granting development consent for one or more Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP).
Habitats Regulations	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
Intertidal	Area on a shore that lies between Mean High Water Springs (MHWS) and Mean Low Water Springs (MLWS).
Sea level	Generally, refers to 'still water level' (excluding wave influences) averaged over a period of time such that periodic changes in level (e.g. due to the tides) are averaged out.
The Applicants	The Applicants for the Projects are RWE Renewables UK Dogger Bank South (East) Limited and RWE Renewables UK Dogger Bank South (West) Limited. The Applicants are themselves jointly owned by the RWE Group of companies (51% stake) and Masdar (49% stake).
Wave height	The vertical distance between the crest and the trough.
Wind turbine	Power generating device that is driven by the kinetic energy of the wind.

Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AA	Appropriate Assessment
AEoI	Adverse Effect on Integrity
DBS	Dogger Bank South
DCO	Development Consent Order
FFC SPA	Flamborough and Filey Coast Special Protection Area
HAR	Habitat Assessment and Restoration Ltd
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
NSN	National Site Network
RIAA	Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment
SoS	Secretary of State
SPA	Special Protection Area
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

1 Introduction

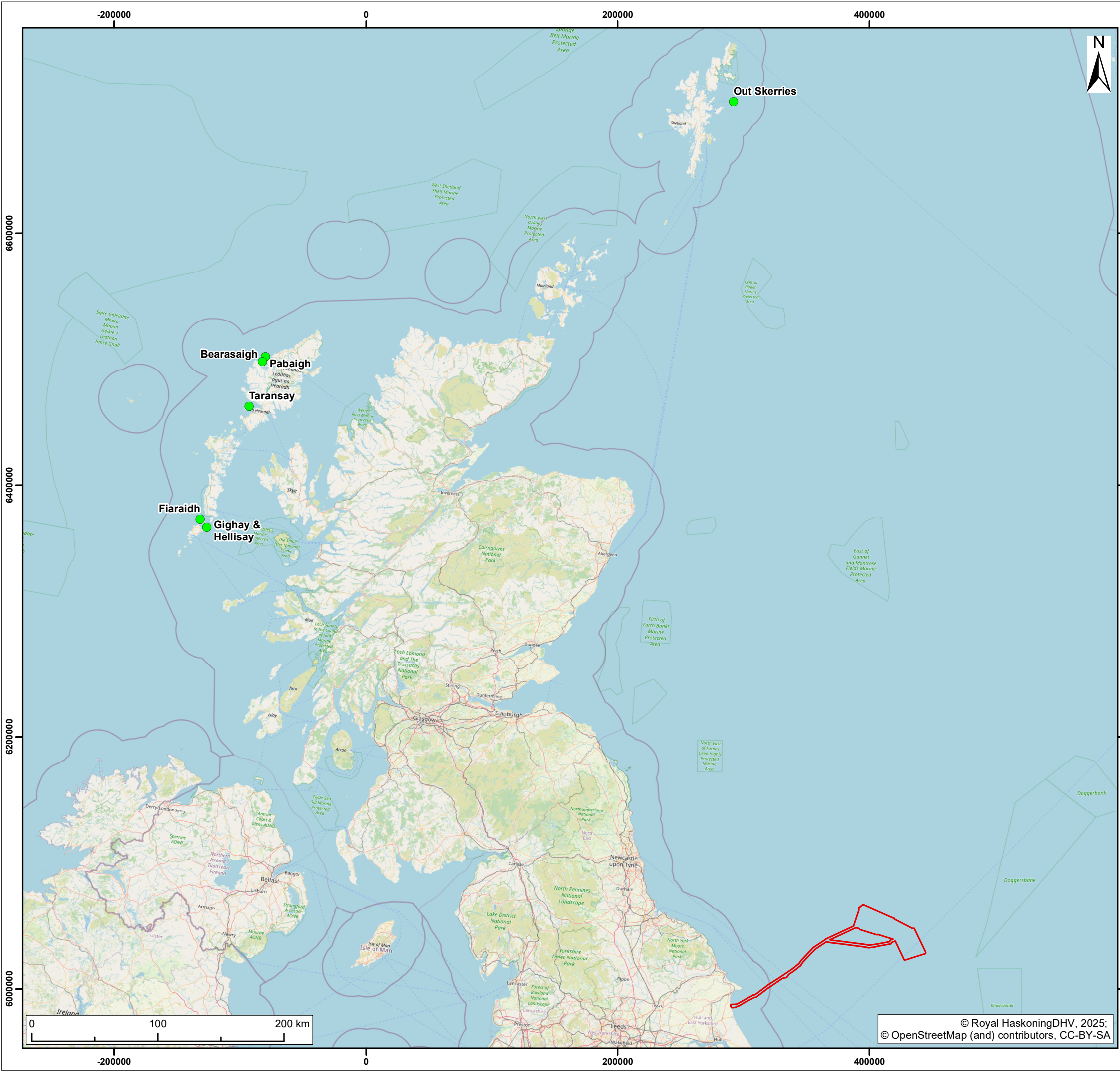
1.1 Background

1. RWE Renewables UK Dogger Bank South (East) Limited and RWE Renewables UK Dogger Bank South (West) Limited ('the Applicants') are applying for a single Development Consent Order (DCO) for both the Dogger Bank South (DBS) East and DBS West Offshore Wind Farms (hereafter referred to as 'the Projects'). When fully operational, the Projects would have the potential to generate renewable power for over 3 million homes in the United Kingdom (UK) from up to 200 wind turbines.
2. As part of their application, the Applicants have submitted the **Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)** (Part 4 of 4 - Marine ornithological Features) (Revision 4) [REP4-017] which provides the information necessary for the competent authority to undertake an appropriate assessment (AA) to determine if there is any adverse effect on integrity (AEol) of sites within the UK National Site Network (NSN).
3. The Applicants concluded that for the guillemot (*Uria aalge*) feature of the Flamborough and Filey (FFC) Special Protection Area (SPA) Adverse Effect on Integrity (AEol) could not be ruled out for displacement risk in-combination with other offshore wind farms. For the razorbill (*Alca torda*) feature of the FFC SPA the Applicants concluded that AEol could be ruled out but acknowledge that the Secretary of State (SoS) may come to a different conclusion. Similarly, the Applicants concluded that there would be no AEol for the guillemot feature of the Farne Islands SPA, however, acknowledge that Natural England have advised that they are unable