



Coniston Fell, Dunnerdale Fell, Seathwaite Fell and Torver High Common (Lancashire) CL29 Raven's Crag Fencing Variation 2025

Environmental Screening Report



A report by
Rigby Jerram
For Coniston, Dunnerdale, Seathwaite & Torver Commoners
15 April 2025

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Contents

1. Summary	3
2. Maps	4
3. Introduction	11
4. Description of Project	11
5. Environmental Screening	12
6. Mitigation of Project	15
7. Description of Likely Effect of Project	15
8. Consultation	16
9. Conclusion	17
10. Photographs	18

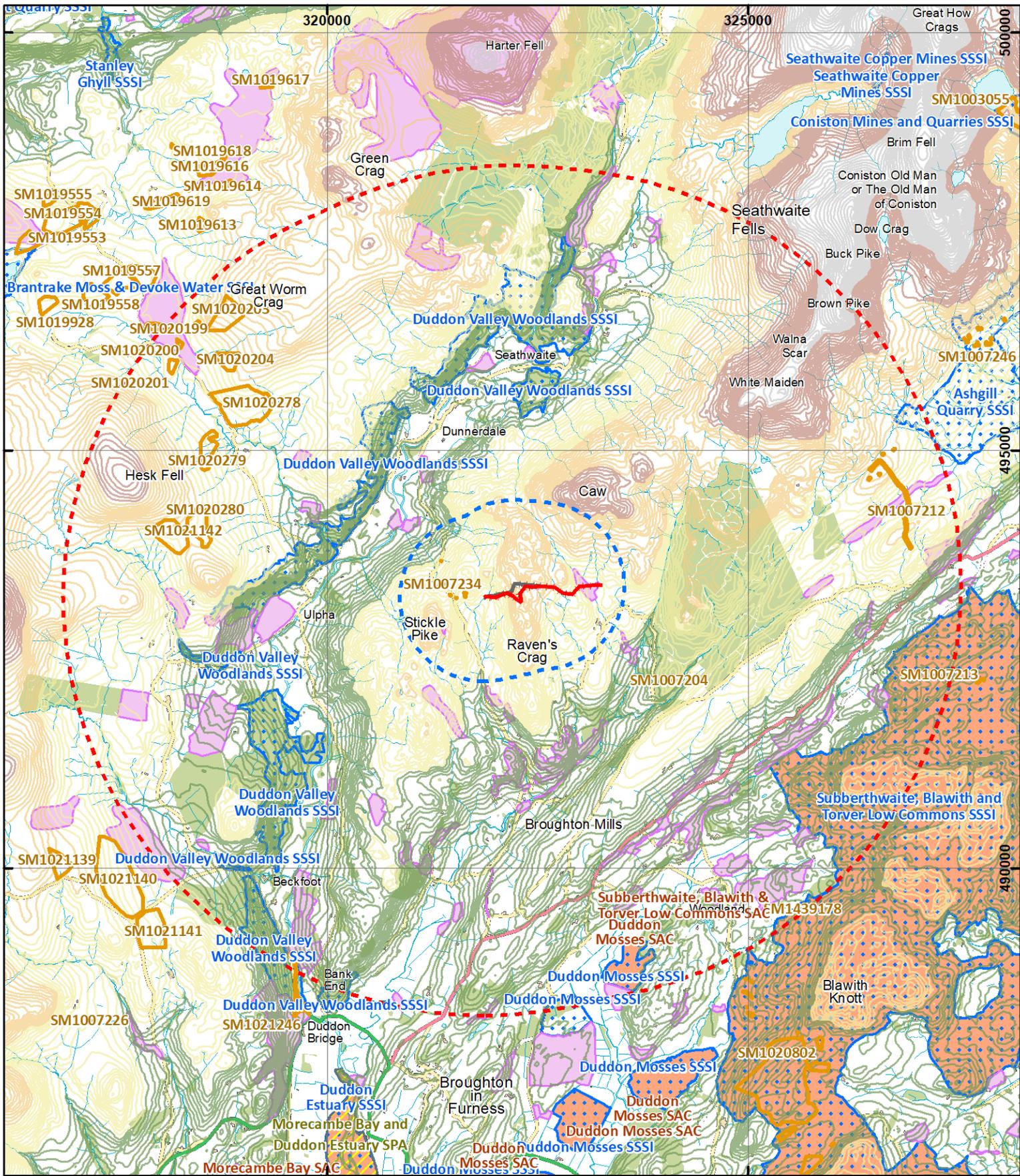
1. Summary

This document is an Environmental Screening Report for the difference between the built line of a fence on common land on the Dunnerdale Fells and the line of the fence as it was approved under Section 38 of the Commons Act 2006. The modification of the fence alignment was made as it was realised that there was a risk that the fence would direct livestock over the edge of a quarry. The new alignment is 1,688m long compared to 1,556m for the approved line and creates an enclosure which is 137ha as opposed to 140ha as approved. The fence is entirely on common land and open access land and is within the Lake District National Park and English Lake District World Heritage Site.

This assessment collates data on biodiversity, geodiversity, access, landscape and the historic environment and assesses the potential for adverse and beneficial impacts upon features of importance.

The assessment concludes that in terms of biodiversity, historic environment, geodiversity and access impacts there is no significant difference between the approved fenceline and the built line.

In terms of landscape impacts, whilst the fence is slightly longer than the approved alignment it is slightly less visible in its mid section, such that the modified alignment has a negligible effect on the landscape and visual impacts of the fence as assessed for the original s38 application.

