



APPENDIX 7-6

COLLISION RISK ASSESSMENT



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1. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the methodology used to assess the predicted rate of collisions for birds at Borrisbeg Renewable Energy Development. The collision risk assessment is based on vantage point surveys undertaken at the Site from September 2020 to September 2023. This represents a 37-month survey period, consisting of 3 breeding seasons and 3 winter seasons, which is in full compliance with NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage) guidance (SNH, 2017). Surveys were undertaken from three fixed vantage points.

Collision risk is calculated using a mathematical model to predict the number of birds that may be killed by collision with moving wind turbine rotor blades. The modelling method used in this collision risk calculation is known as the Band Model (Band *et al.*, 2007) and has been used in a number of studies on bird collision with wind turbines (e.g. Chamberlain *et al.*, 2006; Drewitt and Langston, 2006; Fernley *et al.*, 2006; Madders and Whitfield, 2006). Note that these are theoretical predictions, therefore results must be interpreted with a degree of caution.

Two stages are involved in the Band Model. First, the number of bird transits through the air space swept by the rotor blades of the wind turbines per year is estimated. Then the collision risk for a bird passing through the rotor blades is calculated using a mathematical formula. The product of these provides a theoretical annual collision mortality rate. Finally, a bird avoidance rate is applied to the collision mortality rate to account for birds attempting to avoid collision. This final collision mortality rate informs the assessment of impacts of the Proposed Project on birds.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 The Band Model

The Band Model is used to predict the number of bird collisions that might be caused by a wind turbine. It uses species-specific information on bird biometrics, flight characteristics and the expected amount of flight activity, along with turbine-specific information on hub height, rotor diameter, pitch and rotational speed. The proposed turbine being assessed will be 103.5m at hub height, with 3 blades of a rotor diameter of 163m, giving a maximum rotor height of 185m and a minimum rotor height of 22m. The model makes a number of assumptions on the turbine design and on biometrics of birds:

- Birds are assumed to be of a simple cruciform shape;
- Turbine blades are assumed to have length, depth and pitch angle, but no thickness;
- Birds fly through turbines in straight lines;
- Bird flight is not affected by the slipstream of the turbine blade;
- Because the model assumes that no action is taken by a bird to avoid collision, it is recognised that the collision risk figures derived are purely theoretical and represent worst case estimates.

Two forms of collision risk modelling are outlined by Band *et al.* (2007): a “**Regular Flight Model**” and the “**Random Flight Model**”. A Regular Flight Model is generally applied to situations where flightlines form a regular pattern. This may occur, for example, when birds are using a wind farm site as a commuting corridor between roosting and feeding grounds or migratory routes, as is often observed in geese and swans. The Random Flight Model is generally applied to situations where flightlines form no discernible patterns or routes. This is often observed, for example when raptors are in foraging or hunting flights.

The Regular Flight Model predicts the number of transits through a cross-sectional area of a wind farm which represents the width of the commuting corridor. A “risk window” is identified: a 2-dimensional line the width of a wind farm to a 500m buffer of the turbines, multiplied by the rotor diameter. All commuting flights which pass through this risk window within the rotor swept height (potential collision height; PCH) are included in collision risk modelling. Any regular flights more than 500m from the turbine layout can be excluded from analysis. There are a number of key assumptions and limitations:

- The turbine rotor swept area is 2-dimensional, i.e. there is a single row of turbines in the windfarm. This represents all turbines within the commuting corridor accounted for by a single straight-line;
- Bird activity is spatially explicit;
- Birds in an observed flight only cross the turbine area once and do not pass through the cross-section a second time (or multiple times);
- Habitat and bird activity will remain the same over time and be unchanged during the operational stage of the windfarm;
- All flight activity used in the model occurred within the viewshed area calculated at the lowest swept rotor height.

The **Random Flight Model** predicts the number of transits through a wind farm while assuming that all flights within the vantage point viewshed are randomly occurring, ie. any observed flight could just as easily occur within a wind farm site as outside it. All flights within PCH inside the viewshed are included in the model. There are a number of key assumptions and limitations:

- Bird activity is not spatially explicit, i.e. activity is equal throughout the viewshed area and this is equal to activity in the windfarm area;
- Habitat and bird activity will remain the same over time and be unchanged during the operational stage of the windfarm;
- All flight activity used in the model occurred within the viewshed area calculated at the lowest swept rotor height.

