



BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

OBAN AIRPORT, EXTENSION AREA (NORTH)
OBAN, ARGYLL AND BUTE

15.09.2026 VERSION 2.1

PREFACE

This document is a report of ecological advice provided by the company.

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1 PROJECT INFORMATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) identifies the enhancement that is being undertaken at land adjacent to, and north of, Oban Airport, North Connel; for the creation of new vegetated bunds and an unvegetated platform using inert waste material recovered from the main Oban Airport site in preparations for future development.

This BEP has been prepared in relation to planning application 26/00922/PP. Following Request from Argyll and Bute Council's Biodiversity Officer for a *Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) to be submitted. This plan shall include but not be limited to the following measures:*

- *Baseline data collected by ecological surveys;*
- *A detailed site plan showing the location of all habitats to be retained, enhanced restored and created;*
- *locations of proposed enhancement measures*
- *A schedule of planting to comprise species,*
- *A programme for the implementation, completion, management, review and monitoring of the proposed biodiversity enhancement;*

The approved BEP shall thereafter be implemented in full, including any offsite provision, and managed in accordance with the approved details.

Planning permission has been granted at the end of August 2026, with associated conditions. One of these has requested an update BEP- to include details of new sand martin habitat and the location and detail of all BEP measures. This should include details of an artificial sand martin nesting side for at least 40 pairs and additional measures for the natural creation of a colony.

1.2 NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK - POLICY 3

The National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 3 is centred around biodiversity enhancement. Developments must clearly demonstrate that the developed site will have enhanced biodiversity from the baseline pre-development state.

NPF4 Policy 3b states that national and major developments, or those subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), will only be supported where it can be shown that they will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, including nature networks, so they are in a demonstrably better state than without intervention. The policy requires that such proposals demonstrate significant biodiversity enhancement, in addition to any proposed mitigation.

It should be noted the advice set out by the Scottish Government's Draft Planning Guidance: Biodiversity

"4.12. In the meantime, the absence of a universally adopted Scottish methodology / tool should not be used to frustrate or delay decision making, and a flexible approach will be required. Wherever relevant and applicable, and as indicated above, information and evidence gathered for statutory and other assessment obligations, such as EIA, can be utilised to demonstrate those ways in which the policy tests set out in NPF4 have been met. Equally, where a developer wishes to use an established metric or tool, the planning submission should demonstrate how Scotland's habitats and environmental conditions have been taken into account. Where an established metric or tool has been modified, the changes made and the reasons for this should be clearly set out."

1.3 ECOLOGICAL BASELINE PRE-DEVELOPMENT

The site measures approximately 1.8ha and is located in North Connel, north of Oban Airport (central grid reference NM 90784 36376). A detailed Ecological Report has been produced by Direct Ecology Ltd (DEL) which should be referred to in conjunction with this document.

A summary of key results only is given below.

The area surrounding the site is dominated by coastline to the west with areas of bog dominant to the east. Bog to the east is separated from the site by the A828. Oban Airport sits to the south, with North Ledaig Caravan park to the north.

NatureScot's Carbon and Peatland Map¹ records the location of the proposed extension site as being of carbon and Peatland Class; that is, of mineral soil with peatland habitats not typically found on such soil. An area of Peatland Class 5 peatland (deep peat but no peatland habitat recorded) lies 75m to the north-east of the 2026 updated site boundary and this extends into an extensive area of Peatland Class 1 (nationally important carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat).

There are six habitats within the site boundary which will be lost through the works. These are listed below with the total areas.

The site boundaries have been brought in to ensure that felling to trees is not required and the degraded bog is not included in the development. Figure 2 shows the areas of habitat that will be lost. The main habitat lost is neutral grassland followed by scrub.

Table 1: Areas of UKHab Habitat types within the red line boundary and their assessed value.

UKHab primary Habitat	Area (m ²)	Nature Value	Habitat notes
Other neutral grassland (g3c)	9765	Site	This habitat contains many forb species which provide good foraging opportunities for pollinators, including devil's bit scabious, rosebay and yellow rattle (which can encourage further forb growth by parasitising grasses). The grassland also provides foraging habitat for small mammals and passerine birds.
Holcus-Juncus neutral grassland (g3c8)	41	Site	The tall grasses and rushes in the habitat provide cover for small mammal and amphibian species. Flowering plants found within this grassland also provide foraging resources for pollinators.
Bramble scrub (h3d)	553	Site	Contains largely common and widespread plant species but provides cover and a foraging resource for mammal and bird species.
Mixed scrub (h3e)	279	Site	Contains common and widespread species which is frequent within the local area but provides shelter for mammal and bird species.
Sparsely vegetated urban land (u1f)	588	Site	This habitat generally holds little ecological value. However, colonising flowering plants including buttercup, self-heal ragwort, lady's mantle and oxeye daisy provide habitat good for invertebrates and pollinators.