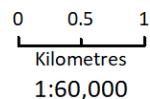


Coniston Fell, Dunnerdale Fell, Seathwaite Fell and Torver High Common (Lancashire)

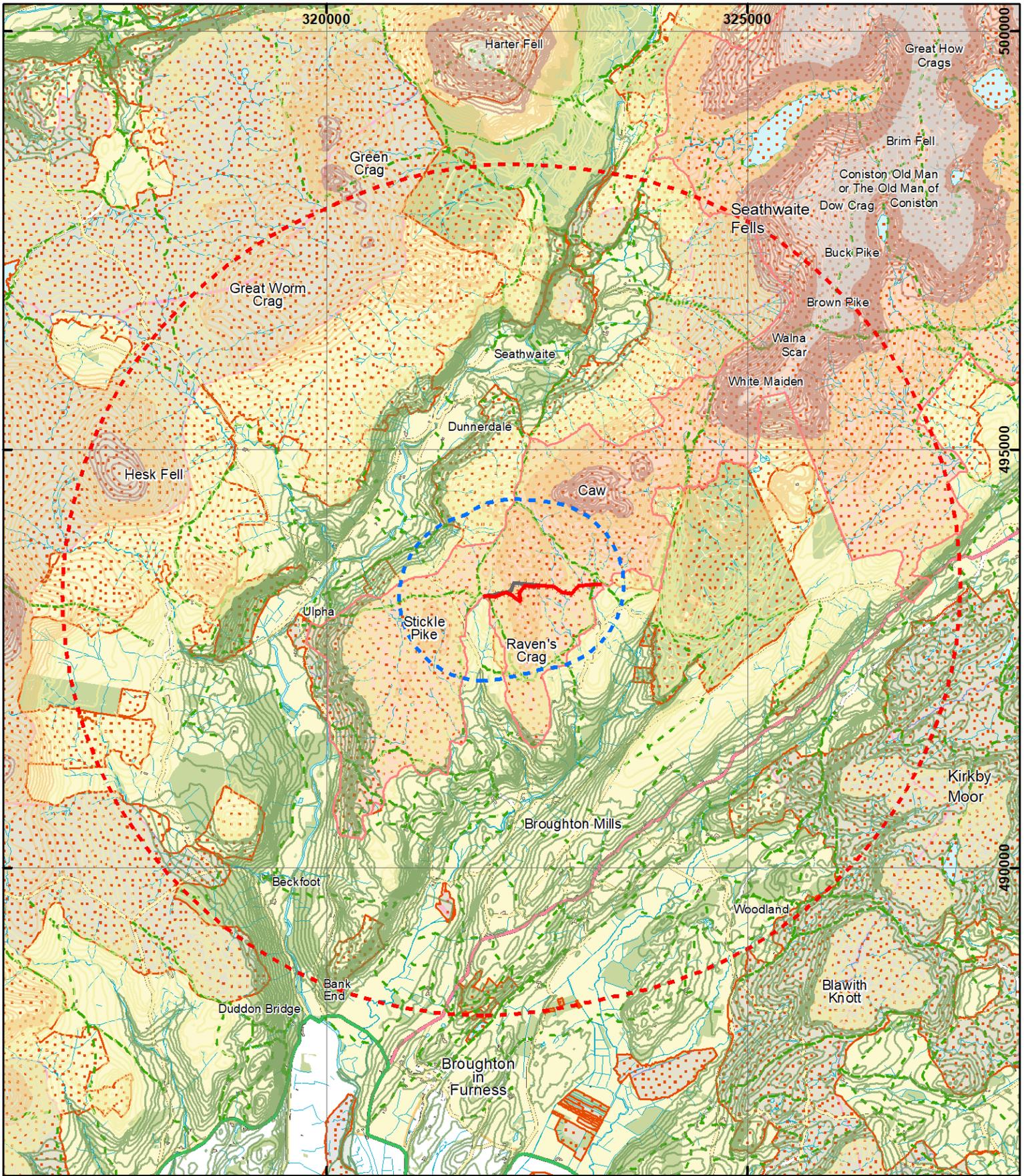
Map 1 Biodiversity and Historic Landscape Designations

- Approved fenceline
- Actual fenceline
- 1km buffer
- 5km buffer
- Scheduled Monuments
- Special Protection Areas
- Special Areas of Conservation
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- County Wildlife Sites

Drawn by R Jerram 17 December 2024



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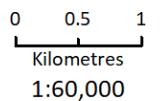


