**Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) for Moray Woodland and Forestry Strategy 2017**

**January 2017**

**Introduction**

Natura 2000 sites are a network of protected sites for international importance which includes special areas for conservation (SACs) and special protection areas (SPAs). It is a requirement of Article 6 (3&4) of the European Habitats Directive that any plans likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site shall be subject to an appropriate assessment to determine the implications in relation to the sites qualifying interests and conservation objectives. A plan should not be approved until it has been ascertained that the policies and proposals contained within it will not adversely affect the integrity of the sites. Proposed SACs and SPAs should also be given the same consideration.

The following Natura 2000 sites are within the Moray Local Development Plan (LDP) area.

**Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)**

Culbin Bar

Hill Of Towanreef

Lower Findhorn Woods

Lower River Spey – Spey Bay

Moidach More

Moray Firth

River Spey

**Special Protection Areas (SPA)**

Loch Spynie

Moray and Nairn Coast

Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor

Darnaway and Lethen Forest

Proposed Moray Firth

**Moray Woodland and Forestry Strategy Context**

The purpose of the strategy is to identify key issues affecting forestry and woodlands in Moray, highlight the opportunities that exist across the sector, increase the profile of current activities and guide woodland creation to appropriate locations across Moray over the next 20 years. Once adopted the strategy will become supplementary guidance to support the implementation of the Moray Local Development Plan 2015.

The strategy is framed around a vision of growth for Moray’s forests and woodlands as follows;

Moray has a network of multi-benefit sustainably managed woodlands that produce high quality timber to support jobs, attract visitors and provide educational and recreational opportunities to contribute to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

The strategy and spatial mapping contained within it, sets out high level objectives and supporting statements. It is anticipated that the strategy will influence woodland management and creation with the Moray Local Development Plan area, there are however no specific policies and proposals. On this basis it has not been straightforward to identify the effects of the strategy in relation to the qualifying interests and conservation objectives.

**Methodology**

The following methodology has been used to carry out this HRA.

Screening has been undertaken to determine whether elements of the strategy individually or in combination with other policies, plans or projects are likely to have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 sites. As stated the strategy sets out strategic objectives that are reflective of Scottish Government priorities including woodland creation, sustainable economic development and climate change. Each of the identified key themes is expanded upon within the supporting statements. There are no specific actions identified within the strategy instead it is intend to influence woodland creation and management and provide a framework to support, promote and encourage other identified opportunities. As there are no direct proposals set out within the strategy this also means that the effects of the strategy in some circumstances are unclear.

The strategy includes high level spatial mapping identifying preferred areas for new woodland creation, all proposals for new woodland creation will be subject to detailed consideration on a site by site basis and there are no specific proposals for new woodland creation. All Natura 2000 sites are identified as sensitive to woodland planting and would require further detailed assessment should a proposal come forward and this would also be considered on a site by site basis.

A further map identifies tourism, recreation and access opportunities across Moray which the Council has indicated they are supportive of in principle. It should be noted that Moray Council is not proposing to undertake these as projects but the strategy highlights the potential to improve access to forests and woodlands and increase tourism and recreational activities within them. The identified opportunities set out within the strategy have been included within the assessment.