to conclude no AEol on guillemot at the Farne Islands SPA in combination with other offshore wind farms. The Applicants have therefore proposed compensation for guillemot from the FFC SPA and, without prejudice, for razorbill from the FFC SPA and guillemot from the Farne Islands SPA. The compensation requirements for a variety of displacement, mortality and apportionment values are presented in the **Appendix 2 – Guillemot [and Razorbill] Compensation Plan (Revision 4)** [REP4-025].
4. **Appendix 2 – Guillemot [and Razorbill] Compensation Plan (Revision 4)** [REP4-025] also sets out the proposed compensation measure, predator eradication/control. A shortlist of eight potential locations for implementation of the compensatory measure was initially identified through desk based assessment, from an original longlist of 82 sites (**Annex B - Guillemot [and Razorbill] Compensation Predator Eradication / Control Site Longlist** [APP-058]). The refinement work that was undertaken on this initial shortlist is documented in the **Guillemot and Razorbill Compensation Site Shortlist Refinement Report (Revision 2)** [REP3-019]. Out of these eight potential locations, seven were discounted as possible compensation sites and the eighth, the Isles of Scilly, was determined to be suitable only as a strategic option.
5. Therefore, a secondary shortlist of six additional sites was subsequently developed.

6. This document summarises the site refinement work that has been undertaken in order to select locations from the secondary shortlist to take forward to the next phase of predator eradication feasibility work, the pre-eradications surveys, which would inform how an eradication would be conducted in practice.

1.2 Shortlisted Sites

7. The secondary shortlist was developed by Habitat Assessment and Restoration Ltd (HAR) based on a desk study and specialist technical knowledge. Having exhausted potential sites in England, Wales and Northern Ireland the focus of the shortlisting exercise was on Scottish sites. This included those that appeared on **Annex B - Guillemot [and Razorbill] Compensation Predator Eradication / Control Site Longlist** [APP-058], an approach discussed with Natural England following their feedback on the initial shortlist, in addition to new sites added based on the experience gained over the last two years.
8. The shortlisting exercise also focused on locations in private ownership due to the approach of conservation bodies preferring a strategic approach rather than individual project-led projects. Specialist technical knowledge was used to exclude sites which are unlikely to provide suitable seabird habitat, where colonies are known to be in good health or where the absence of predators is confirmed.
9. The following sites were identified as possible compensation sites (**Figure 1-1**):
- Taransay, Outer Hebrides;
 - Bearasaigh Islands, Outer Hebrides;
 - Pabaigh, Outer Hebrides;
 - Fiaraidh, Outer Hebrides;
 - Gighay and Hellisay; Outer Hebrides; and
 - Out Skerries, Shetland.