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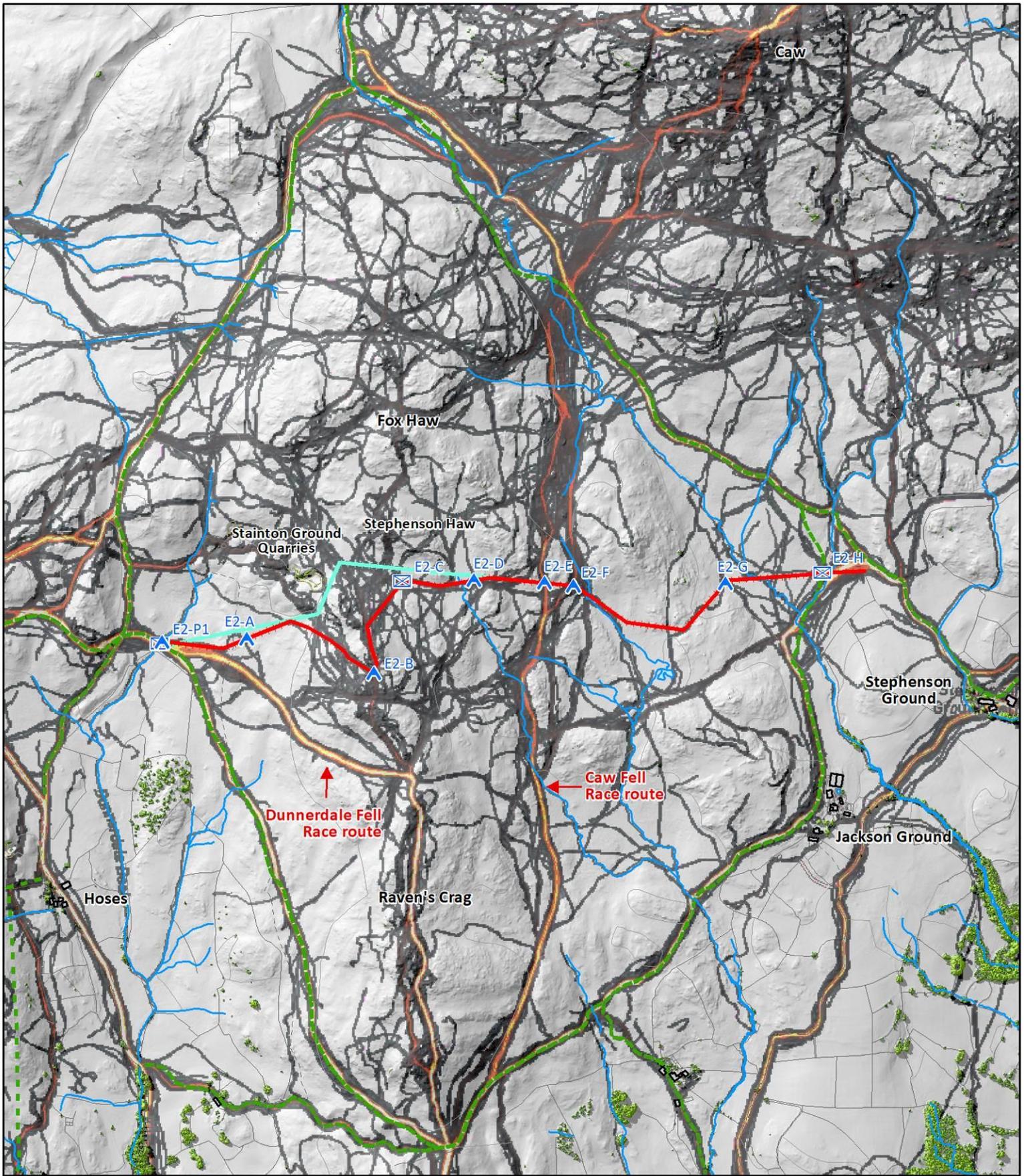
Map 2 Designated Landscape

- Approved fenceline
- Actual fenceline
- 1km buffer
- 5km buffer
- Lake District National Park
- CROW Access Land
- Common Land
- CDST Common
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Byway open to all traffic
- Restricted byway

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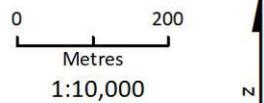
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Coniston Fell, Dunnerdale Fell, Seathwaite Fell and Torver High Common (Lancashire)

Map 4 Strava Heatmap

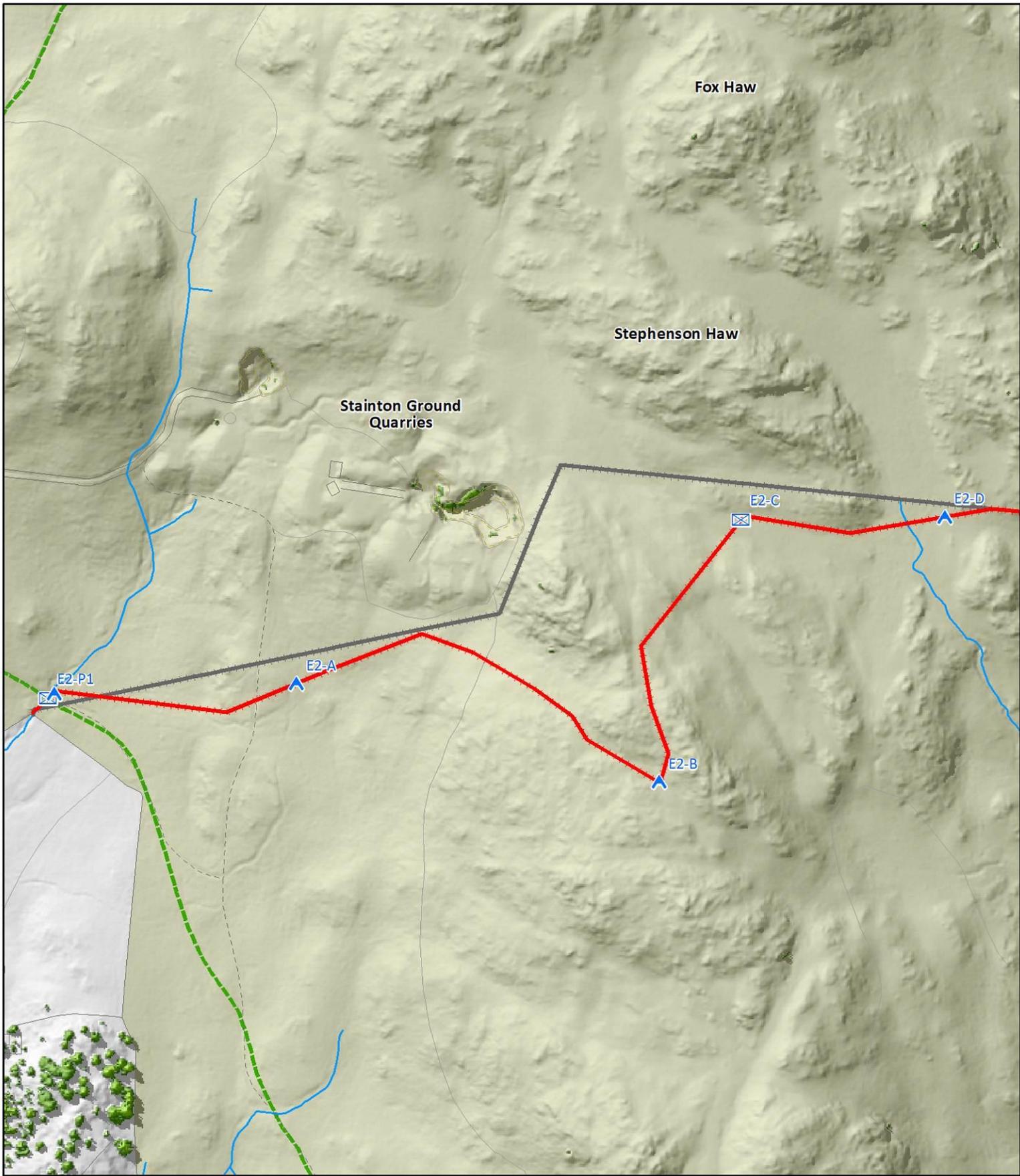
- Approved fenceline
- Actual fenceline
- Field gate
- Stile
- - - Footpath
- Bridleway