**Table 1 - Key Statements Screening**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Themes | Supporting Statements/Identified Opportunities | PPS likely to have significant effects individually or in combination | General Supporting Statement | Projects not generated by this PPS | Protective, enhancement and conservation | Does not generate development and change | Provision of a change with no connectivity to Natura 2000 site | Provision of a change with no or minimal effects | Too general to assess due to lack of information on where, how or when | Screen in/screen out |
| Economic Development | * Promote high quality timber production in Moray   • Promote the planting of a wide range of coniferous species to help to diversify and expand the timber market  **•** Promote the use of locally grown timber in new buildings  • Encourage local timber processing   * Promote the expansion of local woodfuel markets   • Promote supply chain opportunities relating to woodfuel for small scale businesses |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X  X  X  X  X  X | Out  Out  Out  Out  Out  Out |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Timber transport | * Encourage increased collaboration between key sectors to explore funding options for road network improvements   • Promote a forward planning approach to identification of route improvements  • Support continued investment in techniques to reduce the impact of forest operations on the road network  • Promote local processing to reduce timber miles |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X  X  X  X | Out  Out  Out  Out |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Education, training and skills | * Encourage the forestry sector to raise awareness of the variety of career opportunities in the industry |  | X |  |  | X |  |  |  | Out |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Tourism, recreation and access | * Encourage Moray’s woodland tourism businesses to implement accessibility and inclusion best practice   • Support, encourage and market initiatives which open up our woodlands to visitors with additional access needs, for example, the use of all-terrain buggies, widening of trails and installation of accessible signage   * Encourage accommodation development and upgrading across Moray, in line with local planning strategy and policy   • Support development and expansion of existing accommodation provision  • Promote and encourage participation in VisitScotland’s QA schemes  • Identify opportunities for further accommodation investment  • Support local providers to develop schemes such as glamping or forest huts   * Support the initiatives to develop and expand Moray’s off-road trails, for example, at Glenlivet and Moray Monster Trails   • Support and encourage the development of off and on-road links in and around Fochabers and Keith.  • Encourage active travel connections between Moray’s trails, and develop walking and cycling links into the National Park via the Dava Way, Glen Avon, Tomintoul and Glenlivet  • Support initiatives to develop MTB trails and accommodation at the Cabrach  • Support the development and promotion of long distance walking and cycle routes, i.e. Nairn to Cullen and the Moray Way  • Support the development of Culbin Forest as a key family cycling destination   * Promote and encourage recreational activities in Darnaway Forest   • Support and encourage development of walking routes around and between Moray’s towns and villages, i.e. The Isla Way from Dufftown to Keith, the Fishwives Trail from Buckie to Keith and the development of a triangular long distance path linking Keith, Huntly and Dufftown  • Establish and develop relationships with key stakeholders such as the Moray Way Association, encouraging cooperation focused on maximising the tourism benefits of the Dava Way, Speyside Way and Moray Way | X  X  X  X  X  X  X  X | X  X  X  X  X  X |  |  | X  X |  |  |  | Out  Out  Out  Out  Out  Out  Out  In  In  In  In  In  In  In  In  Out |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Health and wellbeing | * Encourage and promote the use of woodlands to improve health and wellbeing   • Encourage and promote the use of woodlands and forests for outdoor learning experiences  • Promote the creation of woodlands close to towns and villages  • Prepare masterplans and development briefs for development sites to secure woodland creation, green infrastructure and green networks |  | X  X  X  x |  | X  X  X  X |  |  |  |  | Out  Out  Out  Out |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Community ownership | **•** Encourage and promote community management and involvement in woodlands  • Encourage and promote community owned renewable energy projects in woodlands   * Encourage and promote an community led affordable housing pilot in Moray’s woodlands |  | X |  |  |  |  |  | X  X  X | Out  Out  Out |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Environmental quality of woodlands | * Support new woodland creation that is resilient to the negative effects of climate change and tree disease by encouraging a greater diversity of tree species and management practices   • Promote the opportunities for trees and woodlands to assist in natural flood management  • Promote trees and woodlands as a means to mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration   * Support the protection of existing woodland   • Promote woodland practices that protect and enhance environmental quality and biodiversity  • Support woodlands that restore, maintain and enhance biodiversity through the creation of habitat networks  • Encourage sustainable forest management that meets the UK Forestry Standard |  | X  X  X  X  X  X  x |  | X  X  X  X  X  X  x |  |  |  |  | Out  Out  Out  Out  Out  Out  Out |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Opportunities for new woodland creation | * Promote and increase the area of woodland cover in Moray   • Promote native woodland creation adjacent to existing native woodland. |  | X  X |  | X |  |  |  | X | Out  Out |