- Legend:
- Offshore Development Area
 - Guillemot (and Razorbill) Compensation Sites

S2	P01	26/09/2025	Suitable for Information	FC	SB	EM
SUI	REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRW	CHK	APR

Title:

Guillemot (and Razorbill) Compensation Sites Secondary Shortlist

Figure: 1 Drawing No: PC2340-RHD-OF-ZZ-DR-Z-1120

Co-ordinate system: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 31N Page Size: A3 Scale: 1:3,000,000

Project: Dogger Bank South Offshore Wind Farms Report: DBS Projects



2 Methodology

2.1 Refining the Shortlist

10. In order to refine the shortlist four key questions need to be addressed:
 - Would a potential eradication be approved and supported?
 - Are invasive predators present?
 - Is habitat suitable for breeding auks?
 - Is there space for additional breeding auks and are they likely to be attracted?
11. These questions were answered through a combination of landowner engagement and site based surveys.

2.1.1 Landowner Consultation

12. Initial contact was made with the landowners / managers of the shortlisted sites by HAR prior to any site visits. This was to inform them of the intention to undertake boat based surveys and also to request engagement regarding the possibility of a future predator eradication on their land.
13. At this point several landowners / managers engaged and the opportunity was taken to gather additional information regarding the presence of invasive predators, the presence of seabirds and any past or proposed predator eradications. Where relevant, this information is reported with the survey results in section 3.

2.1.2 Site Reconnaissance Surveys

14. Site reconnaissance surveys were undertaken in June / July 2025 by HAR's experienced surveyors at the shortlisted sites in order to determine if there was:
 - an existing population of auks present;
 - the availability of suitable habitat for guillemot and razorbill to colonise; and
 - incidental evidence of predator presence.

2.1.2.1 Survey Methods

15. The site visits comprised boat transit around each location, with the exception of Taransay which was surveyed using vantage points and a drone from on the island. All surveys were undertaken following the methods described by Walsh *et al.* (1995) and Gilbert *et al.* (2011) to undertake counts of seabirds, although only a single count was undertaken at each location.

16. For the surveys, birds were viewed with binoculars and count data was recorded by hand in the field and transferred to digital records when ashore. In addition, a high-resolution photographic record was taken to enable verification of counts on return to the office. The count unit is individual adult guillemot on land (above intertidal areas). A colony is defined as an aggregation of breeding individuals sufficiently separated from adjacent groups. Total numbers of other notable seabird species were also recorded.

2.1.2.2 Habitat Assessment

17. The guillemot is a colonial, sea-cliff nesting species found in the North Atlantic and Pacific (Harris and Birkhead, 1985). The species is widespread along the British and Irish coasts.
18. Guillemots breed at varying, often high, densities on ledges, in cliff niches (**Plate 2-1**), among boulders (**Plate 2-2**) or on rock platforms (Harris *et al.*, 1996). Densities as high as 46 pairs/m² in ledge colonies have been reported (Harris and Wanless, 1987) while Harris and Birkhead (1985) state that guillemots breed at densities averaging around 20 pairs/m².



Plate 2-1 Guillemot nesting on cliff ledge habitat



Plate 2-2 Guillemot nesting in boulder and crevice habitat

19. Guillemots nest from the top of cliffs down to two metres above wave height at high tide and appear to show a preference for sites further away from cliff tops, sites that slope inwards and sites that have walls (Harris *et al.*, 1997).
20. They can nest on ledges that are substantially sloped, with slopes recorded to vary “from +50° (sloping down, outwards) to -30° (sloping inwards)”, but generally place their eggs on spots that are almost completely level (+5° to -5°) (Harris *et al.*, 1997).
21. Birds show a preference for breeding next to members of the same species, and new breeders join existing colonies (Birkhead, 1977; Harris *et al.*, 1997).
22. On seabird islands, guillemots are also found to nest at lower densities than ledge colonies under boulders and on ledges in cavities, potentially related to high predation pressure and / or the absence of preferred ledges.
23. The focus of the habitat assessment was on guillemot suitability; however razorbill have relatively similar habitat requirements albeit with a preference for more enclosed nesting spaces on the periphery of colonies (Hipfner and Dussereault, 2001; JNCC, 2021).

