



**EIA Report Appendix 5.1: Ecology and Nature Conservation (Part 2) Technical Report** 







Document status					
Version	Purpose of document	Authored by	Reviewed by	Approved by	Review date
1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	Technical Appendix	Joanna Carter	Simon Zisman	Mike Barker	28.01.2022
2 <sup>nd</sup> Draft	Technical Appendix	Joanna Carter	Simon Zisman	Mike Barker	04.02.2022

Approval for issue		
Simon Zisman	Sine Zie	4 February 2022

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#### **Annexes**

Annex A Scientific Names of Bird Species Included in this Report

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

## **Purpose and Scope**

- 1.1 This Technical Appendix presents the methods, results and conclusions of the intertidal and nearshore nonbreeding waterbird survey. The survey was carried out to inform the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Hunterston high-voltage cable manufacturing facility (referred to in this report as the 'Project') presented in Chapter 5 (Part 2) of the EIA Report (EIAR)<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 The survey took place on the intertidal sandflats at Southannon Sands and Fairlie Sands, adjacent to the Project site, on the east bank of the Firth of Clyde in Ayrshire.
- 1.3 The survey was designed to:
  - Characterise the bird assemblage present on the sandflats and nearshore area; specifically
    waterbirds, such as geese, swans, wildfowl, grebes, waders, divers and cormorants, and true
    seabirds, such as gulls and auks; and
  - Identify any habitats, tidal states, or daily or seasonal periods of sensitivity for passage or wintering birds which form part of the assemblages of any designated sites of nature conservation interest for birds within 20km of the Project site.

## **Designated Sites**

- 1.4 Twenty-nine designated sites of potential nature conservation interest for birds were identified and reviewed using the NatureScot online portal SiteLink (<a href="https://sitelink.nature.scot/map">https://sitelink.nature.scot/map</a>). A search area of 20km from the Project site was selected to capture the wide-ranging movements of geese (Figure 5.5). These sites comprised:
  - Two Special Protection Areas (SPAs);
  - Twenty-four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); and
  - Three Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).

## Renfrewshire Heights SPA and SSSI, and Arran Moors SPA and SSSI

1.5 Renfrewshire Heights SPA and SSSI, approximately 8.3km northeast of the Project site, and Arran Moors SPA and SSSI, approximately 19.6km southwest of the Project site on the Isle of Arran, are both large upland sites designated/notified for breeding hen harrier. The habitats of both sites include blanket bog, grassland, and wet and dry heath, suitable for nesting and foraging hen harriers. The distance between the Project site and these SPAs, together with the difference in habitat (the Project site is adjacent to intertidal sandflats whereas both SPAs are upland habitat) led NatureScot to advise in its Scoping Response¹ that the Project will not have a likely significant effect on the qualifying interests of these SPAs, either directly or indirectly. Therefore these SPAs and SSSIs were **scoped out of the EIA**, as agreed by NatureScot in its Scoping Response¹.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> XLCC – Hunterston Environmental Impact Assessment Report. Chapter 5 (Part 2). 2022.



#### Other SSSIs

- 1.6 Each of the other 22 SSSIs was carefully reviewed for any potential nature conservation interest for birds. Four sites were notified for intertidal habitats and two of these had waterbird assemblages mentioned in the Site Management Statement:
  - Bogside Flats SSSI notified for mudflat and saltmarsh; waterbird assemblage mentioned in the Site Management Statement;
  - Southannon Sands SSSI notified for sandflats; waterbird assemblage mentioned in the Site Management Statement;
  - Ballochmartin Bay SSSI notified for coastland; and
  - · Kames Bay SSSI notified for coastland.

#### **Bogside Flats SSSI**

1.7 Bogside Flats SSSI is approximately 14.3km southeast of the Project site and is notified for its mudflat and saltmarsh. The SSSI contains the only extensive expanse of saltmarsh and mudflats between the Solway Firth and the Inner Clyde Estuary, and is the best example of this habitat in Ayrshire. The site is intensively used by passage and wintering waterbirds. The large wintering populations of eider, red-breasted merganser and cormorant are nationally significant. The populations of whooper swan, shelduck, wigeon, oystercatcher, lapwing, golden plover, dunlin and redshank are regionally significant. Overall this is one of the most important feeding and roosting areas for waterbirds in Ayrshire. However Bogside Flats SSSI is 15km from the Project site, a distance which only geese are likely to regularly travel, and the site is not notified for goose interests. Therefore connectivity is unlikely and this SSSI was scoped out of the EIA.

#### Southannon Sands SSSI

1.8 Southannon Sands SSSI is adjacent to the eastern boundary of the Project site and is notified for its sandflats. The SSSI comprises three discrete areas of intertidal sandflats extending for over 4km along the coast: Fairlie Sands, Southannon Sands and Hunterston Sands. Together, these sandflats represent one of the best examples of this habitat along the entire Clyde coastline. Extensive areas of the nationally scarce dwarf eelgrass are a biologically and structurally important component of the sandflats. Although not notified features of the SSSI, the sandflats support a variety of passage, wintering and breeding waterbirds, including shelduck, eider, red-breasted merganser, oystercatcher, lapwing, ringed plover, whimbrel, curlew and redshank. As this SSSI is adjacent to the Project site it was **scoped into the EIA** and impacts assessed, as agreed by NatureScot in its Scoping Response<sup>1</sup>.

## **Ballochmartin Bay and Kames Bay SSSIs**

1.9 Ballochmartin Bay and Kames Bay SSSIs are both situated on Great Cumbrae Island, 1.5km and 2.1km from the Project site, respectively. Both SSSIs are notified for their coastland, which has been intensively surveyed and studied for over a hundred years and is of considerable importance for research and the teaching of marine biology. However Ballochmartin Bay and Kames Bay SSSIs are not notified for any waterbird interests; also in its Scoping Response<sup>1</sup>, NatureScot specified that atmospheric and water-based pollution impacts may be caused by the Project, and these impacts should be assessed, but NatureScot did not specify any impacts on birds. Therefore both these SSSIs were **scoped out of the EIA**.



## **LNRs**

1.10 Wemyss Bay Woodland LNR, Ardeer Quarry LNR and Stevenson Beach LNR are not designated for intertidal habitats or waterbird interests and were therefore scoped out of the EIA.