**Table 2 – Identifying Relevant Natura Sites**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Identified Opportunities | Culbin Bar SAC | Hill of towanreef SAC | Lower Findhorn Woods SAC | Lower River Spey – Spey Bay SAC | Moidoch More SAC | Moray Firth SAC | River Spey SAC | Loch Spynie SPA | Moray and Nairn Coast SPA | Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor SPA | Darnaway and Lethen SPA | Moray Firth Proposed SPA |
| Support the initiatives to develop and expand Moray’s off-road trails, for example, at Glenlivet and Moray Monster Trails |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Support and encourage the development of off and on-road links in and around Fochabers and Keith. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Encourage active travel connections between Moray’s trails, and develop walking and cycling links into the National Park via the Dava Way, Glen Avon, Tomintoul and Glenlivet |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Support initiatives to develop MTB trails and accommodation at the Cabrach |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Support the development and promotion of long distance walking and cycle routes, i.e. Nairn to Cullen and the Moray Way |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Support the development of Culbin Forest as a key family cycling destination and opportunities for tourist accommodation |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Promote and encourage recreational activities in Darnaway Forest |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Support and encourage development of walking routes around and between Moray’s towns and villages, i.e. The Isla Way from Dufftown to Keith, the Fishwives Trail from Buckie to Keith and the development of a triangular long distance path linking Keith, Huntly and Dufftown |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The following assessments have been prepared for sites that have been screened in.

|  |
| --- |
| **Darnaway & Lethen Forest SPA** |
|  |
| **Qualifying Interests** |
|  |
| The qualifying interest is breeding capercaillie. The number of individual birds within the SPA remains low and the population is very vulnerable to loss of adult birds and poor breeding success. The birds within the SPA are linked to birds that live in adjacent forest areas as capercaillie. Young female birds disperse from their natal forests and can fly some distance. Forest blocks such as Newtyle/Romach, Mulundy, Wangie and Elchies have capercaillie albeit in small numbers in most cases. To help the SPA population to be self-sustaining, these birds in adjacent forests are also important for the exchange of genes. |
|  |
| The SPA's commercial forestry and that of the other blocks mentioned is managed with capercaillie conservation at the fore. This includes silvicultural techniques that increase and improve the habitat for the capercaillie, deer fence removal or marking and predator control. |
|  |
| **Conservation objectives** |
|  |
| 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; |
|  |
| To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: |
| 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 |
| No significant disturbance of the species |

**Context**

Recreational disturbance is known to impact on capercaillie especially during the breeding season. Any rural diversification or other developments that promote recreational use within these forests could, if not managed appropriately, increase the risk of significant disturbance to the species.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Darnaway & Lethen Forest SPA** | | | | | | |
| **Identified Opportunity** | **Qualifying**  **Interests**  **Affected** | **Sensitivities** | **Safeguarding** | **Mitigation** | **Plan**  **Mods.** | **Conclusions** |
| Promote and encourage recreational activities in Darnaway Forest | Capercaillie | Leks, resting  sites &  feeding sites  Recreational access if not managed appropriately may increase the risk of significant disturbance to species | None | Outdoor access code.  Existing signposting identifying sensitive areas. | No | The SPA has a network of informal forest tracks and rides and attracts a level of visitors that appears sustainable. The forest is already actively managed to protect the SPA and provided that this continues it is not anticipated that the numbers of visitors will be of a scale to have a significant adverse effect. It’s unlikely that any proposals would significantly increase visitor numbers or reduce the ability to manage visitors in the forest.    The forest is used at non-sensitive times of year for orienteering and sled dogs events etc. but no permanent facilities are required for these events.  No adverse effect on integrity of SPA. |

No cumulative impacts identified.