2.1.2.3 Estimation of Available Nesting Habitat

24. Habitat visually assessed during the site visit as unoccupied and matching known guillemot breeding preferences (section 2.1.2.2) was photographed and the size of these areas was estimated with the aid of a laser measurement tool, and scaling on photographs.

25. Horizontal and inclined rocky ledges and platforms (greater than or equal to an estimated 0.3m ledge depth), and crevices and boulder fields on favourable aspects of the island were included in these estimates. The high tide mark plus a 2m 'splash zone' was subtracted from the measured height of the unoccupied island features to provide an estimate of the total area of habitat available for additional nesting.
26. At this stage the estimate of available habitat is a relatively crude measurement and to account unevenness in terrain, a multiplier of 0.5 has been applied to the area of observed available habitat. In addition sheltered and exposed habitats were delineated, with the area of sheltered habitat considered to be of good quality and the exposed area as moderate.

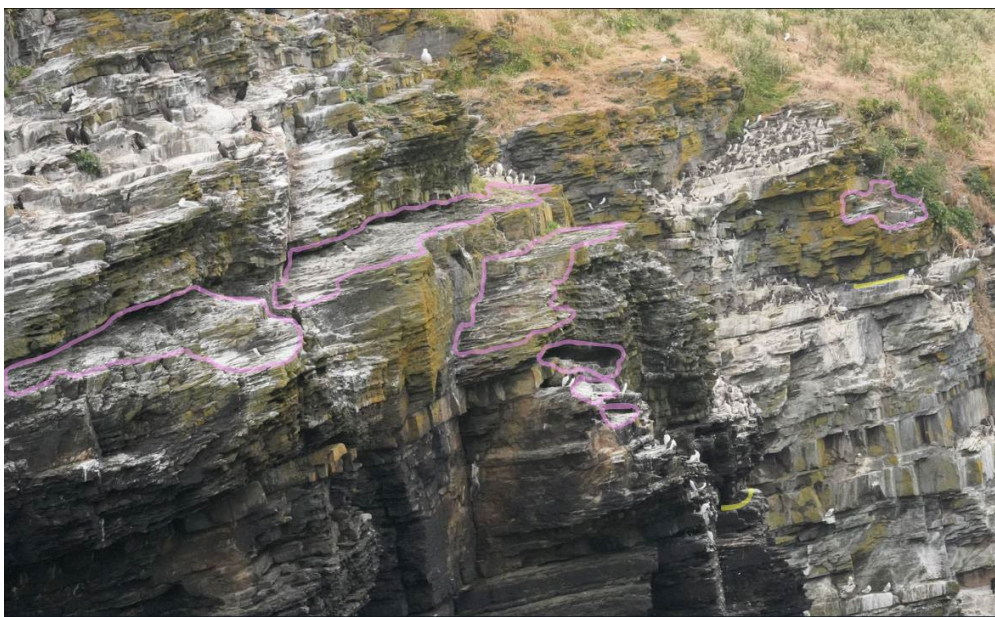


Plate 2-3 Example of unoccupied wide ledge/crevice nesting habitat (circled in pink)



Plate 2-4 Example of unoccupied narrow ledge nesting habitat (underlined yellow)

27. Although the estimate of available habitat is high-level, a range of nesting densities have been applied to give an initial indication of the number of breeding pairs that could be accommodated at each location. Two values were generated for each site based upon nesting densities quoted in the literature, one based on the conservative nesting density of 20 pairs/m² quoted in Harris and Birkhead (1985) and one based on the higher density of 46 pairs/m² reported in Harris and Wanless (1987).
28. Natural England provided comments on the **Guillemot and Razorbill Compensation Site Shortlist Refinement Report (Revision 2)** [REP3-019] regarding nesting densities in their Deadline 4 submission (REP4-125). Natural England stated that they '*...consider that the potential numbers of breeding pairs estimated by the Applicant are likely to be unrealistically high, and we advise the Applicant also includes results using lower nesting densities when assessing the habitat potential...*'. Taking account of these comments, a further three nesting densities, 2.5 pairs/m², 5.5 pairs/m², and 10 pairs/m² were also applied to the area of available habitat.