## 2 METHODS

- 2.1 The intertidal and nearshore non-breeding waterbird survey comprised a programme of monthly surveys carried out over a period of four months from September to December 2021 inclusive.
- 2.2 The survey area was divided into two discrete count sectors, A and B (Figure 5.6). Each sector stretched from the mean high water springs (MHWS) mark to 1.5km out to sea. To identify the distribution of birds, each count sector was divided into three distance bands: 0-500m, 500m-1.0km and 1.0-1.5km. Sector A was approximately 1.2km wide and stretched from the Pier north across Fairlie sands, and Sector B was approximately 1.6-2.3km wide and stretched from the Pier south across Southannon Sands. Both sectors covered the zone within 500m of the site boundary.
- 2.3 On a single day once per month, Sector A was surveyed by one observer and Sector B was surveyed by a second observer. Observers used a snapshot method: every hour, observers counted all waterbirds within the sector, using binoculars and a telescope. Species, numbers and behaviours, such as foraging and non-foraging (e.g. preening, bathing, roosting or loafing), were marked onto field maps using standard British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) codes. This method was based on the high tide (core count) method of the BTO/JNCC/RSPB/WWT WeBS scheme<sup>2</sup>. The process was repeated for seven hours to give seven counts. Weather conditions were recorded hourly, together with any sources of disturbance to the birds. The programme of monthly surveys covered a range of times of day, tidal state, and spring and neap tides (which both occur twice in a lunar month). Full survey details are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1: Intertidal and nearshore nonbreeding waterbird survey effort

Month	Date	Survey start	Sunrise	Survey end	Sunset	Spring/ neap tide date	Tidal state	Sector	Observer
Sep 2021	30th	11:30	07:20	17:30	18:57	2nd neap 9th spring	Mid-low Low-mid	A	Gerry Palmer
						16th neap 23rd spring	Mid-high	В	Andrew Russell
Oct 2021	29th	12:00	08:19	18:00	17:45	1st neap 8th spring	Mid-low Low-mid	Α	Gerry Palmer
						15th neap 23rd spring 31st neap	Mid-high	В	Andrew Russell
Nov 2021	22nd	08:15	08:08	14:15	16:01	6th spring 13th neap	Low-mid Mid-high	Α	Gerry Palmer
						21st spring 29th neap	High-mid	В	Andrew Russell
Dec 2021	17th	09:40	08:44	15:40	15:46	6th spring 13th neap	Mid-high High-mid	А	Gerry Palmer
						21st spring 28th neap	Mid-low	В	Andrew Russell

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Musgrove, A., Langston, R., Baker, H. and Ward, R. 2003. Estuarine Waterbirds at Low Tide: The WeBS Low Tide Counts 1992-93 to 1998-99. WSG/BTO/WWT/RSPB/JNCC, Thetford.



## 3 RESULTS

## **All Species Results**

3.1 Forty-nine bird species were recorded during the intertidal and nearshore nonbreeding waterbird survey programme, September to December 2021. For all 49 species, tables showing monthly peak counts and overall peak counts are presented below, and figures showing distribution and flock size across the survey area are presented in Figures 5.7.1-49. The peak count is defined as the total of all birds (in count sectors A and B) counted within a single one-hour snapshot: the monthly peak count is the largest of these totals among the seven snapshots from any month, and the overall peak count is the largest of the monthly peak counts.

#### Geese and Mute Swan

3.2 See Table 2 and Figures 5.7.1-3.

Table 2: Monthly peak counts and overall peak counts (in bold) for geese and mute swan

Species	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021
Brent goose		1		
Canada goose	2	3		
Mute swan	23	11	5	

#### Wildfowl

3.3 See Table 3 and Figures 5.7.4-15.

Table 3: Monthly peak counts and overall peak counts (in bold) for wildfowl

Species	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021
Shelduck	3	34	53	57
Gadwall				2
Wigeon	353	1,277	77	1,057
Mallard	40	18	51	65
Pintail	3	8	2	5
Teal	19	22	72	40
Tufted duck	1			
Eider	1	16	10	10
Common scoter		1		
Goldeneye				2
Goosander		3		
Red-breasted merganser	49	25	37	32

## **Waders**

3.4 See Table 4 and Figures 5.7.16-26.



Table 4: Monthly peak counts and overall peak counts (in bold) for waders

Species	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021
Oystercatcher	442	318	219	436
Lapwing	4	42	55	78
Ringed plover		172		
Curlew	331	89	131	243
Bar-tailed godwit	10	14	11	127
Knot	3			34
Dunlin	1	138		241
Jack snipe		1		
Snipe			2	
Redshank	105	101	97	219
Greenshank	13	7	5	11

## **Seabirds**

3.5 See Table 5 and Figures 5.7.27-37.

Table 5: Monthly peak counts and overall peak counts (in bold) for seabirds

Species	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021
Black-headed gull	30	67	149	61
Common gull	13	32	66	228
Great black-backed gull	14	15	23	4
Herring gull	46	22	87	109
Lesser black-backed gull	7		1	1
Guillemot		7	1	1
Razorbill		1		
Black guillemot			8	2
Gannet	5			
Cormorant	7	33	9	14
Shag	8		18	18

## **Great Crested Grebe and Divers**

3.6 See Table 6 and Figures 5.7.38-40.

Table 6: Monthly peak counts and overall peak counts (in bold) for great crested grebe and divers

Species	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021
Great crested grebe		1		
Red-throated diver	1	1	1	
Great northern diver			1	1

## **Grey Heron and Little Egret**

3.7 See Table 7 and Figures 5.7.41 and 5.7.42.



Table 7: Monthly peak counts and overall peak counts (in bold) for grey heron and little egret

Species	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021
Grey heron	6	1	5	22
Little egret	2	3		1

#### **Passerines**

3.8 See Table 8 and Figures 5.7.43-49.

Table 8: Monthly peak counts and overall peak counts (in bold) for passerines

Species	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021
Jackdaw	3			350
Rook	1			
Carrion crow	19		37	182
Starling	35	2		
Song thrush		2		
Wheatear		4		
Meadow pipit		19		

# **Species of Conservation Interest and Species Recorded in High Numbers Close to the Project**

3.9 Of the 49 bird species recorded during the intertidal and nearshore non-breeding waterbird survey, those of conservation interest (Schedule 1 species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (<a href="www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/1">www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/1</a>) and Red-listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) (<a href="https://britishbirds.co.uk/sites/default/files/BB">https://britishbirds.co.uk/sites/default/files/BB</a> Dec21-BoCC5-IUCN2.pdf)), together with those recorded in high numbers close to the Project site, are considered in more detail below.

## Bird Species to be Scoped into the EIA

- 3.10 **Shelduck** was recorded in high numbers close to the Project site, with a concentration of birds within 200m of the western edge of the site boundary on Southannon Sands. Monthly peak counts increased from three in September to an overall peak count of 57 in December. Shelduck is therefore at risk of disturbance and displacement impacts from the Project and should be scoped into the EIA.
- 3.11 **Wigeon** was recorded in high numbers close to the Project site, with the greatest concentrations of birds within 300m of the western edge of the site boundary on Southannon Sands. The overall peak count was 1,277 birds in October, with another high peak count of 1,057 in December. Wigeon is therefore at risk of disturbance and displacement impacts from the Project and should be scoped into the EIA.
- 3.12 **Oystercatcher** was recorded in high numbers close to the Project site, with the greatest concentrations of birds within 200m of the western edge of the site boundary on Southannon Sands. The overall peak count was 442 birds in September, with similar high peak counts in October to December. Oystercatcher is therefore at risk of disturbance and displacement impacts from the Project and should be scoped into the EIA.
- 3.13 **Lapwing** is Red-listed and was recorded in high numbers close to the Project site, indeed all records are within 200m of the western edge of the site boundary on Southannon Sands.

  Although numbers of lapwing were low in September, monthly peak counts rose from 42 in



October, to 55 in November, to an overall peak count of 78 in December. Lapwing is therefore at risk of disturbance and displacement impacts from the Project and should be scoped into the EIA.