There are no buildings within the site and no trees within bat roost potential within the site. The woodland along the eastern side of the site and along the access track are assessed to provide moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats. Trees with bat roost potential were identified to the north and east outside of the site.

¹ The map shows five different classes of peat soils. Class 1 and 2 are solely, or are dominated by, land with peat soil and peatland priority habitats. Class 5 is peat soil >50cm but currently without peatland habitats. Class 3 is peaty soil with some/mostly peat forming vegetation.

A variety of habitats on site provide foraging and nesting opportunities for a range of common bird species in addition a sand martin colony was identified close to the centre of the site.

The whole site was assessed to have the potential to support foraging or commuting badger or otter however no signs of activity were observed.

1.4 BIODIVERSITY SITE ENHANCEMENT

The habitats within the centre of the site largely consisting of neutral grassland are being cleared to form a unvegetated platform for future development. New bunds are being created which have taken the translocated grassland the platform creation area.

Through the incorporation of the habitat creation discussed in Section 2 it is assessed that the wider site's biodiversity will be improved and that lost habitat will be replaced and extended through wildflower sowing, and the installation of bird boxes and sand martin habitat, along with invertebrate habitat including bee banks.

The main habitat of note; a small area of bog is due to be retained and excluded from works areas. This will should also be enhanced as detailed below. Areas of dense scrub will be lost however these will be replaced with a species rich native scrub hedge.

Wildflower planting will enhance pollinator populations, supporting bees, and other insects, while also adding diversity to the plant life and creates an improvement to neutral grassland habitat that is lost. Invasive non-native species will be removed preventing further spread into the site and outwith and ongoing check and control will take place. Installing boxes for birds, and invertebrates will offer specialized habitats for these species, supporting their nesting and roosting needs. The new planting and habitat structures will create a more varied and resilient landscape, enhancing ecosystem services such as pollination, pest control, and soil health, while contributing to overall biodiversity.

Table 2: Proposed habitat creation and management

UKHab primary Habitat	Area (m ²)
Other neutral grassland (g3c) – Highland mix	7034
Neutral grassland management and resowing	3167
Native species rich scrub hedge with hedgerow under sow	996
Scattered tree corridor	100 m corridor
Bog habitat management	274

2 ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS

The pre-development ecological value of the site was assessed by a qualified and experienced ecologist. The landscape proposals and additional habitat creation have been created to replace and enhance the habitats lost through development.

2.1 HABITAT CREATION AND ENHANCEMENT

The site will be subject to a landscaping plan that aims to compensate for the loss of biodiversity as a result of the proposals wherever possible (Figures 1). The following is planned for the site:

- New vegetated bunds will be created from the vegetation and soil currently on the site.
- Additional seeding of bunds within wildflower seed will increase diversity within the site in addition to creating additional resource for pollinators.
- Trees will be retained, the site boundary has been moved in to accomplish this. This will maintain existing habitat and linear commuting routes.
- Further enhancements will increase invertebrate habitat through the inclusion of bee banks within the new bunds.
- A corridor of trees and native species rich scrub hedging will be planted along the boundary of the caravan park to the north, this will link to the woodland improving commuting and green corridors, biodiversity and will reduce disturbance to the area of ground proposed for the artificial sand martin site.
- The neutral grassland between the site and the caravan park will be managed to improve condition, reseeding will also be undertaken to improve the diversity of the seedbank.
- An artificial sand martin nesting site will be created for approximately 40 nesting pairs.
- An additional area will be created suitable for natural creation of a sand martin colony.
- Bird and bat boxes will be installed.
- An invasive species survey will be undertaken, Invasive species management will be undertaken and ongoing checks and management will take place for a minimum of 5 years.

2.1.1 INVASIVE SPECIES

Himalayan balsam and buddleia were found across the site (and other non-native species are present nearby). As these are invasive species, it is recommended they are removed to prevent their spread.

All works should be undertaken in accordance with protocols outlined in an invasive species management plan. Works must not cause the accidental spread of these or any other invasive species with or outside of the site.