2.1.3 Predator Surveys

2.1.3.1 Survey Methods

29. Following the reconnaissance surveys, predator surveys were proposed for September / October 2025 at three locations, Bearasaigh islands, Pabaigh and Out Skerries. These surveys were conducted through a combination of night-time aerial surveys using a thermal camera enabled drone, camera traps and more traditional non-toxic baited trapping. The aim of the surveys was to confirm the presence of rats at each of the locations. It was not intended at this stage to gather information on abundance or to obtain tissue samples for analysis.

3 Results

30. The following section presents a summary of the work undertaken over summer 2025, including information obtained from landowner consultation, literature reviews, the survey results and the data analysis undertaken on the data collected.

3.1 Habitat Assessment

31. Surveys were performed between 16th June and 15th July 2025 at the locations shown in **Table 3-1**.

Table 3-1 Site survey dates and methods

Location	Survey Dates	Survey Method
Taransay	16 th – 20 th June 2025	Land based and UAV
Bearasaigh islands	21 st June 2025	Boat based
Pabaigh	21 st June 2025	Boat based
Fiaraidh	8 th July 2025	Boat based
Gighay and Hellisay	8 th July 2025	Boat based
Out Skerries	15 th July 2025	Boat based

3.1.1 Taransay

32. Taransay is the largest uninhabited island in the UK at 1457ha and rising to 267m above sea level at the highest point. The next nearest island is Harris, Outer Hebrides, which is less than 1km away at the closest point on a low tide. Taransay is characterised by rugged upland terrain, areas of dunes and small rugged cliffs. Many of the cliff areas are located on the southwestern peninsula of Aird Mhànaìs.
33. There is a long history of human habitation on the island, with the last inhabitants leaving Taransay in the 1970s. The island currently sees day visitors, tours and occasional overnight groups during the summer months. There is one bothy and one farm building still in use.
34. Taransay is under private ownership and is managed as part of a larger estate. During the initial conversations, it became clear that wildlife conservation and island restoration are important to the landowners. The island is currently the subject of an ecological monitoring and restoration programme to restore Taransay to Celtic rainforest.

35. The landowners had no information on the presence of rats but confirmed that the island had been subject to previous American mink eradication. During the site visit, which involved two thermal drone flights, two baited trail cameras and 40km of passive survey effort, no signs of rats or other invasive predatory mammals were recorded.
36. Seabird surveys, undertaken between the 16th-20th June 2025 through a combination of vantage point and UAV surveys, did not record any guillemot or razorbill breeding on Taransay, although several small groups were observed feeding off the north west coast. Taransay is approximately 36km from the nearest donor colony at the Shiant Isles.
37. Assessment of unoccupied cliff habitat on Taransay (**Plate 3-1**) estimated that there could be up to 8,907m² of suitable but exposed habitat.



Plate 3-1 Taransay

3.1.2 Bearasaigh Islands

38. The Bearasaigh islands comprises a group of islands off the north west coast of Great Bernera. The next nearest large island is Lewis, Outer Hebrides, which is less than 1km away at the closest point to Flodaigh on a low tide. The Bearasaigh group is characterised by rugged upland terrain and steep cliffs with sea caves.

39. There is some history of human habitation on the island of Bearasaigh. The Bearasaigh group do not receive many visitors aside from the occasional sea kayaker or tour boat. Not many people land on the islands and in the case of Bearasaigh and Sean Bheinn (**Plate 3-2**) access is steep and difficult.
40. The Bearasaigh group is in private ownership. The landowner had no information on the status of seabirds or predators on the islands. During circumnavigation of the islands a prominent track or run was observed on Sean Bheinn although it was unclear if this had been made by a predatory mammal. Further investigation was not possible due to the difficulty of access.
41. During the surveys on the 21st June 2025 guillemot and razorbill were observed to be nesting on Sean Bheinn and Bearasaigh in low numbers (1 guillemot and 10 razorbill on Sean Bheinn and 4 razorbill on Bearasaigh). Two of the islands, Haskeir and Flodaigh, had less suitable habitat and no auks seen to be breeding. Several small groups of auks were observed feeding close to the islands amongst other seabirds. In the 2021 seabird census 5 razorbill were recorded nesting on Bearasaigh and 27 on Sean Bheinn.
42. The Bernera island group is 38km from the nearest potential donor auk colony, the Flannan Isles. It should be noted that whilst a large colony, the Flannan Isles auk species have undergone decline between the seabird census in 2000 and 2023. The guillemot population has decreased 40-77%, whilst razorbills have decreased by 18-52%. The next nearest potential donor colony in good health is the Shiant, 50km away.
43. Assessment of unoccupied cliff habitat on the islands indicate that there could be up to 6,560m² of suitable sheltered habitat, along with up to 9,211m² of suitable exposed habitat (**Table 3-2**).