- 3.14 **Ringed plover** is Red-listed and during the October survey, two flocks, of 138 and 172 birds, were recorded within 200m of the western edge of the site boundary on Southannon Sands. These numbers are high and the birds were close to the Project site. Many ringed plover are resident in the UK all year round, however some birds from northern Europe spend the winter here and birds from Greenland and Canada pass through on passage. Therefore it cannot be ruled out that Southannon Sands might be an important staging post for migrating ringed plover. This species is therefore at risk of disturbance and displacement impacts from the Project and should be scoped into the EIA.
- 3.15 **Curlew** is a Schedule 1 species and is Red-listed, and this species was recorded in high numbers close to the Project site, with the greatest concentration of birds within 200m of the western edge of the site boundary on Southannon Sands. The overall peak count was 331 birds in September, with peak counts of 89 to 243 from October to December. Curlew is therefore at risk of disturbance and displacement impacts from the Project and should be scoped into the EIA.
- 3.16 **Bar-tailed godwit** was recorded in high numbers close to the Project site, with the greatest concentrations of birds within 300m of the western edge of the site boundary on Southannon Sands. Numbers of this species were relatively low in September to November, but the overall peak count rose sharply to 127 birds in December. Bar-tailed godwit is therefore at risk of disturbance and displacement impacts from the Project and should be scoped into the EIA.
- 3.17 **Dunlin** is Red-listed and was recorded in high numbers close to the Project site, with the greatest concentration of birds within 200m of the western edge of the site boundary on Southannon Sands. The overall peak count was 241 birds in December, together with a peak count of 138 birds in October. Curlew is therefore at risk of disturbance and displacement impacts from the Project and should be scoped into the EIA.
- 3.18 **Redshank** was recorded in high numbers close to the Project site, with the greatest concentrations of birds within 300m of the western edge of the site boundary on Southannon Sands. The overall peak count was 219 birds in December, with numbers of birds at around 100 from September to November. Redshank is therefore at risk of disturbance and displacement impacts from the Project and should be scoped into the EIA.
- 3.19 **Greenshank** is Amber-listed, however this species was recorded in numbers which exceed 1% of the national wintering population and should therefore be scoped into the EIA. Greenshank were recorded close to the Project site, with the greatest concentrations of birds within 300m of the western edge of the site boundary on Southannon Sands. The overall peak count was 13 birds in September, with the species also present October to December.

## Bird Species to be Scoped out of the EIA

- 3.20 **Red-throated diver** is Annex 1 and Red-listed, however this species was not recorded in high numbers close to the Project site and can therefore be scoped out of the EIA.
- 3.21 **Common scoter** is a Schedule 1 species and is Red-listed, however this species was not recorded in high numbers close to the Project site and therefore can be scoped out of the EIA.
- 3.22 **Goldeneye** is Red-listed, however this species was not recorded in high numbers close to the Project site and can therefore be scoped out of the EIA.
- 3.23 **Herring gull** is Red-listed, however this species was not recorded in high numbers close to the Project site and can therefore be scoped out of the EIA.
- 3.24 **Shag** is Red-listed, however this species was not recorded in high numbers close to the Project site and can therefore be scoped out of the EIA.



- 3.25 **Starling** is Red-listed, however this species was not recorded in high numbers close to the Project site and can therefore be scoped out of the EIA.
- 3.26 **Great northern diver** is Red-listed, however this species was not recorded in high numbers close to the Project site and can therefore be scoped out of the EIA.

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## 4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 One SSSI was scoped into the EIA: Southannon Sands, which is notified for its sandflats. All other designated sites were scoped out of the assessment
- 4.2 Curlew is a Schedule 1 species and is Red-listed, and this species was recorded in high numbers close to the Project site.
- 4.3 Lapwing and dunlin are both Red-listed species recorded in high numbers close to the Project site.
- 4.4 Greenshank is an Amber-listed species and was recorded in nationally important numbers (i.e. >1% of national wintering population) during the surveys.
- 4.5 The following species were recorded in high numbers close to the Project site but are neither Schedule 1 species nor Red-listed: shelduck, wigeon, oystercatcher, bar-tailed godwit and redshank.
- 4.6 All these nine species should be scoped into the EIA.



## **Figures**

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Figure 5.7.39: Intertidal Survey Results – Red-throated Diver

Figure 5.7.40: Intertidal Survey Results – Great Northern Diver

Figure 5.7.41: Intertidal Survey Results - Grey Heron

Figure 5.7.42: Intertidal Survey Results – Little Egret

Figure 5.7.43: Intertidal Survey Results - Jackdaw

Figure 5.7.44: Intertidal Survey Results - Rook

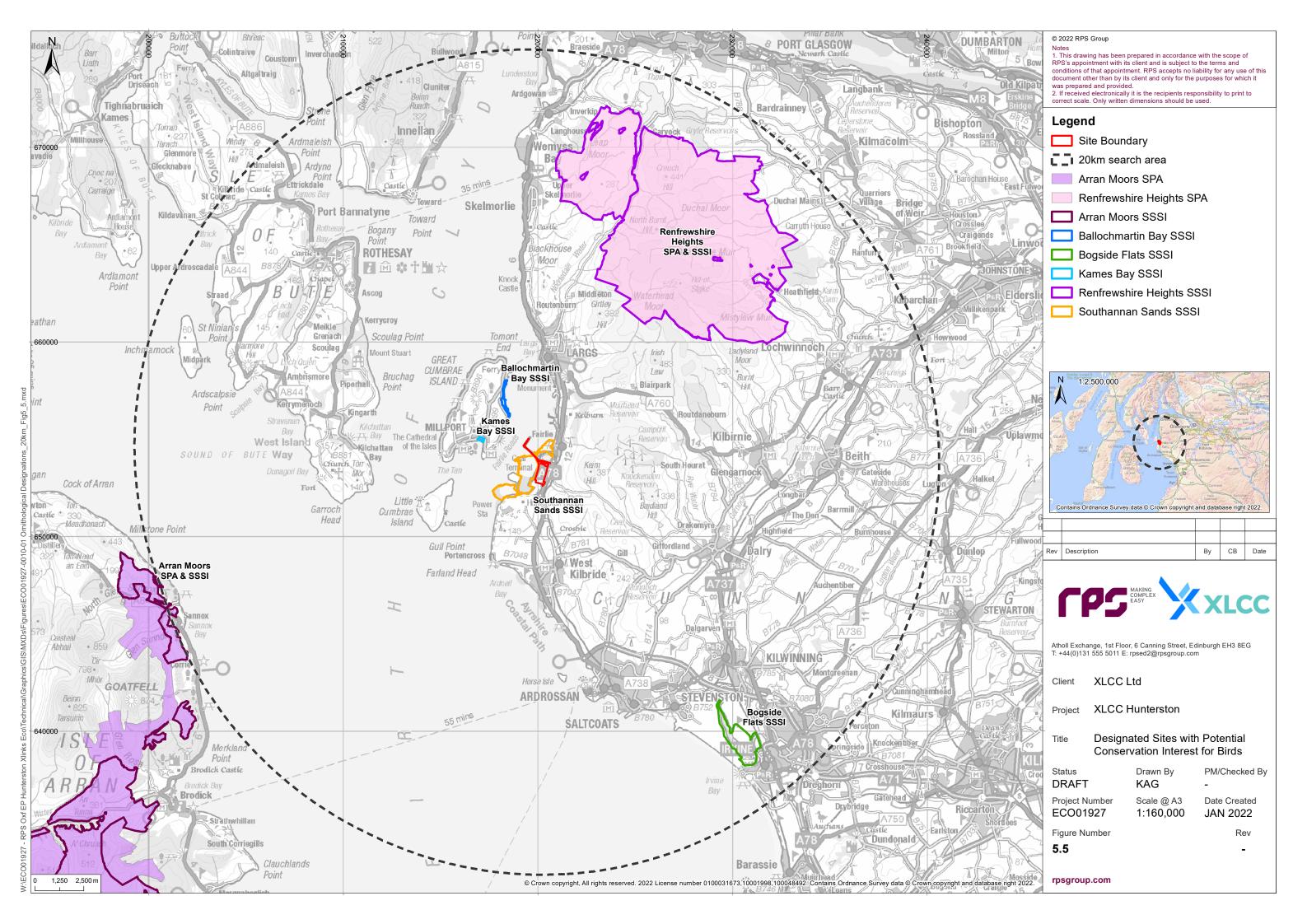
Figure 5.7.45: Intertidal Survey Results - Carrion Crow