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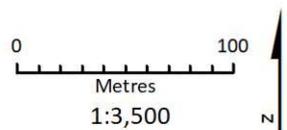


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Map 5 Detail of the diversion from the approved line



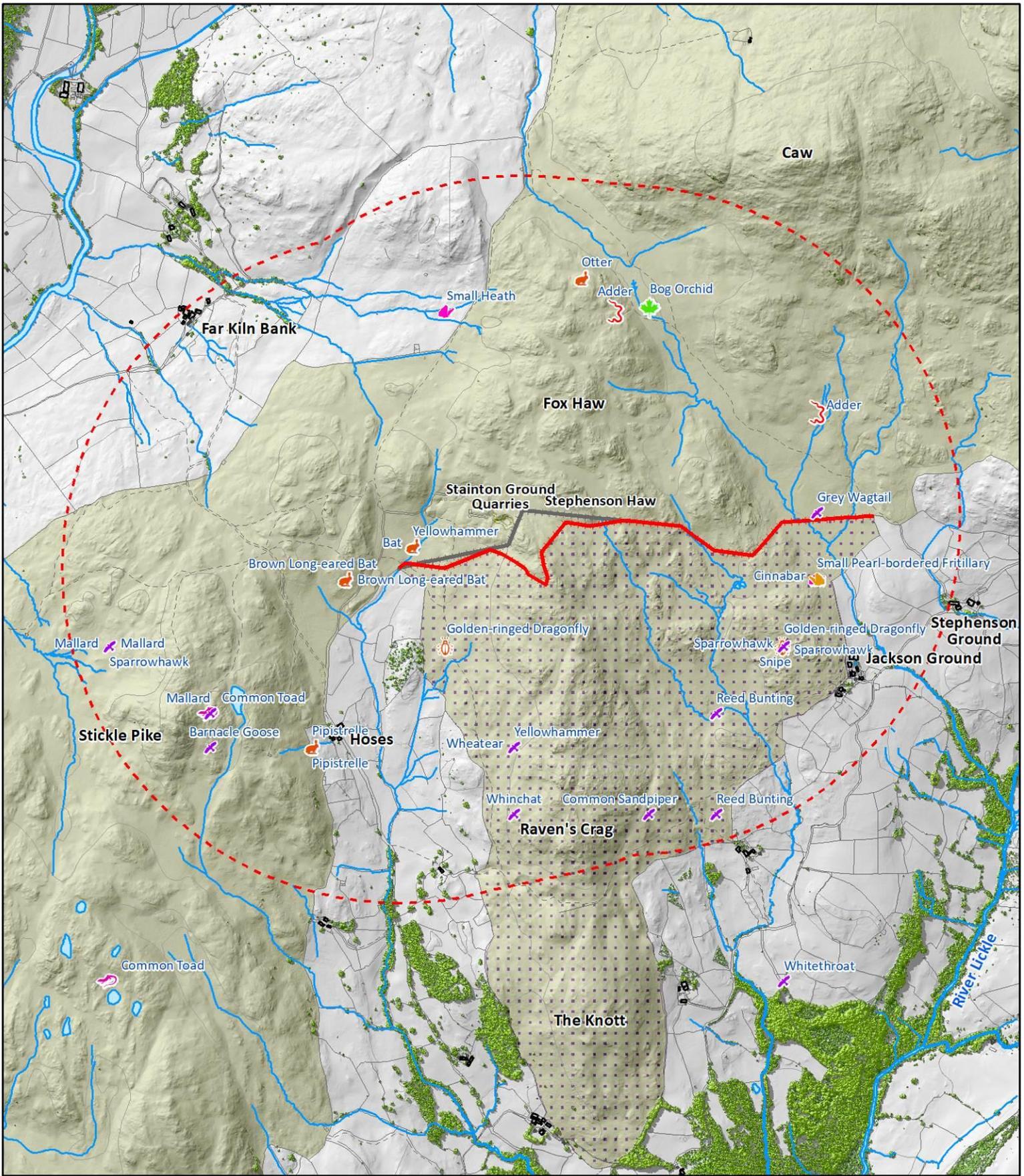
- Common Land
- Approved fenceline
- Actual fenceline
- Bridleway
- Gate
- Stile