Plate 3-2 Sean Bheinn

Table 3-2 Estimates of potential auk nesting area per Bearasaigh island group

Island	Potential Sheltered area (m ²)	Potential exposed area (m ²)
Sean Bheinn	4,626	4,211
Mas Sgeir	0	3,205
Bearasaigh	1,094	840
Campaigh	841	955
Total	6,560	9,211

3.1.3 Pabaigh

44. Pabaigh is composed of two islands off the north coast of Lewis, near the township of Bhaltois. Pabaigh is approximately 350m from mainland Lewis, with a 0.25 ha stepping stone island between, reducing this distance to 200m.
45. The Pabaigh islands are characterised by rugged upland terrain and steep cliffs with sea caves. Between the two islands there is a sheltered bay and some beaches.
46. The two Pabaigh islands are each owned by a separate landowner. The landowners of Pabaigh Mor state that there are brown rats present on their island, particularly around the bothy where they visit as a family. The rats were described as a nuisance to the landowners due to the damage they cause to the bothies and therefore were enthusiastic about their eradication. The rats were described as an increasing problem since the eradication of American mink from Pabaigh as part of the NatureScot eradication programme.
47. Seabird surveys for guillemot and razorbill habitat on Pabaigh were conducted on 21st June 2025. During the survey no guillemots and razorbills were recorded nesting on Pabaigh. There were several small groups of auks observed feeding close to the islands amongst other seabirds.
48. Pabaigh is 37km from the nearest potential donor auk colony, the Flannan Isles. As previously noted that whilst a large colony, the Flannan Isles auks have undergone a decline between the seabird census in 2000 and 2023. The guillemot population has decreased 40-77%, whilst the razorbills have decreased by 18-52%. The next nearest potential donor colony in good health is the Shiantas, 48km away.
49. Estimates of sheltered unoccupied cliff habitat across the islands could be up to 5,917m² (2,664m² on Pabaigh Mor and 2,753m² on Pabaigh Beag). The proximity to mainland Lewis shelters the island from the prevailing wind.

3.1.4 Fiaraidh

- 50. The Sound of Barra is a body of water between Barra and Eriskay in the Outer Hebrides that contains a number of islands. Fiaraidh (53ha) is one of these islands, located 475m from Barra. The island is low-fertility with shallow topsoils atop Lewisian gneiss that have been denuded of vegetative diversity and trees for centuries of sheep grazing. Fiaraidh is currently uninhabited; however, it is actively managed for sheep grazing.
- 51. The island is legally owned by the Scottish Ministers and managed by the Eolaigearraidh Township Association, composed of 40 crofts in Eolaigearraidh and governed by 9 board members.
- 52. The township association confirmed the presence of rats on the island.
- 53. Surveys for guillemot and razorbill habitat on the Sound of Barra islands were conducted on 8th July 2025. No guillemots or razorbills were recorded nesting on Fiaraidh, however there were several small groups of auks observed feeding close to the islands amongst other seabirds. The next closest potential donor colony is Mingulay and Barra Head, 30km from Fiaraidh, where there are 37,000 guillemots and 20,000 razorbills. The guillemots and razorbills on Mingulay are increasing in population.
- 54. Estimates of unoccupied cliff habitat on the islands indicate that there could be up to 1,403m² of suitable sheltered habitat and 2,922m² of suitable exposed habitat.

3.1.5 Gighay and Hellisay

- 55. Gighay (112ha) and Hellisay (158ha) are two islands in the Sound of Barra in the Outer Hebrides (**Plate 3-3**). While the two islands are only 20m apart, a chain of islands between Gighay / Hellisay and Barra means the greatest distance is 700m. The islands are low-fertility with shallow topsoils atop Lewisian gneiss that have been denuded of vegetative diversity and trees for centuries of sheep grazing. Hellisay is the highest of the islands, with steep cliffs to the most southwestern point. The islands are uninhabited however, Hellisay and Gighay were briefly inhabited by some 140 crofters evicted from Barra during the clearances. Feral sheep roam both islands.



Plate 3-3 The protected bay between Gighay and Hellisay, locally named the 'blue lagoon' offering calm access to the two islands.