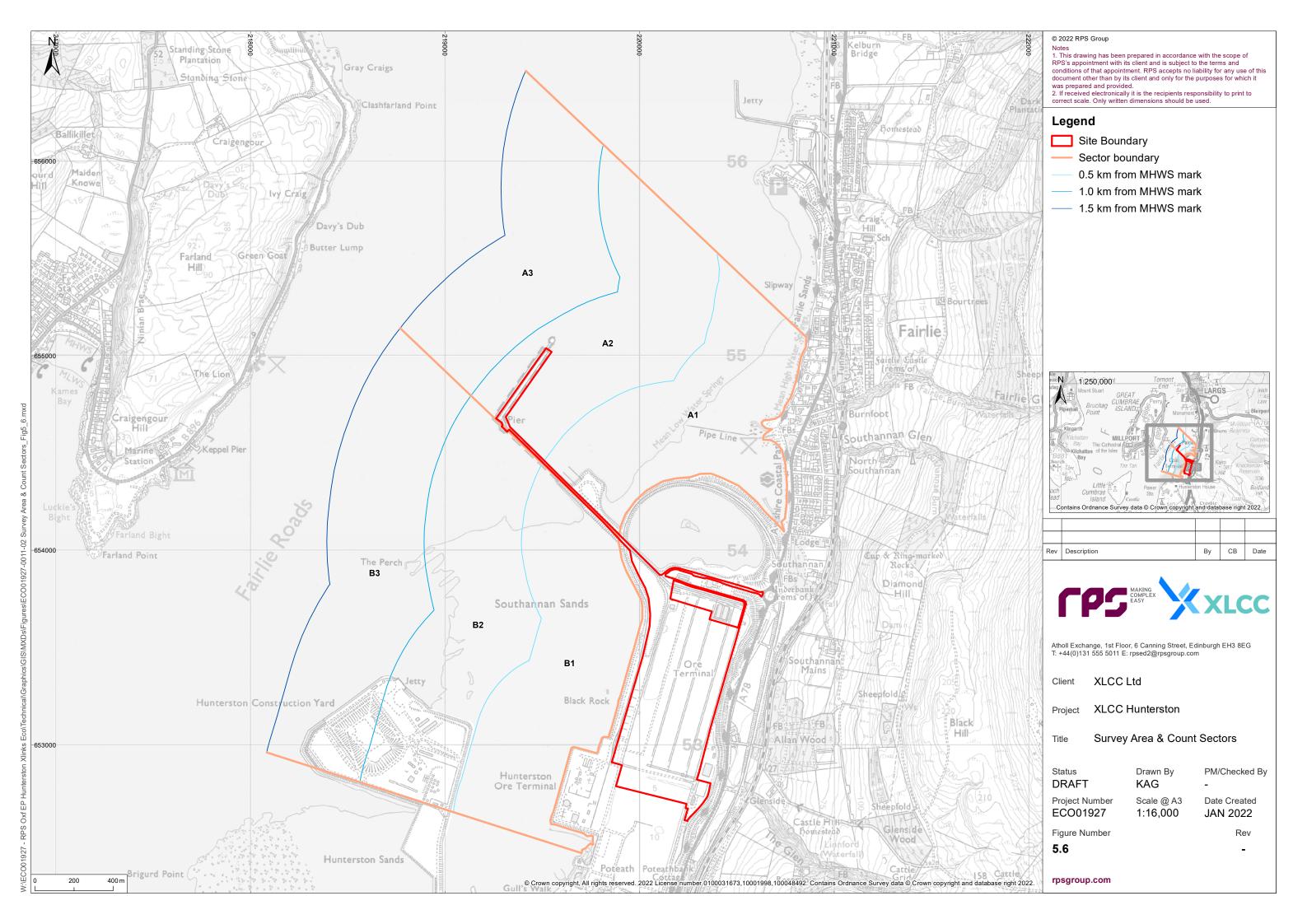
Figure 5.7.46: Intertidal Survey Results - Starling

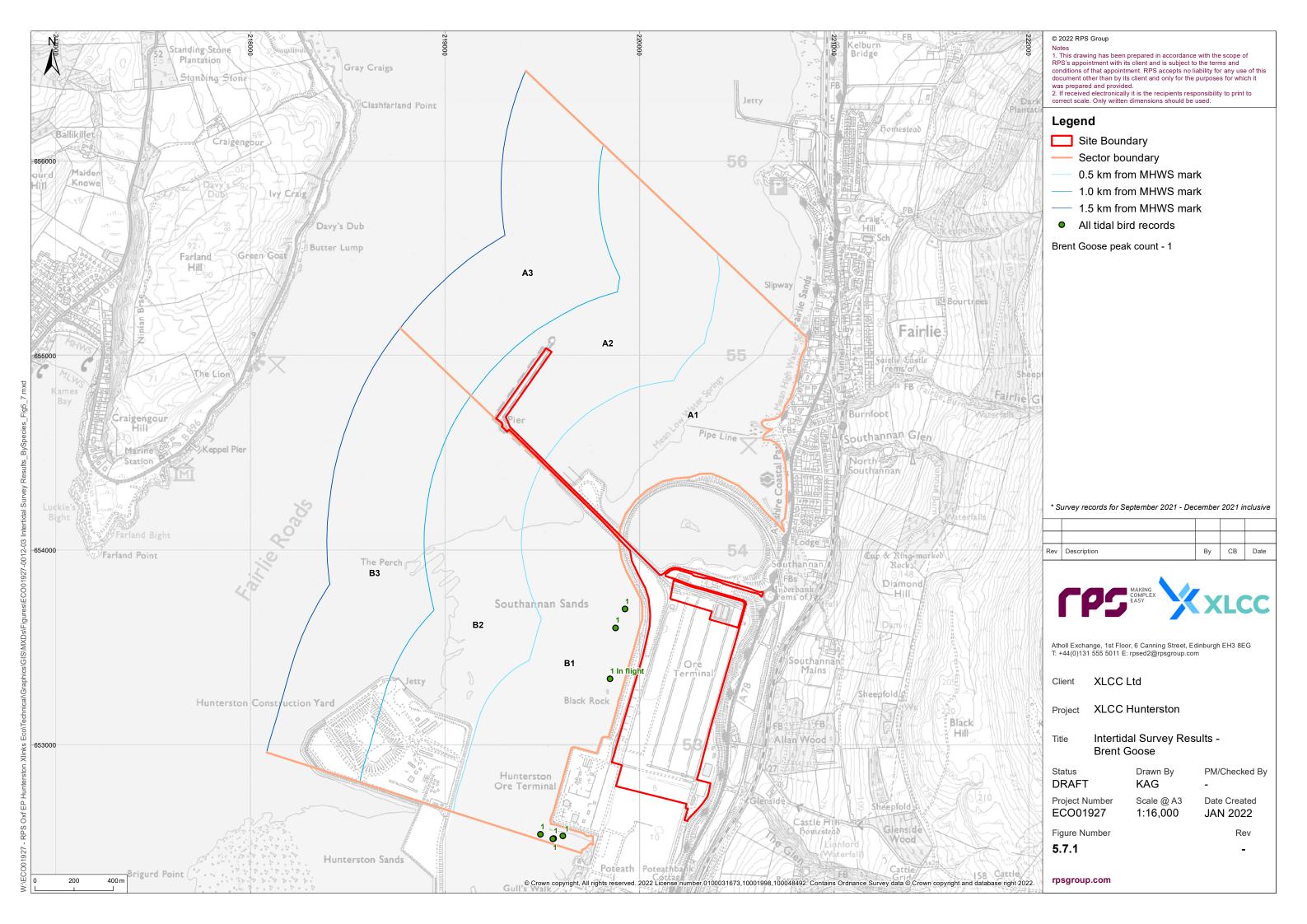
Figure 5.7.47: Intertidal Survey Results – Song Thrush