- An invasive species survey has been undertaken. Recommendations within the report should be followed.

2.1.2 BOG HABITAT

The small area of bog within the site boundary is to be retained, this will be excluded from the works area with a buffer implemented between the bog and the cut and fill area.

- Annual monitoring of the bog habitat should be undertaken to assess the colonisation of unwanted species within the habitat which may be encroaching from habitats within the site.
- The bog habitat should be enhanced through the removal of any encroaching species, in particular trees and shrubs.

2.2 TREES

Trees should be planted to the north and northeast of the site extending slightly along the boundary of the caravan park and along the edge of the woodland creating a merging area between the woodland and grassland. This will create a mosaic of habitats and transition area. This will improve the connectivity of the site and enhance biodiversity creating habitat for a variety of birds, mammals and insects. These trees should be interspersed with a species rich native scrub hedge as discussed below. Larger trees should be chosen for along the boundary and smaller transition trees (described in the native rich scrub section) along the woodland edge.

Trees should be sourced from the local provenance where possible and should be native species, Suitable species are:

- Oak -*Quercus petraea* or *robur*
- Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*
- Gean *Prunus avium*
- Birch *Betula pubescens* or *pendula*
- Alder *Alnus glutinosa*

2.2.1 NATIVE RICH SCRUB HEDGE

Connecting the trees should be a native species rich scrub hedge. This should be multi layered and managed to be dense.

- Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*
- Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*
- Dog rose *Rosa canina*
- Hazel *Corylus avellana*
- Alder *Alnus glutinosa*
- Willows *Salix caprea*, *Salix cinerea*
- Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*
- Holly *Ilex aquifolium*
- Elder *Sambucus nigra*

2.5.3.1 MANAGEMENT

Minimal management of the trees and scrub should be undertaken. Where management is required it should follow the below recommendations.

- If cutting is required it should be on a two-to-three-year rotation with different areas cut each year. Hedges should be cut between January and February.
- Management should include replacement of any plants that die in the first years.
- If supports and straps are used they should be checked to ensure tight enough to support trees sufficiently.
- If any pruning is undertaken it must take place during the dormant period – ideally February/March outside the breeding bird season to avoid disturbance to nesting birds. The breeding bird season is March to September. It is unlikely that pruning (other than die back) should be required within the first 10 years. Any pruned branches can be piled in a discrete location to create habitat piles for invertebrates.
- Pruning cuts should not be painted with any type of wound sealing paint.
- Timber stakes and straps must be removed three years after planting and when the tree is showing signs of strong growth.

2.2.2 WILDFLOWER PLANTING

Wildflower seeding has been recommended for the created bunds. Wildflower seed mix should be used in addition to existing vegetation present within the site which will be used to vegetate new bunds. This will increase the biodiversity of grassland within the site.

Ensure the soils of the bunds are suitable for the seed mix chosen. The below Highland Mix required well drained, sandy loam soils with low nutrient levels and slightly acidic.

A recommended mix is Scotia seeds 'Highland Grassland Mix' this will provide foraging for birds and habitat for invertebrates and therefore bats.

This mix contains 20 species in the following abundance.

- *Achillea millefolium* - Yarrow 2.5%
- *Alchemilla alpina* - Alpine Ladys Mantle 1%
- *Calluna vulgaris* - Common heather 2%
- *Erica cinerea* - Bell Heather 1.8%
- *Galium saxatile* - Heath Bedstraw 0.1%
- *Galium verum* - Lady's Bedstraw 1.6%
- *Luzula multiflora* - Heath Wood Rush 0.2%
- *Plantago lanceolata* - Ribwort Plantain 2%
- *Potentilla erecta* – Tormentil 0.1%
- *Prunella vulgaris* – Selfheal 2.7%
- *Ranunculus acris* - Meadow Buttercup 2.7%
- *Rumex acetosella* - Sheep's Sorrel 1%
- *Stellaria graminea* - Lesser Stitchwort 0.2%
- *Succisa pratensis* - Devils-bit Scabious 0.5%
- *Trifolium repens* - White Clover 1.1%
- *Veronica chamaedrys* Germander Speedwell 0.1%
- *Veronica officinalis* Common Speedwell 0.3%
- *Viola riviniana* - Common Dog Violet 0.2%
- *Agrostis capillaris* - Common Bent 8%
- *Agrostis vinealis* - Brown Bent 6%
- *Anthoxanthum odoratum* - Sweet Vernal Grass 2%
- *Deschampsia flexuosa* - Wavy Hair Grass 6.3%
- *Festuca ovina* - Sheeps Fescue 28.5%
- *Festuca rubra ssp commutate* - Chewings Fescue 28%
- *Molinia caerulea* - Purple Moor Grass 1%
- *Nardus stricta* - Mat Grass 0.2%