|  |
| --- |
| **Moray and Nairn Coast SPA and Culbin Bar SAC** |
|  |
| **Qualifying Interests moray and Nain Coast SPA** |
|  |
| The qualifying interests of the SPA site include foraging grounds for nationally important numbers of breeding osprey. Over 20,000 wintering waterfowl. Internationally important wintering populations of Icelandic/Greenland pink footed geese, Icelandic greylag geese and redshank. |
|  |
| The sites are split between Findhorn Bay/Culbin Sands and Spey Bay and although the features can be found in both areas Findhorn Bay/Culbin Sands is probably more important for the wintering bird interests because it is a greater extent of habitat relatively undisturbed by human activity. Spey Bay is very important for its wet woodland and shingle habitats and is also important for foraging osprey. |
|  |
| **Conservation objectives of Moray and Nairn SPA** |
|  |
| 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; |
|  |
| To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: |
|  |
| 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 |
| No significant disturbance of the species |
|  |
| **Qualifying Interests of Culbin Bar SAC** |
|  |
| The qualifying interests of the site are atlantic salt meadows, shifting dunes, coastal shingle vegetation outside the reach of waves. |
|  |
| **Conservation Objectives of Culbin bar SAC** |
|  |
| To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and |
| To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term; |
| Extent of the habitat on site |
| Distribution of the habitat within site |
| Structure and function of the habitat |
| Processes supporting the habitat |
| Distribution of typical species of the habitat |
| Viability of typical species as components of the habitat |
| No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat |

**Context**

Culbin Sands is fairly remote and so low lying that it is unlikely to be affected by development. Access and recreation are the key pressures in this area because of the damage to saltmarsh. Sections on Findhorn Bay have a lot of human activity but other sections remain fairly quiet and act as important refuges for birds. There are potential impacts likely to arise from recreation and tourism proposals.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Moray and Nairn Coast SPA and Culbin Bar SAC** | | | | | | |
| **Identified Opportunity** | **Qualifying**  **Interest Affected** | **Sensitivities** | **Safeguarding** | **Mitigation** | **Plan**  **Mod** | **Conclusions** |
| Support the development of Culbin Forest as a key family cycling destination Culbin forest identified as an opportunity area for tourist accommodation | Non-breeding  and breeding bird interests;  Atlantic salt meadows, shifting dunes, coastal shingle vegetation outside the reach of waves | Significant  disturbance, including impact to flight paths  Direct loss of or disturbance to habitat used for roosting and or feeding  Direct or indirect loss of or disturbance to habitats | Moray Local Development Plan 2015  E1 – Natura sites  E2 – Local Conservation Sites and Biodiversity  E3 – Protected Species  E4 – Trees and Development  E8 – Coastal Protection Zone  IMP1 – Development Requirements | Outdoor access code | No | Culbin Sands is fairly remote and so low lying that it is unlikely to be affected by development. Any physical buildings associated with tourism will be located in the least environmentally sensitive locations and this can be controlled through the planning process.  Recreational & tourism developments, events, initiative etc. could all increase the levels of human activity in the area that could lead to increasing pressure on these habitats. However there is an existing signed network of paths that educates visitors on the routes to use to avoid damage. Infrastructure is in place to manage visitors that should ensure that the habitats are safeguarded. It’s unlikely that any proposals would significantly increase visitor numbers to the extent that there would be an adverse effect on the integrity of the site.  Culbin forest is owned by the Forestry Commission Scotland who has a stewardship role in ensuring the site is well managed.  No adverse effect on integrity of SPA or SAC. |

No cumulative impacts identified.

|  |
| --- |
| **River Spey SAC** |
|  |
| **Qualifying Interests** |
|  |
| The qualifying interests of the River Spey are the freshwater pearl mussel, otter, sea lamprey, and Atlantic salmon all of which are non-priority. Freshwater pearl mussels and sea lamprey are known to be present only within the main River Spey. Atlantic salmon and otters are more widely distributed and can be found in the main stem and many of the tributaries. The 3 wholly aquatic species depend upon a range of instream habitats to support their life cycles and a water quality and quantity that supports them. These species are very vulnerable to deterioration in water quality either through pollutants or sediment input which can arise during development if unmanaged. Otters rely on the food resources within the rivers and also habitat adjacent to watercourses in which to breed and rest. Often areas of riparian woodland are a valuable habitat for otters as they can offer shelter and the opportunity for breeding holts (under trees for example). |
| **Conservation Objectives** |
| The conservation objectives for the River Spey SAC are to avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (listed below) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features; and |
| To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: |
| Population of the species, including range of genetic types for salmon, 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 |
| No significant disturbance of the species |
| Distribution and viability of freshwater pearl mussel host species |
| Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting freshwater pearl mussel host species |