Survey by R Jerram 12 November 2024

Drawn by R Jerram 12 December 2024



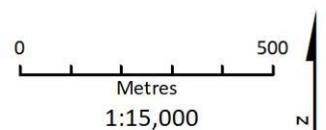
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Coniston Fell, Dunnerdale Fell, Seathwaite Fell and Torver High Common (Lancashire)

Map 6 Rare and Protected Species Records

- | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Approved fenceline | amphibian | insect - dragonfly (Odonata) |
| Actual fenceline | bird | insect - moth |
| 1km buffer | flowering plant | reptile |
| Common Land | insect - butterfly | terrestrial mammal |
| Raven's Crag Exclosure | | |



Drawn by R Jerram 11 April 2025

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Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC): Non-Statutory Sites Search



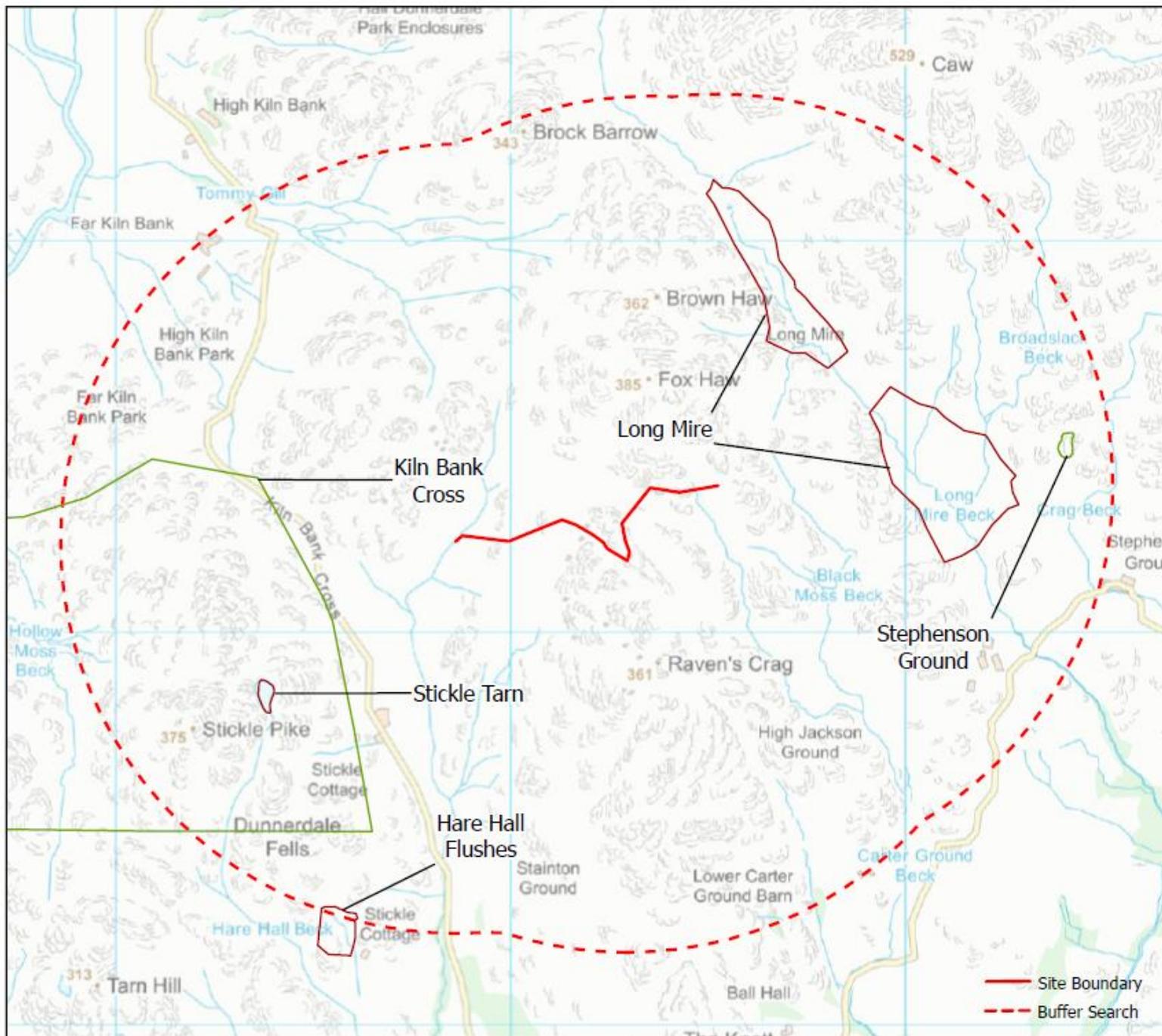
For: Rigby Jerram at Rigby Jerram Ecological Consultants

Site Name: Raven's Crag, Dunnerdale

Buffer: 1km

Search Date: 15/01/2025

N.B. Sites are displayed only if it intersects with the search area



Key

- County Wildlife Sites
- Local Geological Sites

0 125 250 500 m



Any queries in the first instance contact:
Dr Moustafa Eweda
Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC)
E. datamanager@cbdc.org.uk

3. Introduction

A Section 38 Commons Act (2006) application for fencing on Coniston Fell, Dunnerdale Fell, Seathwaite Fell and Torver High Common (Lancashire) (CDST) was made and approved in 2020. The fencing was required as part of a Countryside Stewardship Agreement which included the restoration of extensive tree and scrub habitat on the common through the creation of seven enclosures. When it came to erecting the fence to create the Raven's Crag enclosure it became apparent that the agreed fenceline route had potential to direct livestock over the edge of the Stainton Ground Quarry void in bad weather. To prevent this occurring the fence was rerouted around the south side of the knoll on the south-east side of the quarry, rejoining the approved line on the west side of Stephenson Haw (Map 3).

