



Sandwater Road B9075 Realignment: 2018 Bird Surveys Update

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As part of the bird monitoring studies undertaken for the proposed Viking Wind Farm, the whole of the Sandwater Bird Survey Area (the B9075 realignment development corridor buffered to 500m) was surveyed for breeding waders, skuas, terns, gulls and wildfowl species in 2018. Surveys for breeding merlin, whooper swan and red-throated diver were also undertaken in 2018 extending to at least 1 km from the development corridor. The 2018 survey work was undertaken by Atlantic Ecology and used the same survey methods as were used in previous years (described in Viking Energy, 2016). The results of the 2018 surveys are summarised in Table 1 (note, the 2013 and 2015 figures in Table 1 are taken from Viking Energy, 2016). The presence of breeding meadow pipit, skylark, wren, hooded crow and wheatear was also noted during the 2018 surveys but these species were not surveyed in detail as they are all common widespread; they are not included in Table 1.

The 2018 survey results for 12 species are similar to the results of the surveys of the same area undertaken in 2013 and 2015, in terms of the number and distribution of breeding territories (Table 1). Indeed, for these 12 species the changes since the 2013 and 2015 surveys are consistent with the size of year-to-year variations to be expected for a relatively small survey area. These 12 species include the species of greatest relevance to the assessment of potential effects on birds due to the realignment of Sandwater Road, namely whimbrel, curlew, golden plover and dunlin.

One species, ringed plover, was recorded breeding in 2018 that was not recorded breeding in the 2013 and 2015 surveys (Table 1). In 2018 ringed plover held a breeding territory along the gravel shores on the eastern side of Sand Water, approximately 400 m south of the B9075. Given the distance from the B9075 and ringed plovers' strong association with un-vegetated stony/sandy ground (such as the eastern shore of Sand Water) it is considered unlikely that the project would lead to any adverse impact on this species.

Four species common gull, Arctic skua, lapwing and teal, were not recorded in the 2018 despite these being recorded in previous surveys (Table 1). With the exception of teal, these species are known to have declining populations on Shetland Mainland.

References

Viking Energy (2016). B9075 Sandwater Road Environmental Statement. Volume 3: Technical Appendices, 8.1. Baseline Bird Surveys Technical Report. (May 2016).

Table 1: The number of breeding territories in 2018 within the Sandwater Bird Survey Area (realignment corridor buffered to 500 m). The 2013 and 2015 survey results are taken from Viking Energy 2016.

Species	No. territories in 2018	Location of 2018 notional territory centres within survey area	2013/15 mean count	2013/15 maximum count
Merlin	0 (none within at least 1 km)	Not relevant	0	0
Red-throated diver	0 (none within at least 1 km)	Not relevant	0	0
Great skua	1	Petta Dale valley floor, approx. 350m N of B9075	1	1
Arctic skua	0	Not relevant	1	1
Common gull	0	Not relevant	5.5	6
Arctic tern	1	NE shore Sand Water, approx. 350m S of B9075	0.5	1 (possibly bred)
Oystercatcher	14	Spread approx. evenly across survey area	16.5	23
Snipe	13	Spread evenly across survey area	10.5	13
Redshank	8	Spread across survey area	7	8
Lapwing	0	Not relevant	9	13
Dunlin	2	Petta Dale valley floor approx. 250 m N of B9075, and W side of Sand Water approx. 350m S of B9075	2	3
Golden plover	3	Petta Dale valley floor approx. 200-400m N of road	1	2
Ringed plover	1	East shore Sand Water approx. 400m S of B9075	0	0
Curlew	18	Spread approx. evenly across survey area	19.5	21
Whimbrel	2	Petta Dale valley floor approx. 100-200m N of B9075	2.5	3
Common sandpiper	1	East shore Sand Water approx. 500m S of B9075	0.5	1
Whooper swan	(1 pair)	Nested southern Sand Water approx. 750m S of B9075	(0.5)	(1)
Greylag goose	1	Petta Dale valley floor	3	3
Teal	0	Not relevant	1	1