**Context**

The River Spey SAC includes the main stem of the River Spey from Cragganmore (in Moray) to the mouth of the river at Spey Bay. It also includes several major and minor tributaries. Larger settlements that have potential to influence the SAC are Dufftown, Aberlour, Craigellachie, Rothes, Fochabers and Mosstodloch. The sort of development that has potential to impact on the 4 species and their habitats are road and paths construction and other infrastructure projects (including bridges, safety barriers). Predominantly the mitigation required to eliminate the risk to the 4 species, their habitats and the processes that support them is to ensure that development is well positioned and is able to implement a suite of construction methods that avoid sediment release, pollution and risk of disturbance to otters.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **River Spey SAC** | | | | | | |
| **Identified Opportunity** | **Qualifying**  **Interest**  **Affected** | **Sensitivities** | **Safeguarding** | **Mitigation** | **Plan**  **Mod.** | **Conclusions** |
| Support the initiatives to develop and expand Moray’s off-road trails, for example, at Glenlivet and Moray Monster Trails | Atlantic  salmon  sea lamprey freshwater pearl  mussel | Direct loss of/or  disturbance to habitat Direct disturbance to gravel spawning beds, mussel beds, silt beds. Accessible waters Changes in flow, water quality, sedimentation | Moray Local Development Plan 2015  E1 – Natura sites  E2 – Local Conservation Sites and Biodiversity  E3 – Protected Species  E4 – Trees and Development  E8 – Coastal Protection Zone  EP5- SUDs  EP6 - Waterbodies  IMP1 – Development Requirements  Other Safeguarding The River Spey Catchment Management Plan | Construction methods should follow best practice guidance to protect the water environment. | No | There is a risk of sedimentation and pollution reaching the River Spey SAC during construction of tracks, watercourse crossings and failures of tracks once in operation if in close proximity to water courses that are tributaries to the River Spey. Safeguarding will be provided at planning application stage which will ensure impacts can be minimised.  No adverse effect on integrity of SAC. |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **River Spey SAC** | | | | | | |
| **Identified Opportunity** | **Qualifying**  **Interest**  **Affected** | **Sensitivities** | **Safeguarding** | **Mitigation** | **Plan**  **Mod.** | **Conclusions** |
| Support and encourage the development of off and on-road links in and around **Fochabers** and Keith. | Atlantic  salmon  sea lamprey freshwater pearl  mussel | Direct loss of/or  disturbance to habitat Direct disturbance to gravel spawning beds, mussel beds, silt beds. Accessible waters Changes in flow, water quality, sedimentation | Moray Local Development Plan 2015  E1 – Natura sites  E2 – Local Conservation Sites and Biodiversity  E3 – Protected Species  E4 – Trees and Development  E8 – Coastal Protection Zone  EP5- SUDs  EP6 - Waterbodies  IMP1 – Development Requirements  Other Safeguarding The River Spey Catchment Management Plan | Construction methods should follow best practice guidance to protect the water environment. | No | There is a risk of sedimentation and pollution reaching the River Spey SAC during construction of tracks, watercourse crossings and failures of tracks once in operation if in close proximity to water courses that are tributaries to the River Spey. Safeguarding will be provided at planning application stage which will ensure impacts can be minimised.  No adverse effect on integrity of SAC. |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **River Spey SAC** | | | | | | |
| **Identified Opportunity** | **Qualifying**  **Interest**  **Affected** | **Sensitivities** | **Safeguarding** | **Mitigation** | **Plan**  **Mod.** | **Conclusions** |
| Encourage active travel connections between Moray’s trails, and develop walking and cycling links into the National Park via the Dava Way, Glen Avon, Tomintoul and Glenlivet | Atlantic  salmon  sea lamprey freshwater pearl  mussel | Direct loss of/or  disturbance to habitat Direct disturbance to gravel spawning beds, mussel beds, silt beds. Accessible waters Changes in flow, water quality, sedimentation | Moray Local Development Plan 2015  E1 – Natura sites  E2 – Local Conservation Sites and Biodiversity  E3 – Protected Species  E4 – Trees and Development  E8 – Coastal Protection Zone  EP5- SUDs  EP6 - Waterbodies  IMP1 – Development Requirements  Other Safeguarding The River Spey Catchment Management Plan | Construction methods should follow best practice guidance to protect the water environment. | No | There is a risk of sedimentation and pollution reaching the River Spey SAC during construction of tracks, watercourse crossings and failures of tracks once in operation if in close proximity to water courses that are tributaries to the River Spey. Safeguarding will be provided at planning application stage which will ensure impacts can be minimised.  No adverse effect on integrity of SAC. |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **River Spey SAC** | | | | | | |
| **Identified Opportunity** | **Qualifying**  **Interest**  **Affected** | **Sensitivities** | **Safeguarding** | **Mitigation** | **Plan**  **Mod.** | **Conclusions** |
| Support the development and promotion of long distance walking and cycle routes, i.e. Nairn to Cullen and the Moray Way | Atlantic  salmon  sea lamprey freshwater pearl  mussel | Direct loss of/or  disturbance to habitat Direct disturbance to gravel spawning beds, mussel beds, silt beds. Accessible waters Changes in flow, water quality, sedimentation | Moray Local Development Plan 2015  E1 – Natura sites  E2 – Local Conservation Sites and Biodiversity  E3 – Protected Species  E4 – Trees and Development  E8 – Coastal Protection Zone  EP5- SUDs  EP6 - Waterbodies  IMP1 – Development Requirements  Other Safeguarding The River Spey Catchment Management Plan | Construction methods should follow best practice guidance to protect the water environment. | No | There is a risk of sedimentation and pollution reaching the River Spey SAC during construction of tracks, watercourse crossings and failures of tracks once in operation if in close proximity to water courses that are tributaries to the River Spey. Safeguarding will be provided at planning application stage which will ensure impacts can be minimised.  No adverse effect on integrity of SAC. |