56. The islands are legally owned by the Scottish Ministers and are managed by the Eolaigearraidh Township Association, composed of 40 crofts in Eolaigearraidh and governed by 9 board members.
57. The township association could not confirm the presence of predatory mammals on Gighay and Hellisay, however the presence of rats on nearby islands, managed for sheep grazing was confirmed.
58. During the survey on 8th July 2025 no guillemots or razorbills were recorded nesting on Gighay or Hellisay, however there were several small groups of auks observed feeding close to the islands amongst other seabirds. Mingulay and Barra Head is the closest potential donor colony, where there are 37,000 guillemots and 20,000 razorbills, 27km away from Hellisay and Gighay. The guillemots and razorbills on Mingulay are increasing in population.
59. Estimates of unoccupied cliff habitat on the islands indicate that there could be up to 4,073m² of suitable sheltered habitat (2,823m² on Gighay and 1,251m² on Hellisay) and 3,564m² of suitable exposed habitat (1,423m² on Gighay and 2,141m² on Hellisay).

3.1.6 Out Skerries

60. The Out Skerries are an island group off the east coast of Shetland, forming the easternmost point of Scotland. Two of the three main islands, Housay (178 ha) (**Plate 3-4**) and Brunay (62 ha), are inhabited and connected by a bridge. The third main island, Grunay (35), was formerly inhabited. An infrequent ferry service serves the approximate population of less than 40 people. This service would need to be taken into account for biosecurity if the Out Skerries were taken forward for predator eradication/control.
61. The bedrock of the islands is Dalradian (metamorphic), resulting in low-fertility grasslands that have been denuded by a history of grazing, sharp cliffs on the southern coast of the islands, and boulder cliffs on the north coast of the islands.
62. The Out Skerries are privately owned. Rats have been confirmed as present on at least the inhabited islands of Out Skerries by the landowner.
63. There is a historical presence of razorbills on Out Skerries. In the 2001 JNCC Seabird Census, two razorbills nested on Bruray and three on Housay. There is also anecdotal evidence of a large breeding colony of guillemot (Shetland Islands Council, 2010). During the seabird survey on the 15th July 2025, no common guillemots or razorbills were recorded nesting on Out Skerries. Due to the relatively late July timing of the survey, it is unclear whether this was due to absence or the chicks had fledged already. However, there were many groups of auks observed feeding close to the islands amongst puffins.
64. The nearest potential donor colony of 24,000 guillemots is 32km away on Noss.



Plate 3-4 An example of cliffs at Housay

65. Although guillemots and razorbills were not recorded as breeding on the Out Skerries, assessment of unoccupied cliff habitat estimated that there could be up to 19,343m² of sheltered habitat across all the islands (**Table 3-3**), suitable for breeding guillemots and razorbills, among other cliff, boulder, and crevice nesting species. As well as up to 23,278m² of unoccupied exposed habitat.

Table 3-3 Estimates of potential auk nesting area per Out Skerries island

Island	Potential exposed area (m ²)	Potential Sheltered area (m ²)
Housay	15,655	5,600
Grunay	3,960	1,944
Bruray	0	6,986
Filla	2,021	2,632
Bound Skerry	1,642	1,708
North Benelip	0	473
Total	23,278	19,343

3.2 Estimation of Available Nesting Habitat

66. The area of available habitat at each site, described in section 3.1 is a high level assessment to inform an initial screening of sites and determine whether detailed survey is warranted. Nesting densities have been applied to these areas nonetheless to demonstrate that if even a fraction of the habitat identified is utilised post eradication, there is potential to provide a significant amount of compensation for the Projects (**Table 3-4**).

Table 3-4 High-level projection of available nesting habitat based on unrefined habitat assessment. Potential rat free nesting space presented as sheltered with exposed in brackets. Estimate of nesting pairs based on sheltered habitat only. Shaded rows represent sites taken forward for further assessment.