Additional species could be included in the mix to provide food plants for the butterfly species identified on the site. These are listed below:

- Greater Bird's-foot *Trefoil L. pedunculatus*
- Black Medick *Medicago lupulina*
- Common Restharrow *Ononis repens*
- White Clover *Trifolium repens*
- Lesser Trefoil *T. dubium*
- *Festuca spp.*
- *Agrostis spp.*
- *Poa spp.*
- Cock's- foot *Dactylis glomerata*
- Downy Oat-grass *Helictotrichon pubescens*
- False Brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*
- Tufted hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*
- Common Couch *Elytrigia repens*
- *Cirsium spp.*

- *Carduus spp.*
- *Malva spp.*
- Viper's-bugloss *Echium vulgare*

Below the area of proposed hedgerow scrub a more suitable hedgerow mix could be sown such as the Hedgerow Meadow Mix (SCM4)

- *Campanula latifolia* Giant Bellflower 0.1%
- *Centaurea nigra* - Common Knapweed 2.5%
- *Cruciata laevipes* - Crosswort 1.5%
- *Digitalis purpurea* - Foxglove 1%
- *Filipendula ulmaria* – Meadowsweet 2.5%
- *Geum urbanum* - Herb Bennet 2.5%
- *Geranium sylvaticum* - Wood Cranesbill 1%
- *Hypericum perforatum* - St Johns Wort 0.5%
- *Knautia arvensis* - Field Scabious 1%
- *Leucanthemum vulgare* - Ox eye Daisy 1%
- *Primula vulgaris* – Primrose 0.1%
- *Rhinanthus minor* - Yellow Rattle 1%
- *Scrophularia nodosa* - Common Figwort 0.1%
- *Silene dioica* - Red Campion 1.9%
- *Stachys sylvatica* - Hedge Woundwort 1%
- *Stellaria holostea* - Greater Stitchwort 0.1%%
- *Torilis japonica* - Upright Hedge Parsley 1.5%
- *Vicia sepium* - Bush Vetch 0.5%
- *Agrostis capillaris* - Common Bent 10%
- *Cynosurus cristatus* - Crested Dog's Tail 10%
- *Festuca rubra ssp commutate* - Chewings Fescue 25%
- *Poa nemoralis* - Wood Meadow Grass 10%
- *Poa pratensis* - Smooth-stalked Meadow Grass 25%

3.5.3.1 MANAGEMENT

After first sowing it is normally recommended that there are two early cuts carried out during March and early May (cut to 4-7cm), if the sward is at or above 10cm at this point. The purpose of the early cut is to keep weeds and potentially more vigorous species at bay if necessary. The need for an early cut should be made the land management team. A second cut should be carried out at the end of the growing season in September (after flowering) (cut to 4cm).

Cutting should only be undertaken where assessed as required. If undertaken it should only be cut once (more frequent cutting could reduce species diversity) in September/October (after flowering) where it should be cut to 4cm. In all cases remove clippings. Fertiliser should not be used.

Appropriate soil should be used for the wildflower areas; the soil should be low fertility and have suitable nutrients and pH.

The same management should be undertaken for the current neutral grassland to the north of the site as shown in Figure 1. This area should also be seeded with the highland mix to increase the variety of the seedbank in this area.

2.3 WILDLIFE HABITAT CREATION

2.3.1 SAND MARTINS

Sand martin enhancement measures will be included in the plans to compensate for the removal of the existing colony within the site. This will include creating a new artificial sand bank in a suitable alternative location within the site. An artificial sand martin bank will be situated on the northern section of the site as per Figure 1.

Additionally, an area of sandy bank to the east of the site will be exposed and made suitable for natural uptake by sand martins (Figure 1).

Artificial Habitat

The artificial sand bank will provide for at least 40 nesting pairs.