**Cumulative Effects**

Each identified opportunity will be subject to a separate HRA under the relevant regulatory process i.e. planning permission and where there is potential for cumulative impact proposals would be refused if they reached the threshold of having an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC.

|  |
| --- |
| **Moray Firth pSPA** |
| **Qualifying Interests** |
| The qualifying interests of the pSPA are the Great Northern Driver, Red-throated diver, Slavonian grebe. Migratory species scaup, common eider, Long-tailed duck, Common Scoter, Velvet Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Red breasted merganser, European Shag. |
| **Conservation Objectives** |
| The conservation objectives for Moray Firth pSPA are; |
|  |
| 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 |
| To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: |
| • 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 |
| • No significant disturbance of the species |

| **Moray Firth pSPA** | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Identified Opportunity** | **Sensitivities** | **Qualifying Interest Affected** | **Safeguarding** | **Mitigation** | **Plan Mod.** | **Conclusions** |
| Support the development and promotion of long distance walking and cycle routes, i.e. Nairn to Cullen and the Moray Way | Disturbance to birds at leks, resting sites & feeding sites. | Great Northern Diver, Red-throated diver, Slavonian grebe. Migratory species scaup, common eider, Long-tailed duck, common Scoter, Velvet Scoter, Common Goldeneye, Red breasted merganser, European Shag. | E1 – Natura sites  E2 – Local Conservation Sites and Biodiversity  E3 – Protected Species  E8 – Coastal Protection Zone  IMP1 – Development Requirements |  | No | Potential for a likely significant effect through disturbance caused by increased recreation pressure from human activity arising from an increased number of people utilising enhanced Moray Coastal Trail. It’s unlikely that development of long distance route would significantly increase visitor numbers to the extent that there would be an adverse effect on the integrity of the site.  No adverse effect on integrity of proposed SPA. |

No cumulative impacts identified.