More detail on both the Random and Regular Flight Model calculations are available from NatureScot: <https://www.nature.scot/wind-farm-impacts-birds-calculating-theoretical-collision-risk-assuming-no-avoiding-action>. In the case of the Proposed Project, the species recorded in flight in the study area were randomly distributed. Therefore, a Random Flight Model was conducted for these species. A Regular Flight Model was not conducted for any species, as no regular flight corridors were evident.

2.2 Modelling Process

The steps used in the Band Model to derive the collision mortality rate for each species observed at a wind farm site are outlined below.

- Stage 1: Estimate the number of bird transits through the air space swept by the rotor blades of the wind turbines. Transits are calculated using either the “Regular” or “Random” flight model (Band *et al.*, 2007), depending on flight distribution and behaviour.
- Stage 2: Calculate the collision risk for an individual bird flying through a rotating turbine blade. Collision risk is calculated using a formula which incorporates the number of bird transits (Stage 1), individual species’ biometrics, individual species’ flight speed and style, and the proposed turbine parameters. This formula is publicly available on the NatureScot website: <https://www.nature.scot/wind-farm-impacts-birds-calculating-probability-collision>. Biometrics are available from the British Trust of Ornithology (BTO, 2021) and flight speeds are available from Alerstam *et al.* (2007), Bruderer and Boldt (2001) and Cochran and Applegate (1986). For species that can both flap and glide, the mean of the collision risk for flapping and for gliding flight is taken.
- The product of the number of birds transits per year multiplied by the collision risk provides an annual collision mortality rate. There is an assumption that birds flying towards the turbines make no attempt to avoid them.
- To account for birds attempting to avoid collision, an avoidance factor is applied to the annual collision mortality rate. This corrects for the ability of the birds to detect and manoeuvre around the turbines. Avoidance rates are available from SNH (2018) and Gittings (2022). Bird avoidance rates are generally 98-99% or higher for most species, based on empirical evidence, targeted studies and literature reviews, and continue to be updated following further studies of bird behaviour and mortality rates at wind farm sites.

The final annual collision risk corrected for avoidance is a “real-world” estimation of the number of collisions that may occur at a wind farm, based on observed bird activity during the vantage point survey period.

2.3

Ornithological Receptors

The Key Ornithological Receptors (KORs) recorded in flight at PCH during vantage point surveys at the Site were:

- > Golden Plover
- > Merlin
- > Peregrine Falcon
- > Little Egret
- > Whooper Swan
- > Kestrel
- > Lapwing
- > Snipe
- > Buzzard
- > Sparrowhawk

A CRM was conducted for each of these species. It is assumed that waterbirds (ie. golden plover, little egret, whooper swan, lapwing and snipe) are active for 25% of the night along with daylight hours (as per SNH guidance) and this is accounted for in the model.

2.4

Turbine specifications

Birds in flight within the viewshed at heights bands 15-25m and 25-200m above ground level have been included in the collision risk model. The turbine specifications used in the model are available in Table 7 - 6 - 1.

Table 7 - 6 - 1 Turbine specifications*

Wind Farm Component	Scenario Modelled
Turbine model	Nordex N163
Number of turbines	9
Blades per turbine rotor	3
Rotor diameter (m)	163
Rotor radius (m)	81.5
Hub height (m)	103.5
Swept height (m)	185
Pitch of blade (degrees)	6
Maximum chord (m) (i.e. depth of blade)	4.5
Rotational period (s)	6.75
Turbine operational time**	85

* As provided by the developer at the time of analysis

**This operational period of 85% is referenced from a report by the British Wind Energy Association (BWEA) (2007) which identifies the standard operational period of the wind turbines in the UK to be roughly 85%.

2.5

Calculation Parameters

The calculation parameters for the vantage points are outlined in Table 7 - 6 - 2. Bird biometrics are presented in Table 7 - 6 - 3. Finally, Table 7 - 6 - 4 presents the model input values for the random model: bird seconds in flight at PCH observed from the vantage points during the relevant survey period. Bird seconds in flight at PCH is calculated by multiplying the number of birds observed per flight by the duration of the flight spent within PCH.