The Green Future Building company design of box will be used to install an artificial nest area. Ongoing maintenance of the artificial site will be required and it is anticipated that pairing up with a local body (e.g. school, wildlife group) may be suitable in the long term to take this forward. Each of the Green Future Building cabinets come with 48 nesting chambers

As the structure will not be above water – predation deterrents maybe required to prevent access to the structure from e.g. fox. The ecologist will advise. <https://www.greenfuturebuilding.co.uk/products/sand-martin-banks>. Three are tunnels which lead from the front to chambers filled with sand for the sand martins to excavate to create nesting holes. The top of the cabinet will be planted up to help regulate internal temperature and absorb summer heat.



Front panel of sand martin bank cabinet with plants growing on the top



Back access to the sand martin cabinet

Natural Habitat

In the east of the site (Figure 1) a bank which is assessed to be composed of suitable stable material which is soft enough for nesting sand martin will be shaped/cut with an excavator to be suitable for use as a sand martin nesting sand bank, giving the sand martin a choice of nesting locations and potential to create their own nest bank.

The bank will be shaped so that it is a more or less vertical bank which is clear of vegetation. The bank should be 3-4m high to reduce risk of predation. The area in front (and to the sides) of the bank should be kept clear of vegetation² and scrub/trees to ensure a clear flyway

2.3.2 TREE BIRD BOXES

Direct Ecology will provide suitable bird boxes and install them in suitable locations in the areas shown in Figure 3.

Ten bird boxes will be placed in the trees in the woodland at the east of the site as per Figure 3. These will provide additional site enhancement and habitat for birds within the site. A selection of bird boxes will be installed. These will be installed by an ecologist. Boxes suitable for a variety of birds will be installed. The following will be used:

- Vivara Pro Barcelona WoodStone® Open Nest Box x 2
- Vivara pro woodstone 32mm box x 2
- Woodstone Seville 28mm box x 2
- Vivara Pro Starling Nest box x 2
- Eco Twany owl nest box x 1
- Treecreeper nest box 1



Vivara Pro Barcelona WoodStone® Open Nest Box

² Hopkins, L. (2001) Best Practice Guidelines: Artificial Bank Creation for Sand Martins and Kingfishers. Rotherham: Environment Agency.
https://www.lbp.org.uk/downloads/Publications/Management/artificial_bank_creation.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com



Vivara Pro NK SW 03 Oval WoodStone® Nest Box



Woodstone 28 and 32mm nest box



Schwegler 2BN treecreeper



Eco Tawny Owl nest box

2.3.3 BAT BOXES

Direct Ecology will provide suitable bat boxes and install them in suitable locations in the areas shown in Figure 3

Six bat boxes will be placed in the trees to the east near to the cycle path where more mature trees are present as per Figure 3. The bat boxes will be positioned 3 m or higher from the ground, so that the roosts cannot be easily interfered with. Woodcrete bat boxes are recommended due to their construction from a mixture of wood sawdust, concrete and clay, and their known use by bats including common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle bats. They are breathable and maintain a suitable temperature due to their insulating properties. They are waterproof and rot-proof, with a life expectancy of 25 years without any maintenance requirements (i.e. waterproofing). The following boxes will be used

- X 2 convex bat boxes
- X 2 Schwegler 2Fs
- X 2 Eco Kents



Schwegler 2F bat box



Convex bat box <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/convex-bat-box.html>



Eco – Kent Bat box – eg <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/10691-eco-kent-bat-box.html>

2.3.4 LIGHTING

Future development should take into consideration lighting and should follow the Institute of Lighting Professionals Bat and Artificial Lighting at Night, 2023 guidelines.

2.3.5 INVERTEBRATES

Creating habitats for invertebrates is crucial for maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health. Invertebrates play vital roles in pollination, soil aeration, nutrient cycling, and the food web. They support plant growth by pollinating flowers, and many are essential for decomposing organic matter, which enriches the soil. Additionally, invertebrates serve as a food source for numerous other animals, including birds, amphibians, and small mammals.

The site currently has limited suitable habitat for butterfly species. However, violet *Viola riviniana* is included within the highland grassland mix which is the caterpillar food plant of the pearl-bordered fritillary and small pearl-bordered fritillary, this along with the nearby woodland edge would improve the site for this species. Additionally, devils-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis* is included in the Highland seed mix which is the food plant for the marsh fritillary caterpillar and this will therefore have the potential to improve the site for this species as well.

Species suitable for common blue, meadow brown, painted lady and ringlet butterflies have been listed in Section 2.2.2 and should be included to provide food sources for these butterflies that were identified on site.