Location	Potential rat-free nesting space (m ²)	Estimated number of additional pairs				
		2.5 pairs/m ²	5.5 pairs/m ²	10 pairs/m ²	20 pairs/m ²	46 pairs/m ²
Taransay	0 (+8,907)	0	0	0	0	0
Bearasaigh islands	6,560 (+9,211)	16,400	36,080	65,600	131,200	301,760

Location	Potential rat-free nesting space (m ²)	Estimated number of additional pairs				
		2.5 pairs/m ²	5.5 pairs/m ²	10 pairs/m ²	20 pairs/m ²	46 pairs/m ²
Pabaigh	5,917	14,793	32,544	59,170	118,340	272,182
Fiaraidh	1,403 (+2,922)	3,508	7,717	14,030	28,060	64,538
Gighay and Hellisay	4,073 (+3,564)	10,183	22,402	40,730	81,460	187,358
Out Skerries	19,332 (+23,278)	48,330	106,326	193,320	386,640	889,272

3.3 Predator Surveys

67. At the time of writing, predator surveys are on-going. Surveys have been conducted at two locations, Pabaigh and Out Skerries, and are proposed for the third location, Bearasaigh in October.
68. The results of the surveys undertaken to date are presented in **Table 3-5**.
69. Brown rats were recorded using the thermal camera enabled drone on both Pabaigh islands. Brown rats were also recorded with the drone on the adjacent island of Vacsay (approximately 470m east), and using camera traps on mainland Lewis (approximately 350m west).
70. Thermal camera enabled drone flights and lethal trapping recorded the presence of rats on the Out Skerries, specifically Housay.

Table 3-5 Summary of predator surveys

Location	Survey Dates	Method	Predator Presence Confirmed
Pabaigh Islands	8 th -14 th September 2025	Thermal images (drone) Camera traps	Yes
Out Skerries	28 th September – 4 th October 2025	Thermal images (drone) Camera Traps Lethal traps	Yes

Location	Survey Dates	Method	Predator Presence Confirmed
Bearasaigh Island Group	TBC	TBC	TBC

4 Summary

71. The results of the landowner consultation and site visits were used to categorise the shortlisted sites based their potential to provide the compensation required by the Project. These results are summarised in **Table 4-1**.

Table 4-1 Assessment of compensation potential of shortlisted sites

Location	Site access approved and supported	Evidence of invasive predators	Suitable habitat for breeding auks	Presence of auks on island	Space for additional auks	Taken forward for further Assessment
Taransay	Pass	Tentative	Pass	Tentative	Pass	No
Bearasaigh Islands	Pass	Tentative pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Yes
Pabaigh	Pass	Pass	Pass	Tentative	Pass	Yes
Fiaraidh	Pass	Pass	Pass	Tentative	Pass	No
Gighay and Hellisay	Pass	Tentative pass	Pass	Tentative	Pass	No
Out Skerries	Pass	Pass	Pass	Tentative pass	Pass	Yes

72. All of the shortlisted sites have significant amounts of available habitat suitable for guillemot and razorbill but may not provide the necessary compensation potential for other reasons. The three most suitable locations, each of which are considered as having potential to provide the Projects' compensation requirements, are being taken forward for further assessment; Bearasaigh islands, Pabaigh and Out Skerries.
73. The Bearasaigh Islands landowners approved preliminary surveys, and are open to the prospect of a seabird compensation scheme on the islands. Predator survey field work is still to be completed at this location at the time of writing, however a possible mammal track was observed on Sean Bheinn during the reconnaissance survey. The habitat on the islands is suitable for auks, in particular, Sean Bheinn and Bearasaigh which is already been used in low numbers. Further assessment of current and historic colony size and predator presence will be required.

74. Pabaigh's landowners provided consent to the survey work and are open to exploring the opportunity of the islands as a compensation site. The landowners around private bothies have observed rats, and drone surveys have confirmed the presence of rats on both of the Pabaigh islands and nearby locations. There is suitable nesting habitat for auks, in particular on the western coast of the islands. During the survey, no auks were observed nesting on either Pabaigh Mor or Pabaigh Beag, although they were observed foraging in waters around islands. Further refined assessment of guillemot and razorbill habitat availability and predator abundance will be required.
75. The landowner of the Out Skerries is supportive of the project and approved site access to conduct survey work. Rats were confirmed through consultation to be present on at least Housay and Bruray, and have been confirmed through drone and trapping survey. There is suitable habitat for guillemots and razorbills, although none were recorded nesting on it during surveys, potentially as a result of the July survey timing. However, there were many groups of auks observed feeding close to the islands amongst puffins. Further refined assessment of guillemot and razorbill habitat availability and predator abundance will be required.

5 Next Steps

76. Surveys to confirm the presence of predators are anticipated to be complete at the Bearasaigh islands by the end of October. Following completion of these surveys a location (or locations) will be chosen to be progressed to detailed pre-eradication studies including assessment of predator abundance and refined habitat assessment.
77. No further surveys are currently proposed at the other shortlisted sites.

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