This Environmental Screening Report forms part of a retrospective application for the approval of this divergence from the approved line. The assessment concentrates on how the built line of the fence differs in its environmental impacts compared to the approved line. No attempt is made to assess the impacts of the fence overall as the principal of the fence and the eastern part of its route have already been approved.

4. Description of Project

The fence runs east – west across the middle section of the Dunnerdale Fells in the south-western English Lake District within the Lake District National Park and the English Lake District World Heritage Site (Maps 1 – 3 and 5). The Dunnerdale Fells are an area of low, knolly fells with extensive areas of bracken on their lower slopes and areas of acid grassland on higher ground. There are frequent valley mires and flushes in the hollows and valleys between the knolls. The Raven's Crag enclosure extends along the ridge extending southwards from Stephenson Haw and Stainton Ground Quarries over Raven's Crag to The Knott. The area is typical of the Dunnerdale Fells, with extensive stands of bracken on the lower ground and acid grassland present along the knolly ridge top. There are several valley mires, mainly in the north-eastern part of the enclosure, as well as small rushy flushes.

The approved line of the fence ran directly from the northernmost corner of the fell wall some 500m north north-east of the farm buildings at Hoses to the south-east corner of the main void of Stainton Ground Quarries, then turning northwards above the edge of the void and below a small knoll to level ground, at which point it turned eastwards towards Stephenson Haw.

The actual line of the fence as built runs from the wall corner to the southern side of the quarry void and then turns south-east for 200m, following a shallow trough between two knolls, before turning northwards around the eastern side of the northern-most knoll and then north-eastwards and eastwards to rejoin the approved line. There is also a minor kink in the first section of fence where it avoids a small rock outcrop. Both lines are shown in Maps 3 and 5.

5. Environmental Screening

5.1. Biodiversity

A habitat survey was conducted in 2019 to inform the original application and a walkover survey was also undertaken in November 2024. The lower ground below Stainton Ground Quarries is mostly covered by dense bracken with rush – *Sphagnum* flushes at the western end and part way up the slope. Above the quarry acid grassland predominates. Beyond the point where the built line of the fence starts to follow the approved route rush flushes are again present and the fence drops into a shallow valley with a valley mire. The areas of rush flush and valley mire fall into the upland flushes, fens and swamps priority habitat. Areas of bracken and acid grassland are not priority habitat.

Areas of upland flushes, fens and swamps priority habitat crossed by the realigned fenceline would also have been crossed by the approved fenceline.

There are no Special Protection Areas or Ramsar Sites within 5km of the project.

There are two Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within five kilometres of the project (Map 1):

- Duddon Mosses SAC lies 4.2km south of the realigned fence. It is designated for its lowland raised bog habitat. No impacts are predicted on this SAC.
- Subberthwaite, Blawith & Torver Low Common SAC is designated for its valley mire habitat and is 3.5km south-east of the fencing. No impacts are predicted on this SAC.

There are three biological Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within five kilometres of the project:

- Duddon Mosses SSSI lies 4.2km south of the realigned fence. It is designated for its lowland raised bog habitat and invertebrate assemblage. No impacts are predicted on this SSSI.
- Subberthwaite, Blawith & Torver Low Common SSSI is designated for its valley mire habitat, natterjack toad population and dragonfly assemblage and is 3.5km south-east of the fencing. No impacts are predicted on this SSSI.
- Duddon Valley Woodlands SSSI is designated for its upland oak woodland and is 1.7km north of the fencing. No impacts are predicted on this SSSI.

Two County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) lie within one kilometre of the realigned fenceline (Maps 1 and 3):

- Long Mire CWS is crossed by the approved fenceline route at its eastern end. It is designated for its valley mire habitat. No impacts have occurred to this site as a result of the realignment of the fence from its approved line at its western end.
- Stickle Tarn CWS is designated for its extensive emergent vegetation and upland tarn habitat and is 600m west of the fence. No impacts are predicted on this site.

5.2. Geodiversity

The commons are underlain by Borrowdale Volcanic rocks and there are numerous small slate quarries in the vicinity of the fence.

There is one geological SSSIs within five kilometres of the proposed fencing:

- Ashgill Quarry SSSI is designated for its exposures of Ordovician and Silurian rocks and is 4.6km east of the fence.

Neither fence route has an impact on the geodiversity of the Dunnerdale Fells.

5.3. Archaeology and Historic Environment

There is a single Scheduled Monument within one kilometre of the fence: Cairns on Kiln Bank 1/6 to 1/2 mile (270m-800m) SSE of Far Kiln Bank Farmhouse. This Scheduled Monument is 230m west of the fence and has not been impacted by its construction.

In addition there are 32 Historic Environment Records within a kilometre of the fence (Table 1). The majority of these are bronze age cairns. One record, a washfold (2900468), lies within a few metres of the western end of both the approved line and built line of the fence. The built fence avoids the washfold and associated sheepfold, skirting them to the north-west and north. No other record lies close to the fence and none have been impacted by its construction.