Sand patches

Creation of bare sand patches of bunds will create a varied structure and habitat mosaic which will enhance the site for beetles, solitary bees, wasps and butterflies. A technique detailed in the below. Where possible these areas should be kept free of vegetation.

<https://naturebftb.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Creating-and-maintaining-bare-sand-patches-habitat-management-guide-19.05.pdf>

Bee Banks

Many solitary bees and wasps build burrows in sand; this habitat niche can be easily created using sand to create a mound. The bee bank can vary in size depending how much space is available and ideally should be situated away from the prevailing wind and on a south or southeast facing bank to maximise sunshine. Guidance on creating a bee bank can be found here: [Bee-bank-boolet-4.pdf](#)

Hibernacula

On the southern side of the bund a hibernacula structure should be created suitable for reptile use. A trench between 30-60 cm deep in an area that will remain dry should be loosely filled with rocks, stones, branches and twigs. And covered with a thin layer of soil. It should be ensured that tunnels and crevices through the stones remain.

Deadwood Piles

Along the woodland edge and new scrub hedge, areas of deadwood should be piled up. Cuttings from the hedge management should also be put in piles. The pile should have a sunny and a shady side. The piles should be created from logs, twigs and leaf litter, some soil and moss. The pile should be fairly compact and in a quiet area. No painted or treated wood should be used.

Placement of invertebrate enhancement is suggested in Appendix 1, figure 1. Final locations should be agreed with an ecologist, following finalised site plans and bund profiles.

