



PROJECT WEST SCOTLAND INTERCONNECTOR PROJECT: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
CLIENT SCOTTISH WOODLANDS LTD

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The South West Scotland Interconnector project is an Iberdrola grid project designed to connect a number of wind farms in South West Scotland to the national grid. To facilitate the construction of electricity poles and towers a number of areas of woodland along the proposed grid route had to be felled. This work was contracted to Scottish Woodlands Ltd (SWL) with Natural Power acting as their environmental advisors.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Natural Power wrote an overarching Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and 17 Environmental Management Plans (EMP) specific to each of the different woodland areas along the route. These plans outline the environmental constraints and appropriate mitigation associated with proposed tree felling works, including those associated with biosecurity. Before the CEMP and EMPs were finalised various organisations including the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish National Heritage (SNH), and local fishery trusts, were invited to comment upon them.

Work was being carried out over multiple river catchments, some of which were confirmed to show the presence of American signal crayfish (*Pacifastacus leniusculus*), a highly invasive crustacean that causes significant damage to river ecosystems and infrastructure. While the other river catchments were believed to be free from this species, it was essential to make sure that there was no accidental transfer of this species from one river catchment to another.

It was also recognised that the crayfish problem was totemic for a wider bio-security issue. There was a risk of unintended transfer of other known and unknown non-native species from one river catchment to another, not just within the project boundaries but also from other areas through the delivery of plant. As well as being undesirable this would be potentially illegal under the terms of the parts 14 - 17 of Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 which makes the movement of any animal outside of its natural range an offense..

CASE STUDY



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

SERVICES PROVIDED (CONT'D)

SOLVING THE PROBLEM

In order to ensure that SWL could comply with the regulations a plan had to be developed that had regulator buy in, and was auditable yet simple to operate on the ground. The first task was to identify the risk factors. Broadly the most significant risk was from any machinery that could be operating in wetland areas and machinery and excavators that could easily carry soils, vegetation and seeds. Harvesting and forwarding vehicles were the highest risk due to their deep tracks that could trap different species such as American signal crayfish and plant material. It should be noted that juvenile American signal crayfish may only be 15-20mm long and can easily be trapped in mud. Very small parts of some plants, such as Japanese knotweed can also easily root and create new plants.

Reliable visual detection of unwanted species trapped in mud on machinery is not possible so it was decided that the only way to minimise the risk was to ensure that all machinery was cleaned thoroughly before: arriving on the project, moving from one river catchment to another within the project, or leaving the project. The above images are examples of machinery being delivered that had been thoroughly cleaned.

ENSURING THAT THE PLAN WAS FOLLOWED

It was important that evidence was collected that this cleaning was being completed. In order to do this no machinery was able to enter the site or move catchments without an inspection and a photographic record of its condition (Figures 1 and 2). The machinery was always inspected outside of the project boundaries for newly delivered plant. Any machinery that was not cleaned was turned away.

ADDED VALUE

Following the start of felling operations, SEPA has been impressed by the level and quality of bio-security being demonstrated on the project.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
FIONA STRYJEWSKI
ACCOUNT MANAGER

fionas@naturalpower.com

FOR FULL DETAILS ON OUR ISO AND OTHER CERTIFICATIONS, PLEASE VISIT:
[naturalpower.com/company](https://www.naturalpower.com/company)

[naturalpower.com](https://www.naturalpower.com)

sayhello@naturalpower.com

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