Table 1 Lake District National Park Historic Environment Records within 1km of Realigned Fence

Ref	Feature	Age
2885625	The White Well Holy Well	Medieval
2885699	Goat Crag Cairnfield	Bronze Age
2885700	Cairns on Kiln Bank	Bronze Age
2885701	Kiln Bank Walls	Uncertain
2885703	Kiln Bank Cairnfield	Bronze Age
2885704	Kiln Bank Cairnfield	Bronze Age
2885705	Kiln Bank Cairnfield	Bronze Age
2885706	Kiln Bank Cairnfield	Bronze Age
2885707	Cairns on Kiln Bank	Bronze Age
2885960	Caw Cairnfield	Bronze Age
2886398	Dunnerdale Cairn	Bronze Age
2886704	Fox Haw Cairn with Cist	Bronze Age
2886799	Area of Prehistoric Sites on Dunnerdale Fells	Prehistoric
2888381	Stephenson Ground Cairn	Bronze Age
2888382	Stephenson Ground Cairn	Bronze Age
2888384	Stephenson Ground Cairn	Bronze Age
2888385	Stephenson Ground Cairn	Bronze Age
2888420	Stephenson Ground Cairns	Bronze Age
2888550	Stephenson Ground Field System	Uncertain
2888871	Stainton Ground Slate Quarries	Uncertain
2888872	Brock Barrow Slate Quarry	Uncertain
2888873	Horse Pack Slate Mine	Uncertain
2889281	Kiln Bank Levels	Uncertain
2889282	Hollowscar Farmstead Stie	Uncertain
2889648	Stone Circles, Tommy Gill, Brock Barrow	Prehistoric
2889657	Potash Kiln, Stephenson Ground	Uncertain
2889658	Potash Kiln, Stephenson Ground	Uncertain
2892083	Bank and Ditch, Stephenson Ground	Uncertain
2892084	Settlement, Park Head Road	Uncertain
2900468	Washfold of unknown date	Uncertain

There is no difference in the impacts of the realigned fence and the approved fenceline on historic features.

5.4. Landscape

The fence runs east – west across the middle section of the Dunnerdale Fells in the south-western English Lake District within the Lake District National Park and the English Lake District World Heritage Site (Map 2). The Dunnerdale Fells are an area of low, knolly fells with extensive areas of bracken on their lower slopes and areas of acid grassland on higher ground. There are frequent valley mires and flushes in the hollows and valleys between the knolls. The Raven’s Crag enclosure extends along the ridge extending southwards from Stephenson Haw and Stainton Ground Quarries over Raven’s Crag to The Knott. The area is typical of the Dunnerdale Fells, with extensive stands of bracken on the lower ground and acid grassland present along the knolly ridge top. There are a number of valley mires, mainly in the north-eastern part of the enclosure.

The landscape of the Raven’s Crag enclosure and land surrounding it is characteristic of the lower fells of the Rugged/Craggy Volcanic High Fells. The underlying volcanic geology is prominent, with frequent outcrops of rock, with short grassland on the higher ground and bracken beds on the lower slopes. Glacial and fluvial erosion processes have produced a complex topography of rocky knolls and small valleys and troughs between them. These low knolly fells are a distinctive characteristic of the Coniston Fells Distinctive Character Area and, whilst small scale in comparison to other parts of the Coniston Fells, the history and influence of slate and mineral extraction on the landscape character is clearly visible in the vicinity of the fence in the form of disused quarries, mine levels and associated spoil heaps.

5.5. Access

The Common is open access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. In addition to this there are several public rights of way running across it in the vicinity of the diverted section of fence, most notably the bridleway running around the south end of Raven’s Crag from Jackson’s Ground to the road at Kiln Bank Cross. The fence crosses this bridleway at its western end in the same location as it would have been crossed by the approved fence. There is a field gate at this location to allow walkers, horse riders and cyclists access. The unaltered eastern end of the fence also crosses a public bridleway, again there is a field gate at the crossing point to maintain access rights.

The common is heavily used by the public for recreation, mainly in the form of walking, but also for fell running and mountain biking. In addition to casual fell running, two competitive fell races traverse the Raven’s Crag enclosure: Caw Fell Race and Dunnerdale Fell Race. The routes of these races can be clearly seen on Map 4, which shows the Strava Heatmap of the area. The Dunnerdale Fell Race route crosses the diverted fence at the same point as the bridleway to High Kiln Bank and so will use the bridleway gate. The Caw Fell Race route crosses the fence just east of where the diverted line rejoins the approved line where stiles have been positioned.

5.6. World Heritage Site Outstanding Universal Value

The Common is in the Duddon Valley component of the English Lake District World Heritage Site and makes a significant contributions to the *extraordinary beauty and harmony* of the valley, the *common land* agro-pastoral system and has several of the valley’s hefted *Herdwick flocks*.

6. Mitigation of Project

No specific additional mitigation is included to accommodate the diverted fenceline, however all the mitigation features included in the original Section 38 application have been incorporated into the revised line. Gates have been placed where the fence crosses public bridleways and stiles are positioned where there are desire lines across the fence. The revised fenceline uses the landscape to hide it wherever possible, particularly where it diverts south around the knoll to avoid the quarry.

7. Description of Likely Effect of Project

7.1. Biodiversity

The biodiversity impacts of the realigned fence are no different to those of the approved line. Small stands of upland flushes, fens and swamps priority habitat are crossed by both routes and the minor adverse impacts resulting from this are the same for both the approved and built fencelines.

7.2. Geodiversity

There are no geodiversity impacts from either fenceline.