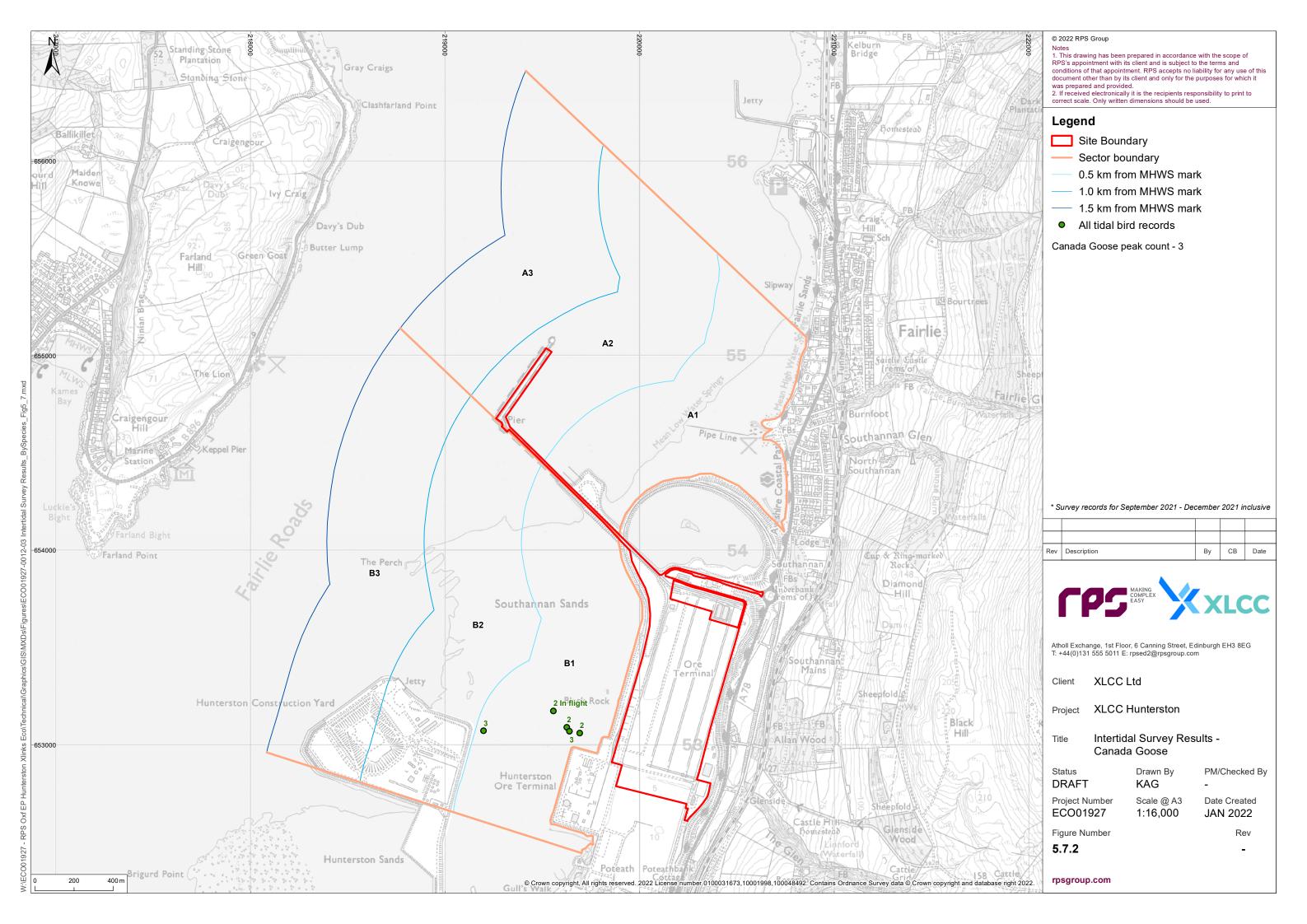
Figure 5.7.48: Intertidal Survey Results – Wheatear