|  |
| --- |
| **Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor SPA** |
| **Qualifying Interests** |
| The single qualifying bird species is breeding common gull (Larus canus) present at nest sites on heather moorland within the SPA during the breeding season. They forage on agricultural land further afield from the SPA so are making regular daily movements between their nests within the SPA and adjacent farm land. Despite the name these gulls are not commonly found and are most particular about their breeding sites and being ground nesters are more susceptible to predators. |
| **Conservation objectives** |
| 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; |
| To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: |
| 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 |
| No significant disturbance of the species |

**Context**

The SPA is split between two rounded hill tops at maximum elevation s of 376 and 410 metres above sea level. The site is relatively remote and exposed with a few farms located in the lower areas. The A920 Dufftown to Huntly road passes to the north of the site. There are unlikely to be any development pressures that would directly affect the land within the SPA with the exception of wind energy developments and forestry proposals.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tips of Corsemaul and Tom Mor SPA** | | | | | |
| **Identified Opportunities** | **Sensitivities** | **Safeguarding** | **Mitigation** | **Plan**  **Mod** | **Conclusions** |
| Support and encourage development of walking routes around and between Moray’s towns and villages, i.e. The Isla Way from Dufftown to Keith, the Fishwives Trail from Buckie to Keith and the development of a triangular long distance path linking Keith, **Huntly and Dufftown** | Direct loss of or  disturbance to habitat  Nesting sites & flight paths | E1-Natura 2000 Sites  IMP1-Development  Requirements  IMP2-Development Impact Assessment EP7-Watercourses ER6-Agricultural | None | No | Potential for disturbance if path is through or close to SPA. This is unlikely due to topography and that alternative options will in all likelihood be easier to develop and be a more attractive option.  No adverse effect on integrity of SPA. |

No cumulative impacts identified.

|  |
| --- |
| **Hill of Towanreef SAC** |
| **Qualifying Interests** |
| The SACs qualifying interests are blanket bog, dry, alpine and sub-alpine heaths, juniper on base-rich soils and grassland found on soils rich in heavy metals. There is also a species of plant, marsh saxifrage, that is found. Marsh saxifrage is also a plant species listed as an European Protected Species (EPS). |
| Although predominantly on high upland ground remote from most development a small section abuts the A941 Cabrach road. The site is shared by Moray and Aberdeenshire with the Moray section being mostly moorland habitats managed for grouse. |
| **Conservation objectives** |
| To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features and; |
| To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term: |
|  |
| Extent of the habitat on site Distribution of the habitat within site Structure and function of the habitat Processes supporting the habitat Distribution of typical species of the habitat |
| Viability of typical species as components of the habitat |
| No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitat |
| To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species (yellow marsh saxifrage) or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for each of the qualifying features and; |
| To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term: |
| 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 |
| No significant disturbance of the species |

**Context**

Although predominantly on high upland ground remote from most development a small section abuts the A941 Cabrach road. The site is shared by Moray and Aberdeenshire with the Moray section being mostly moorland habitats managed for grouse. The risk of development affecting this SAC is most likely to come from road upgrades any proposed development adjacent to the site would need to demonstrate that they would not influence the hydrology that supports the blanket bogs and some of the other habitat

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hill of Towanreef SAC** | | | | | | |
| **Identified Opportunities** | **Qualifying Interests**  **Affected** | **Sensitivities** | **Safeguarding** | **Mitigation** | **Plan**  **Mod** | **Conclusions** |
| Support initiatives to develop MTB trails and accommodation at the Cabrach | Dryheaths  Alpine and subalpine heaths Juniper on heaths or calcareous grassland Grasslands in soils rich in heavy metals,  Blanket bog | Direct loss of, or disturbance to habitat.  Changes in hydrology, air quality | E1 – Natura sites  E2 – Local Conservation Sites and Biodiversity  E3 – Protected Species  ED7 – Rural Business Proposals  ED8 – Tourism Facilities  IMP1 – Development Requirements | None | No | There is potential impact on hydrological processes and functions related to SAC habitats. This is an unlikely location for development however nearby sites can be connected through hydrology. Safeguarding will be provided at planning application stage which will ensure impacts can be minimised.  No adverse effect on integrity of SAC. |

No cumulative impacts identified.