7.3. Historic environment

There are no adverse impacts on the historic environment associated with either fenceline. The sheepfolds at the western end of the fence would have been avoided by both routes. The scheduled monument to the west of the end of the fence is too far away for either fenceline to have an impact upon it. The built line of the fence is a slight improvement on the approved line in relation to Stainton Ground Quarries as it has been moved away from the edge of the main quarry void.

7.4. Landscape

In terms of landscape character there is no significant difference between the two fencelines. The only difference is how the fence goes around the knoll on the south-east side of Stainton Ground Quarries. The approved line goes around the western side, whilst the built line takes a slightly longer route (by 132 metres) around its southern and eastern sides (Map 2 and Figure 1). This makes no discernible change to the impact on landscape character, as the impact is simply the presence of the fence for 10 years. From any particular view point only portions of the fence are visible, such that the slight change in length and alignment makes no significant difference. The built alignment actually results in a slightly smaller enclosure (by 3ha) so could be said to have a slightly lesser impact, though in reality this difference is negligible.

There is no significant difference between the impact of the approved alignment and built alignment of the fence on visual amenity. The only place where there may be a discernible difference is when viewed from the road over to the Duddon Valley, where the built alignment maybe slightly less prominent as it avoids the minor skylining which would have been associated with the approved alignment where it topped out on the east side of Stainton Ground Quarries (Photos 1, 3 and 8 – 12), the difference however is very minor.

7.5. Access

There are no differences between the impacts on access of the built line as compared to the approved line. The two routes either cross public rights of way and desire lines at the same or very

similar points and both versions include the same number of gates and stiles, with both providing field gates to accommodate public bridleway crossing points.

7.6. World Heritage Site Outstanding Universal Value

There is no difference in the impact of the built fenceline and the approved fenceline in relation to the Outstanding Universal Value of the English Lake District World Heritage Site.

8. Consultation

A consultation document summarising the details of the proposed fences and potential impacts was sent out to the following recipients on 8th January 2025:

- Lake District National Park
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre
- Open Spaces Society
- Foundation for Common Land

8.1. Summary of responses

Consultation responses were received from the Historic Environment Officer at Lake District National Park, Open Spaces Society and Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre:

Lake District National Park

From: Eleanor Kingston
Sent: 27 January 2025 15:21
To: Rigby Jerram

Subject: RE: Consultation on modification of approved fencing on Raven's Crag, Dunnerdale

Dear Rigby,

Thank you very much for the consultation documents and for the opportunity to comment.

I have looked through the information and I can confirm that I agree that the change to the fence line has not had an impact on any of the known historic features. I therefore have no further comments to make.

If you need anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Eleanor
Eleanor Kingston BA (Hons) MA MCifA
Lead Strategy Adviser - Historic Environment
Lake District National Park Authority

Open Spaces Society

From: Ian Brodie
Sent: 10 January 2025 15:01
To: Lucy McKean; Rigby Jerram
CC: Amanda McCleery

Subject: RE: Consultation on modification of approved fencing on Raven's Crag, Dunnerdale

Dear Rigby

Many thanks for this retrospective consultation. The OSS are grateful that the Commoners have taken their responsibilities seriously and are to apply for a retrospective s38. The author of this note has previously walked extensively over the area being considered by this consultation.

Our previous concerns were in respect of the landscape and access and mostly these were dealt with during negotiations with Natural England. You appear to have covered the various sites of historic interest. In terms of ecological interest we have previously noted the finds of several Bog orchid sites but these do not appear to be directly affected by the works. However, should there be any monitoring of the area in summer can we please ask that you check for the presence of this species in appropriate habitats near to the erected fence line.

In terms of landscape we note that distant views of the fence are infrequent and the only visual impacts are on the recreational users of the common in the vicinity of the fence where, obviously, it forms a significant visual intrusion. However, this is only marginally different than from the approved line.

We note, with regret, that stiles and not pedestrian gates have been provided at the limited number of fence crossing points.

Whilst some of this response may not be directly relevant to an EIA it should clear any points we may have during the application process. The OSS will, on receipt of the s38 application, raise no objections provided that the originally approved fence time limit is not extended by the s38 application.

Best wishes

Ian

Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre

The Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre provided the rare and protected species data which is shown in Map 6.

9. Conclusion

Impacts due to the realignment of the fenceline off its approved route on the English Lake District World Heritage Site Outstanding Universal Value are neutral, as are impacts on access, the historic environment, biodiversity, landscape character and visual amenity.

10. Photographs



Photo 1 The fence viewed from the Park Head Road bridleway



Photo 2 View from lower Stainton Ground Quarries soil heaps



Photo 3 Minor realignment around small crag



Photo 4 Above the small crag showing stile E2-A



Photo 5 Southernmost tip of realignment. Note stile E2-B in corner



Photo 6 Fence corner on north side of crag with Fox Haw and Caw in background



**Photo 7 Looking west along from fence from point is re-joins the approved line.
Note stile E2-D**



Photo 8 The slope above the quarry void where approved line would have gone



Photo 9 View across fence to Raven's Crag from bridleway to Kiln Bank Cross



Photo 10 View from bridleway to Kiln Bank Cross



Photo 11 View of fence from path up to Stickle Pike



Photo 12 View from path up to Stickle Pike



Photo 13 Gate & stile E2-P1



Photo 14 Stile E2-A



Photo 15 Stile E2-B



Photo 16 Gate E2-C



Photo 17 Stile E2-D



Photo 18 Stile E2-E



Photo 19 Stile E2-F



Photo 20 Stile E2-G



Photo 21 Gate E2-H