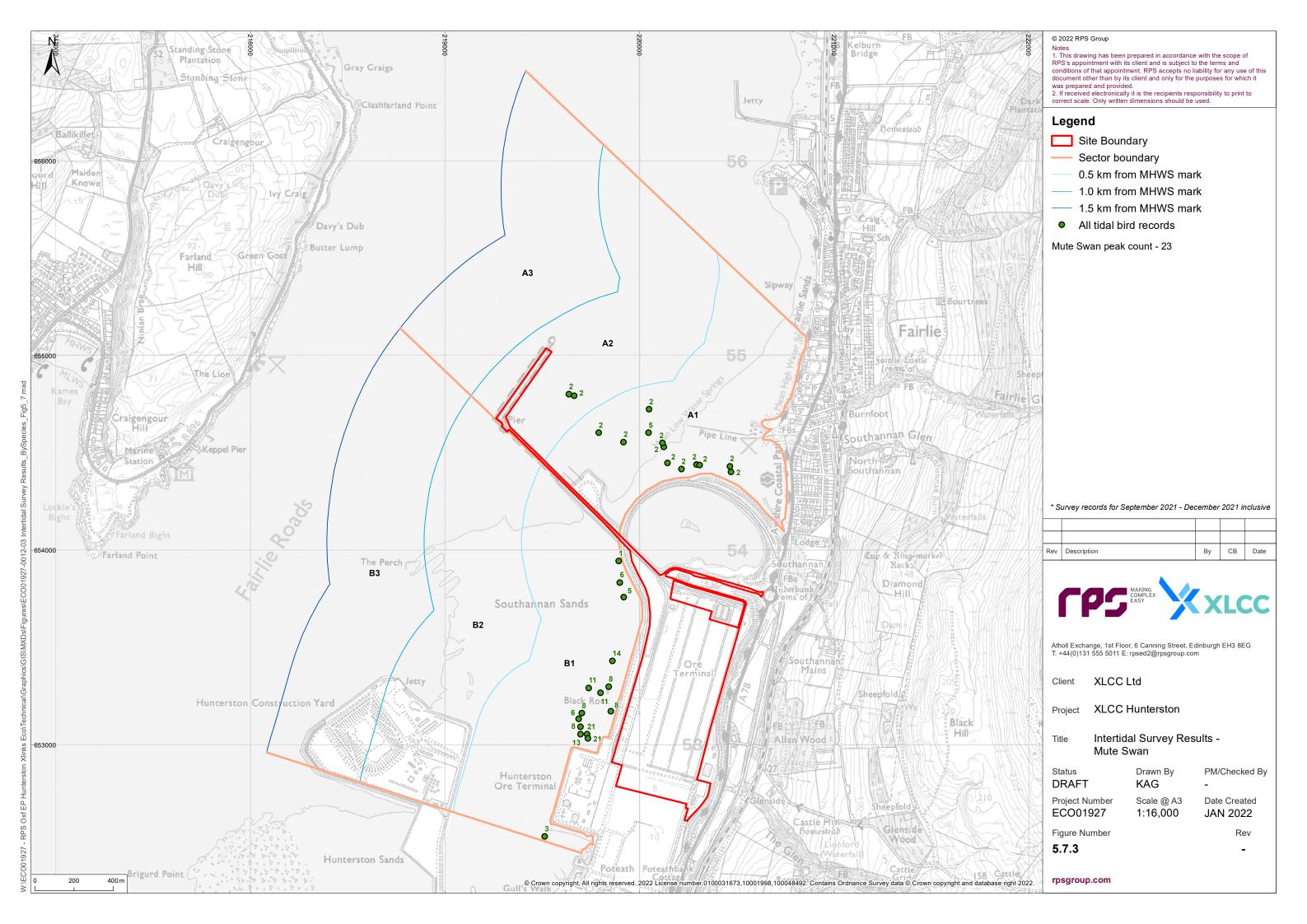
Figure 5.7.49: Intertidal Survey Results – Meadow Pipit

