Environmental Alert

Scottish Power Energy Networks - Major Projects

Subject: Invasive Plants

Code: XX/XX/20XX

Purpose: To communicate what invasive plants are, the risks they pose and what to do when they are encountered on site.

An invasive plant is any non-native plant species that has the ability to spread causing damage to the environment, the economy, our health and the way we live.

Environment– invasive plants can have serious impacts on the natural environment. They interfere with the important interactions between plants and animals by affecting the availability of resources and habitat.
Economy - Invasive species cost in the British economy around £1.7 billion every single year. Plants like Japanese knotweed damage buildings and annually cost the building and infrastructure industries tens of millions to control.
Health—Some invasive plants such as giant hogweed are harmful to human health. Skin contact with giant hogweed results in severe burns and blistering. The skin can remain sensitive to light for many years after contact.

Most species of invasive plants will not be noticeable in the winter months, but throughout the growing season their presence will be obvious. In Scotland the four main species likely to impact on our works are **Japanese knotweed, Rhododendron, Himalayan balsam** and **giant hogweed.** Familiarise yourself with these plants so you can identify them (see photos below). Work activity should aim to avoid contact with these plants where possible. If contact is unavoidable, careful consideration needs to be given to biosecurity measures (e.g. power washing plant, use of wheel wash before leaving and entering site and making sure footwear is clean) and disposal of plants and associated soils. It is also important to consider that management of some invasive plants should only occur at certain times of the year e.g. Himalayan balsam plants should not be disturbed when the plant is in seed (July-October).

Remember—it is illegal to cause the spread of invasive non-native plants into the wild, even accidentally


Himalayan balsam


Giant hogweed


Japanese knotweed


Rhododendron

Actions and Recommendations

Identify any invasive plants on your site
Isolate the plants from all work activities using fencing and signage. Note that for Japanese knotweed the fence should be at least 7m from the nearest plant
Communicate the details of any invasive plants on site to all site operatives and visitors
Plan works carefully if clearing invasive plants is necessary. Take specialist advise on treatment and/ or disposal. Consider biosecurity requirements e.g. wash down areas for plant
Contacts: Speak to the Environmental Advisor on the project or contact the Environmental Team— agallagher@spenergynetworks.co.uk Tel. 0141 614 6890
XXXXXXX

Author: - James Elliott

Approved: by XXXXXX

Date: 10/06/2019

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Subject: Land Damage

Code: SPENM-21-0001

Purpose: To prevent excessive and avoidable land damage and associated negative environmental impacts, and to ensure compliance with SPEN's Land Code of Conduct.

When has land been 'damaged'?

Land can be described as damaged when its utility to its owner is compromised, its ecological, biodiversity or financial values are reduced and/or its physical condition is degraded. Land Damage can be immediately obvious or can take time (potentially years) to reveal itself.

Deep rutting damage caused to arable field.

Damage caused by machine access to moor.

Significant ruts from machine access

Topsoil churned from repeated machine movements.

Author: Stuart Carr **Approved: by Aga Gallagher** **Date:** 12/01/2020

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Example Issues Arising from Land Damage

- **Pollution risk** - deep ruts allow water to gather. This water picks up material as it flows over exposed ground or is driven through by plant and vehicles. Unmitigated, this water can overtop the ruts in inclement weather or flow along ruts, making its way into watercourses or onto public roads that it would not otherwise have reached.
- **Soil degradation** - in some situations the structure of topsoil can be changed which affects its drainage characteristics, and can foster anaerobic activity which alters pH levels and impacts on the ability of plants to grow in it. This can in turn affect wildlife populations.
- **Loss of utility to the landowner** - areas of land rendered unsuitable for their intended use, for example animal grazing. Established access routes may also be rendered impassable using the equipment or vehicles that the landowner has to hand.

- Increased refusal of access.
- Increased use of notices for access.
- Risk of works being stopped, leading to stand-down time.
- Impact on programme / delivery.
- Health and Safety implications
- Reduced ability to enforce access rights
- Conflict with SPEN's Biodiversity Net Gain targets.
- Projects stuck at 'Live' status to allow lengthy settlement negotiations.
- Landowner subsidy loss.
- Degradation of relationships with landowners and lack of trust.

Land Damage and SPEN Activity

Land Damage is most commonly caused on SPEN Projects by accessing towers or other assets which are not served by roads or access tracks. It can also be caused by poor reinstatement of land surrounding these assets following initial construction or operational maintenance activities.

The SPEN Land Code of Conduct obligates SPEN to consider the impact on the local environment, plan works to minimise the impact on the land, mitigate land damage by using appropriate access routes, plant & machinery and be ultimately responsible for making good all land damage associated with our operations and activities.

Incident Reporting

Excessive & avoidable land damage and breach of the obligations promoted within the Land Code of Conduct will be reported via SPEN's Incident Management process in line with the Incident Management Guide. This contains the relevant definitions of Near Misses, Minor, Significant and Major Incidents.

Example Near Miss - Operatives going to take access to a tower across a wet field which would require land protection measures but being stopped before doing so.

Example Minor Incident - Operatives taking access over a wet field and causing rutting which requires unplanned reinstatement, and generates a pollution risk OR impacts on the landowner's intended use of the land but can be remediated and returned to use within 6 months.

Example Significant Incident - Operatives take unmitigated access across land, causing damage to vegetation and soils which takes up to a year to regenerate OR impacts on the landowner's intended use of the land for a long period of time (up to a year).

Example Major Incident - installation of linear infrastructure (eg access roads or cable routes) which change the drainage characteristics of the land and cause damage which takes upwards of a year to repair OR impacts on the landowner's intended use of the land beyond 1 year, results in subsidy losses to the landowner or involves damage that SPEN are unable to 'make good' without 3rd party specialist involvement.