Table 7 - 6 - 2 Viewshed coverage

Vantage Point	Visible Area at 22m	Risk Area	Turbines visible
VP1	602.76ha	236.281ha	4
VP2	392.02ha	217.115ha	4
VP3	545.19ha	181.925ha	3

Table 7 - 6 - 3 Bird biometrics

Species	Body Length(m)	Wingspan(m)	Flight Speed(m/s)
Golden Plover	0.275	0.715	17.9
Merlin	0.275	0.560	10.9
Peregrine Falcon	0.445	1.050	12.1
Little Egret	0.600	0.915	10.2
Whooper Swan	1.500	2.200	17.3
Kestrel	0.335	0.755	10.1
Lapwing	0.295	0.845	12.8
Snipe	0.255	0.420	17.1
Buzzard	0.540	1.205	11.6
Sparrowhawk	0.330	0.625	10.0

Table 7 - 6 - 4 Model input values

Species	Model	Period	Input value
Golden Plover	random	October to April	6,898,057
Merlin	random	All	298
Peregrine Falcon	random	All	2,878
Little Egret	random	Winter	2,404
Whooper Swan	random	Winter	7,993
Kestrel	random	All	18,914
Lapwing	random	Winter	1,302,019
Lapwing	random	Breeding	10,772
Snipe	random	September to April	16,029
Buzzard	random	All	97,315
Sparrowhawk	random	All	5,738

The avoidance rates applied to the collision risk were: 99.8% for golden plover; 99.5% for whooper swan; 98% for merlin, peregrine falcon, little egret, lapwing, snipe, buzzard and sparrowhawk; and 95% for kestrel.

3.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A “Random” collision risk model has been conducted for KORs observed flying at PCH during vantage points surveys at the Site using the Band Model, following best practice guidance from NatureScot. Collision risk models provide theoretical predictions of the probability of bird collision with wind turbine rotor blades. The results are affected by sources of uncertainty including the representativeness of the survey data, natural variability in bird populations, model assumptions and estimates on bird attraction and avoidance rates. As such, the results are considered to be a best estimate of collision risk, rather than a precise figure. The predicted number of transits per year and the estimated collision risk is presented in Table 7 - 6 - 5, along with the final predicted number of collisions per year. Note that for birds that both flap and glide, the average collision risk percentage between flapping and gliding is taken.

Table 7 - 6 - 5 Collision rate predictions. For each species, the survey period and model type are specified, along with the predicted number of transits through the risk area and the collision risk (for flapping flight, gliding flight and the average of both). Two values for collision rate are presented: the initial collision rate without avoidance and a final estimated collision rate (with an avoidance factor). Finally, the estimated number of collisions over the lifetime of the turbines is presented, along with the corresponding estimated number of years of operation for one collision to occur.

Species	Survey Period	Model	Transits	Collision Risk			Collision Rate			Estimated Collisions Over Lifetime of Wind Farm	One Bird Collision
				flapping	gliding	overall	without avoidance	avoidance factor	with avoidance		
Golden Plover	October to April	random	662165.8	4.22%	no gliding flight	4.22%	27975.2	99.8%	55.95	1678.51 birds	<1 year
Merlin	All	random	16.3	4.51%	4.44%	4.47%	0.73	98%	0.015	0.44 birds	69 years
Peregrine Falcon	All	random	163.4	5.14%	4.97%	5.06%	8.26	98%	0.165	4.96 birds	6 years
Little Egret	Winter	random	144.8	6%	no gliding flight	6%	8.69	98%	0.174	5.22 birds	6 years
Whooper Swan	Winter	random	558.8	7.51%	no gliding flight	7.51%	41.97	99.5%	0.21	6.29 birds	5 years
Kestrel	All	random	881.4	4.89%	4.8%	4.85%	42.72	95%	2.136	64.08 birds	<1 year
Lapwing	Winter	random	75554.3	4.54%	no gliding flight	4.54%	3433.65	98%	68.673	2060.19 birds	<1 year
Lapwing	Breeding	random	703	4.54%	no gliding flight	4.54%	31.95	98%	0.639	19.17 birds	2 years



Species	Survey Period	Model	Transits	Collision Risk			Collision Rate			Estimated Collisions Over Lifetime of Wind Farm	One Bird Collision
				flapping	gliding	overall	without avoidance	avoidance factor	with avoidance		
Snipe	September to April	random	1752.6	4.05%	no gliding flight	4.05%	70.94	98%	1.419	42.56 birds	1 year
Buzzard	All	random	5139.5	5.58%	5.41%	5.5%	282.53	98%	5.651	169.52 birds	<1 year
Sparrowhawk	All	random	284.3	4.85%	4.79%	4.82%	13.69	98%	0.274	8.22 birds	4 years

Taking into account the uncertainties associated with the model, the predicted collision risk is imperceptible (EPA [2022] criteria) for the species merlin. At least one collision over the lifetime of the wind farm is predicted for the remaining species.

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