APPENDIX 1: FIGURES

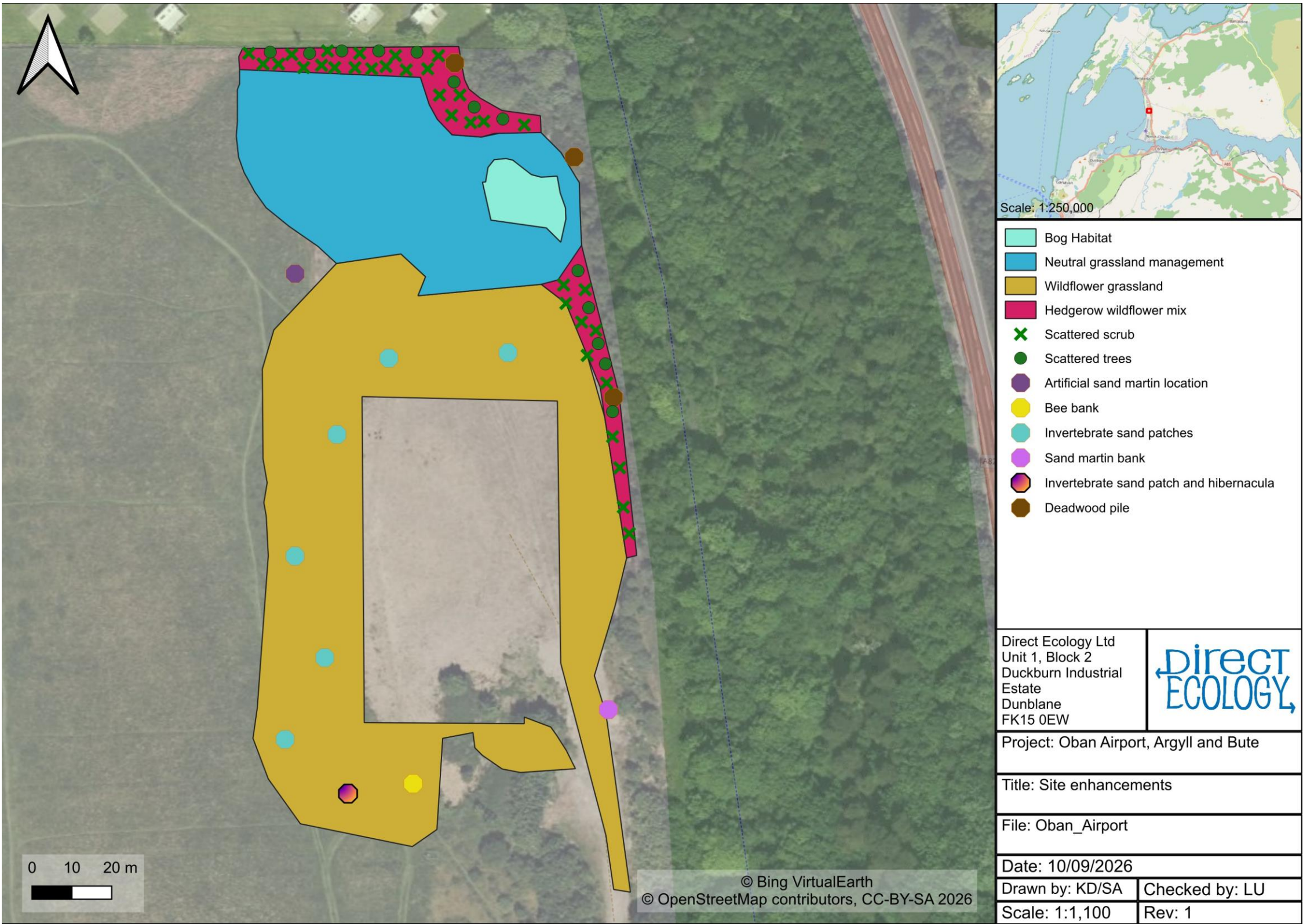


Figure 1: Site enhancement plan

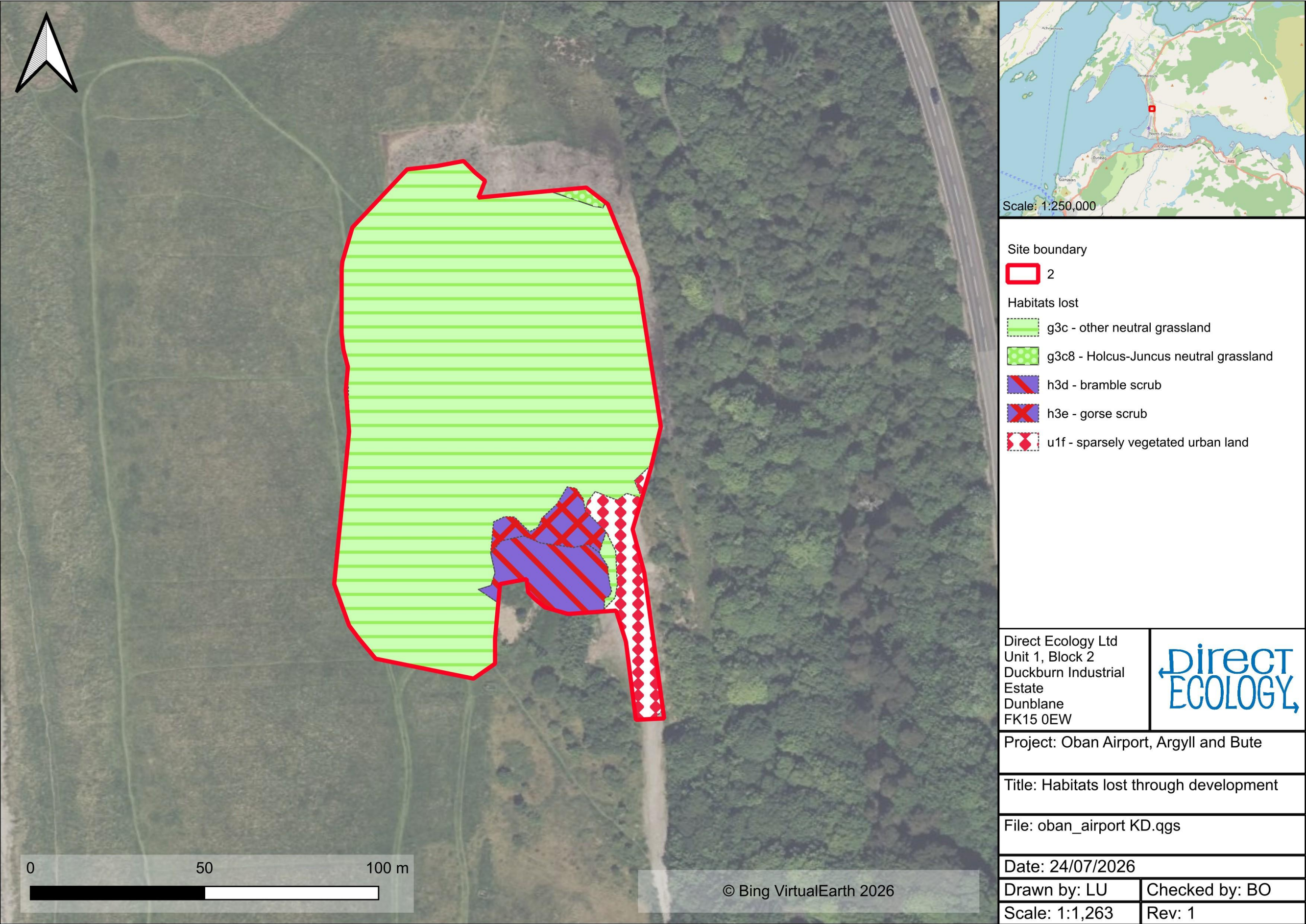