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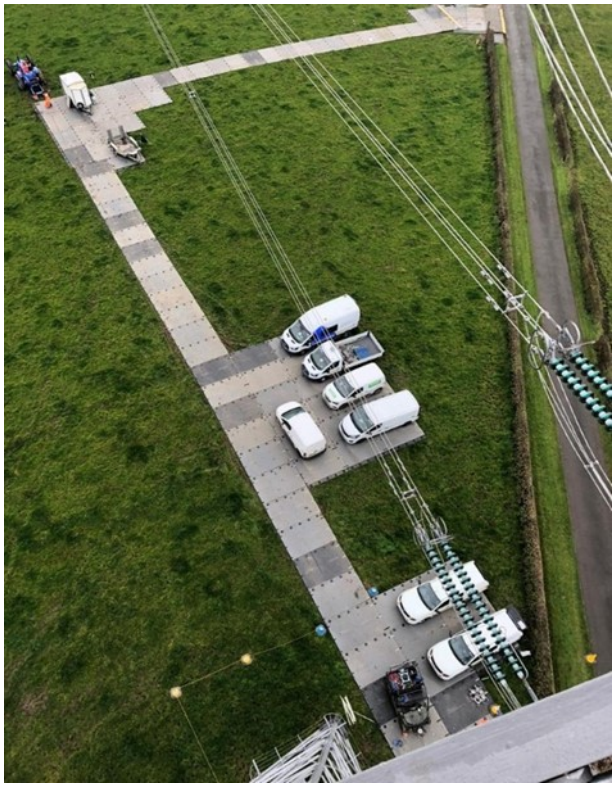
Mitigation Measures

- Consideration in the SPEN EMP and site walkovers for inclusion in Civils BoQ and Forecast, or under a separate contract if required. Ground Protection can also be added to Project Risk Registers with agreed sums to be set aside for use as required.
- Ensure access to trakway panels, bogmats or similar.
- Use of low ground pressure plant.
- Careful selection of access routes to avoid easily-damaged land.
- Scheduling of work to account for seasonal variance in rainfall, water levels and resulting ground resilience to necessary plant movements.



Author: Stuart Carr **Approved: by Aga Gallagher** **Date:** 12/01/2021

Environmental Alert

Scottish Power Energy Networks - Major Projects

Subject: Nesting Birds

Code: XX/XX/20XX

Purpose: To raise awareness and prevent harm to nesting birds

Description:

As we approach **nesting season** it is important to be aware of the potential for nesting birds to impact on our works and the actions we should take to minimise this. Bird Nesting Season in the UK is considered to be between **March** and **August** inclusive.

All wild birds are protected under the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**. It is illegal to kill, injure or take any wild bird, to destroy eggs, and to damage, destroy or obstruct access to nests while in use.

Trees and hedges

Most bird species nest in trees, hedges and shrubs. If this type of vegetation needs to be felled, removed or cut back, it should be done so outside of the breeding season. Bird deterrents such reflective strips tied to hedges and trees may have some value, but are not guaranteed to deter nesting attempts. Note that the netting of trees/ hedges is no longer considered good practice.

Examples
- **Blackbird nesting in a hedge**
- **Blue tit nesting in cavity of a tree**

- ✗ Do not cut down trees, hedges or shrubs within the bird breeding season
- ✓ Check for evidence - old nests should act as a warning
- ✓ Communicate the presence of known nests on site to all site staff and visitors

Nests on Man-Made Structures

Birds are opportunistic and can make use of man-made structures and objects if they will provide suitable shelter. Some larger species will make use of steel-lattice towers and song birds can nest in a variety of objects found in busy construction sites. If birds do nest on equipment or materials, these cannot be used until the birds have finished nesting and the area will need to be cordoned off to prevent disturbance.

Examples
- **Oystercatcher nesting in substation**
- **Swallows nesting at the back of transformers**

- ✓ Be aware of the areas of your site which may be attractive to nesting birds and therefore more vulnerable
- ✓ Stockpiles of material such as stone, soil and timber will be attractive to nesting birds, cover these where possible

Author: James Elliott **Approved: Aga Gallagher** **Date: 22/02/2021**

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Purpose: To raise awareness and prevent harm to nesting birds

Ground-Nesting Birds

Some bird species are ground nesters. These birds are **particularly vulnerable** because vehicles and plant can disturb or destroy the nests while moving through the site. Ground nesting birds generally nest in areas such as heath, bog or places with tall grass. If your project area is suitable for ground nesting birds and works will be taking place in the bird breeding season, then mitigation measures will need to be taken to ensure nests are not disturbed or damaged.

Examples

- **Skylark nesting in tussocks of long grass**
- **Curlew nesting on ground next to tower**

✗ Do not track plant and vehicles across areas deemed to be suitable for ground nesting birds

✓ Strim down ground vegetation before March to deter birds from nesting in the footprint of the site.

Schedule 1 Birds

All birds are protected, but some rare/ vulnerable species are listed as Schedule 1 species and have **extra protection**. Schedule 1 birds have established **buffer zones** around their nests in which no works or access should occur. The size of the buffer zones depends on the species of bird. Some buffer zones are very large (e.g. golden eagle is 1500m) which can have a significant impact on the programming of works on some projects.

Examples

- **Peregrine falcon nesting in cross-arm of a tower**
- **Golden eagle nesting in crags above an overhead line**

✓ Ensure that ornithological surveys are carried out at the Planning Stage of new projects

✓ Ensure pre-construction ecology surveys are undertaken when works move into a new area

✓ Engage with NatureScot when planning works around Schedule 1 birds

Author: James Elliott **Approved: Aga Gallagher** **Date: 22/02/2021**