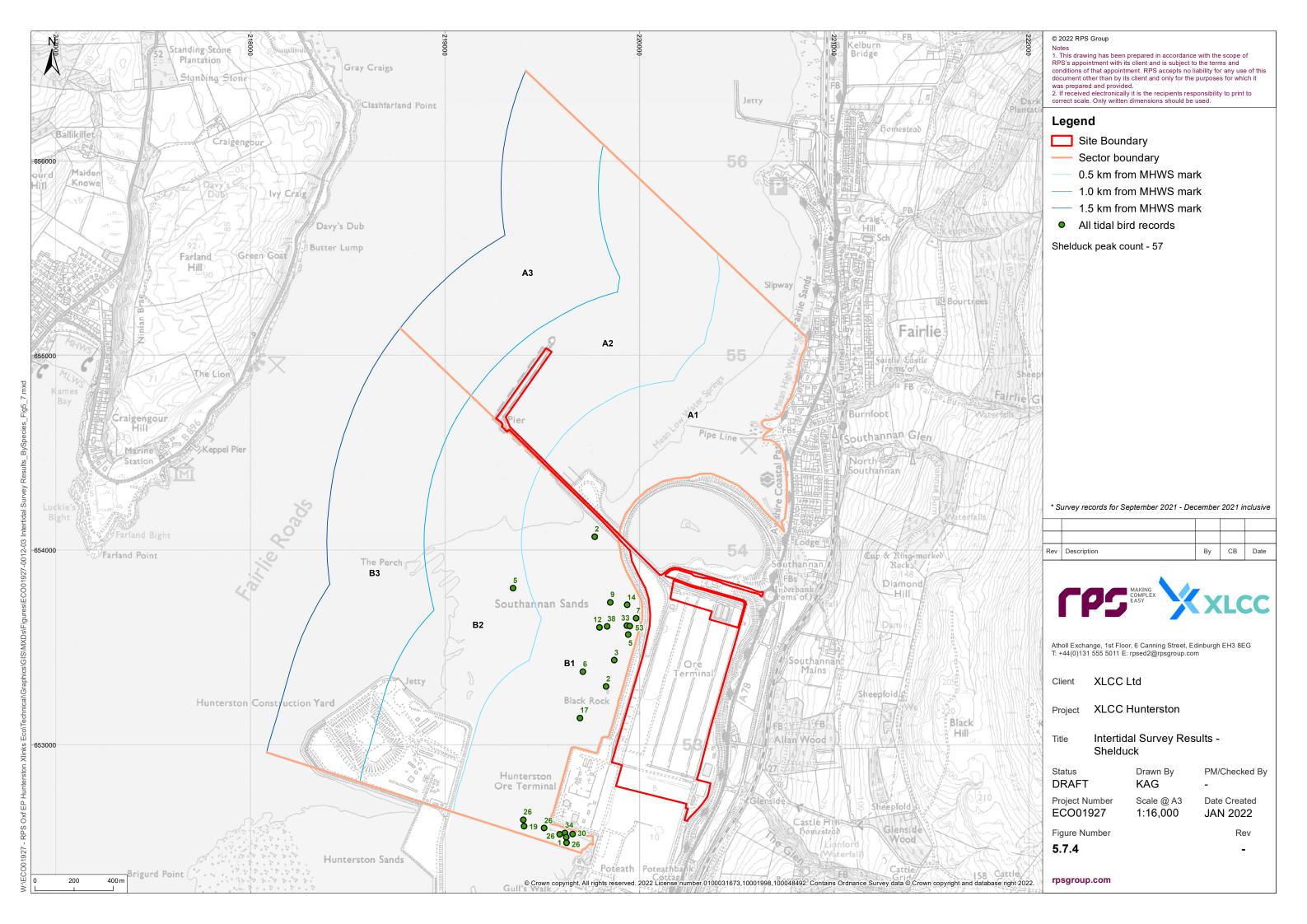


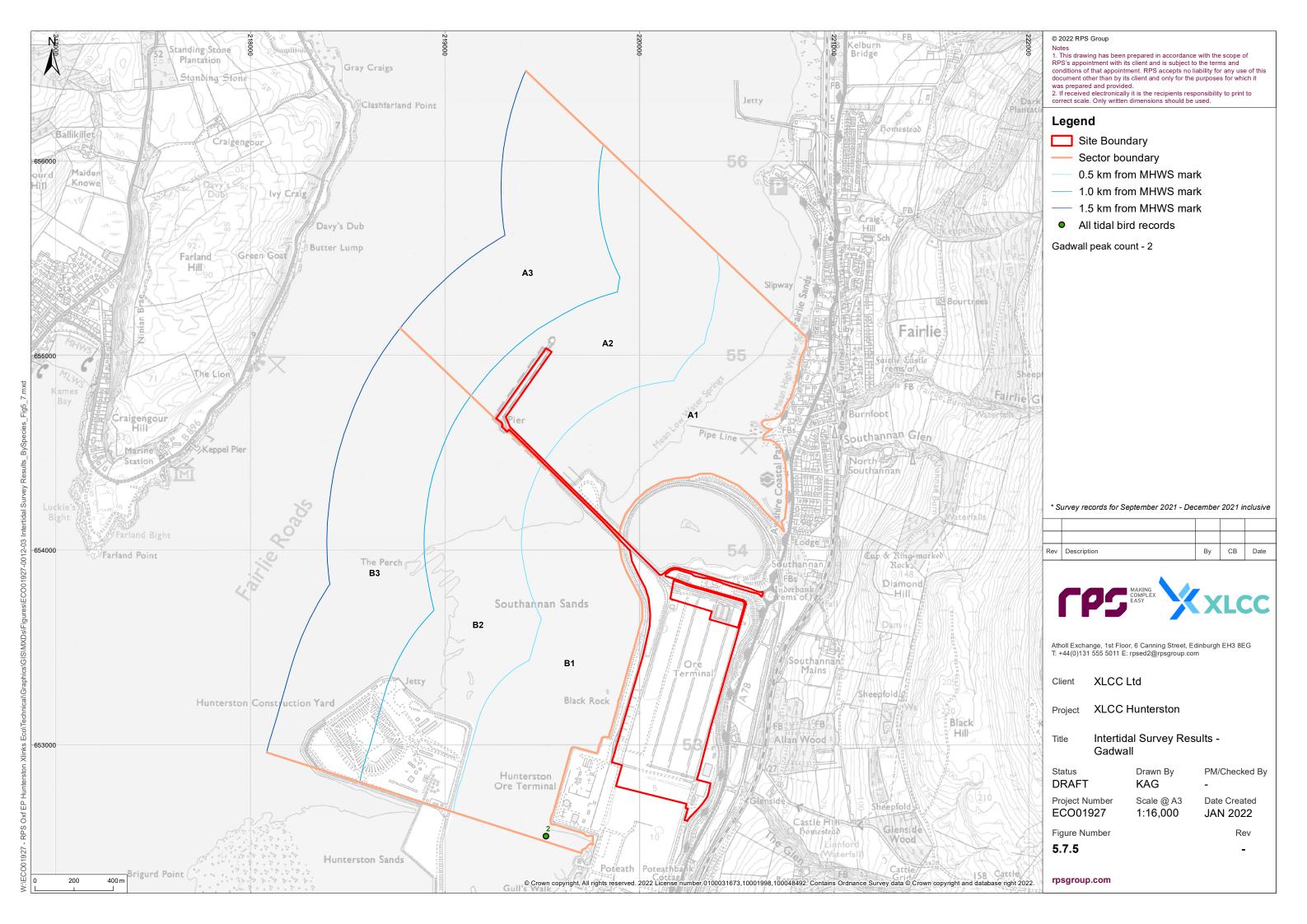


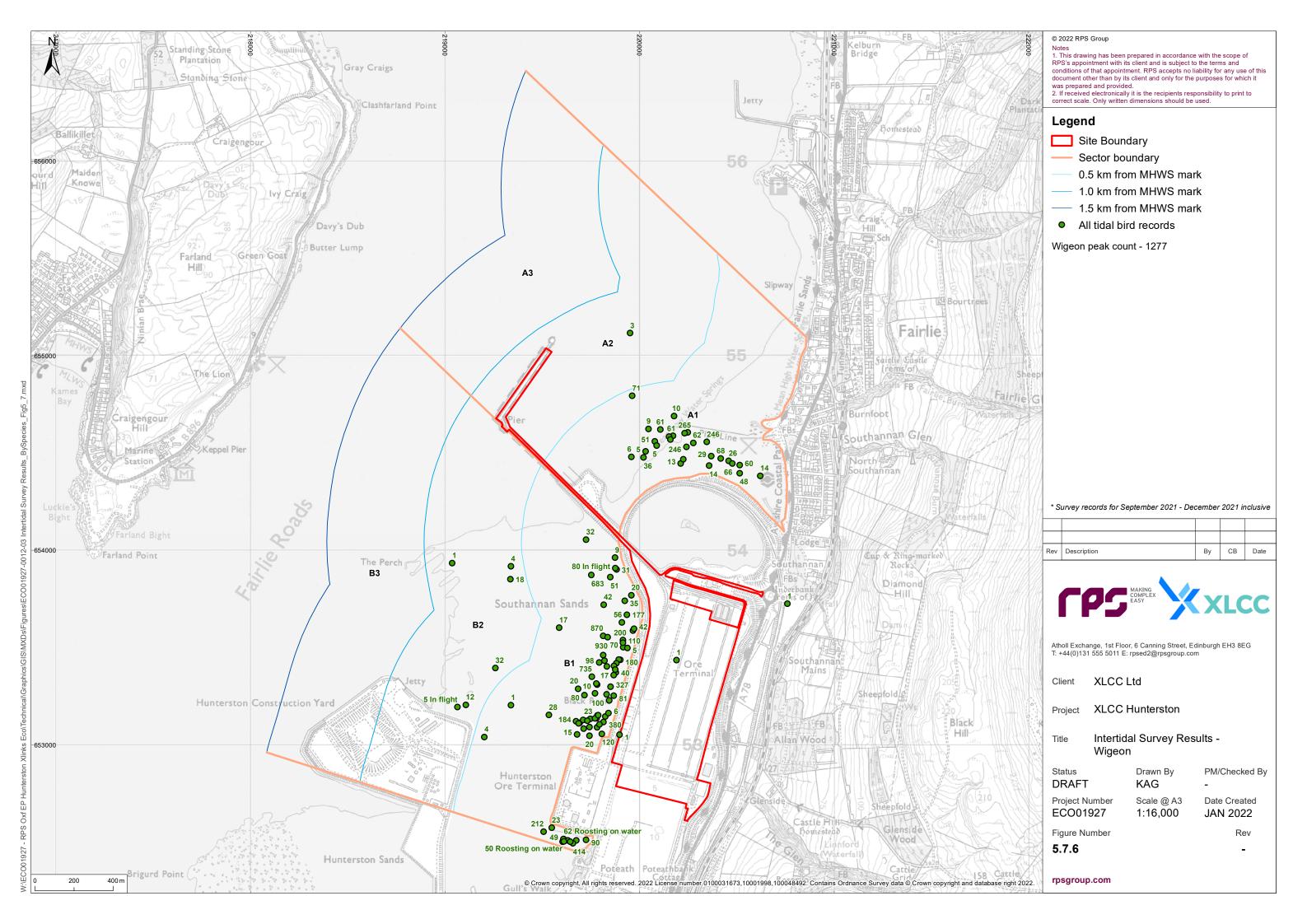