Figure 2: Habitats lost through works

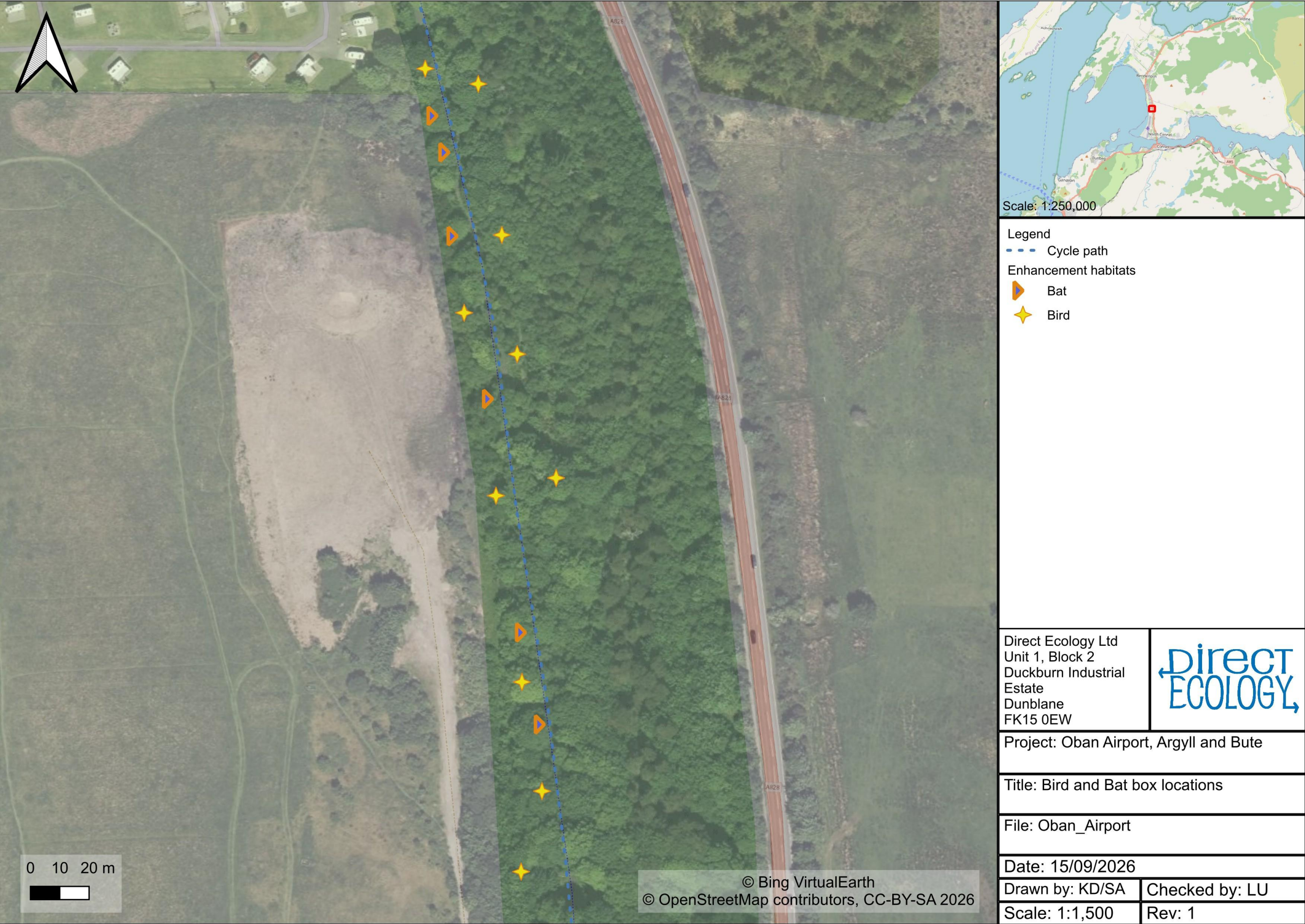


Figure 3: Bird and bat box locations (boxes will be micro-sited on site)