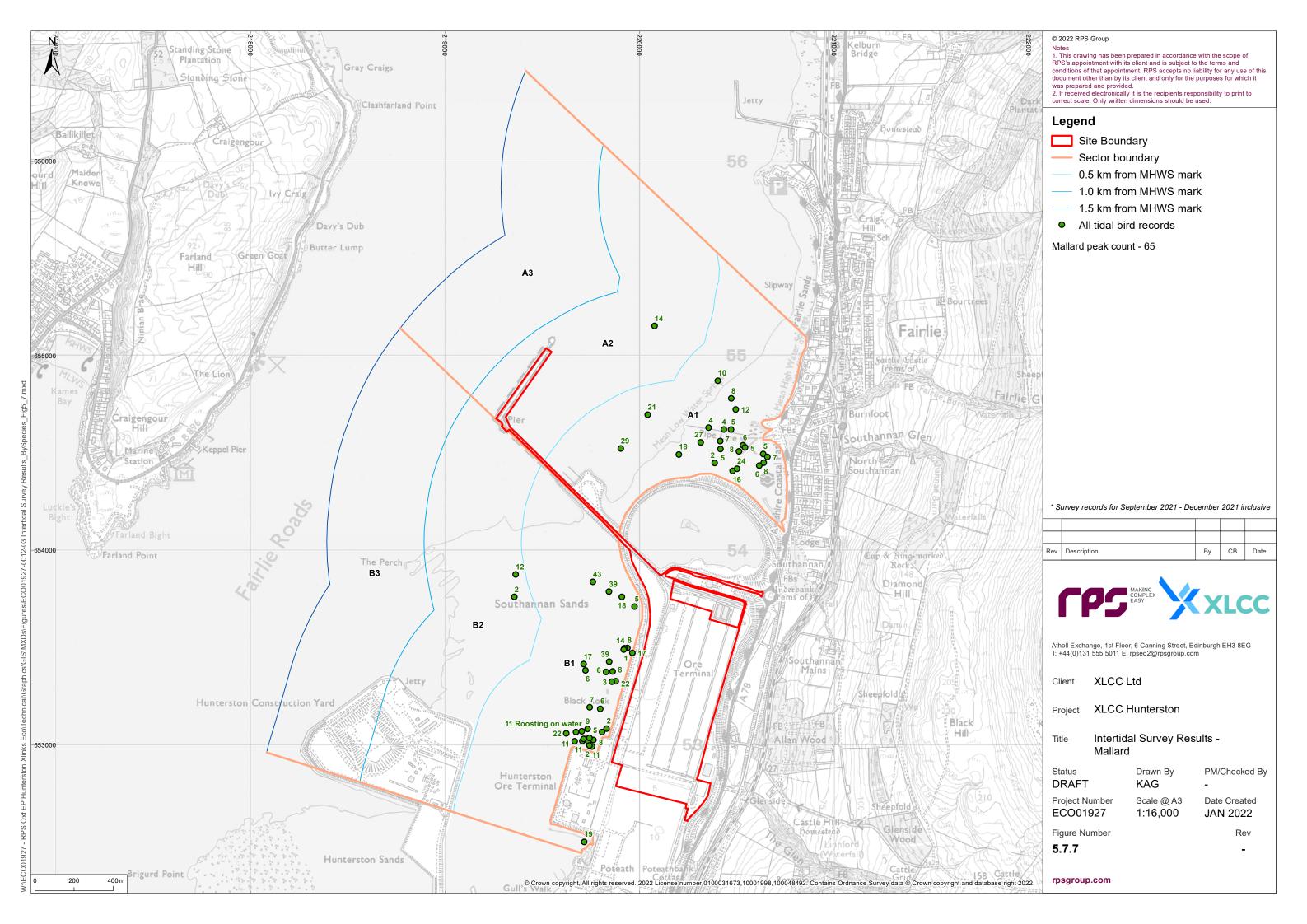


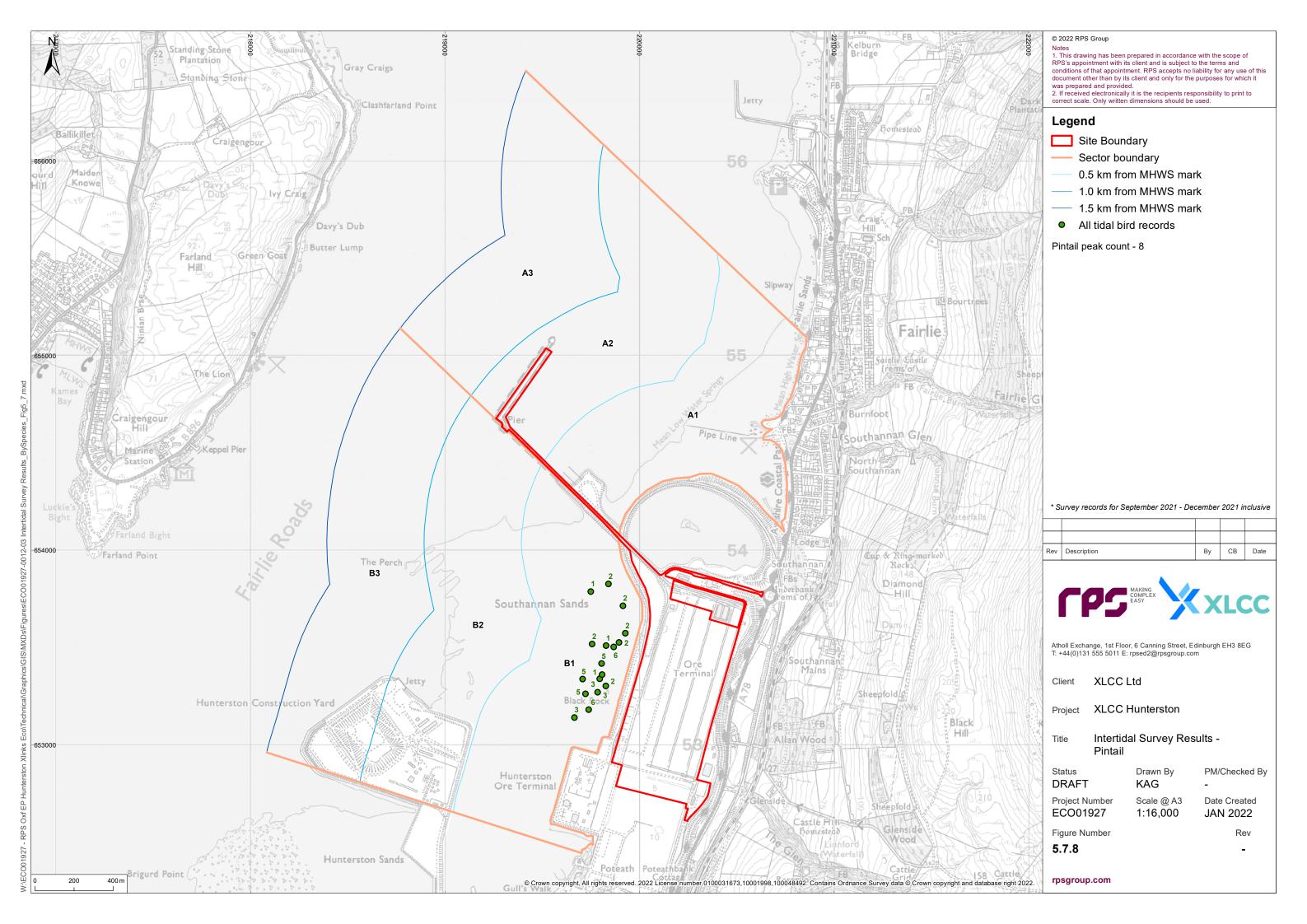


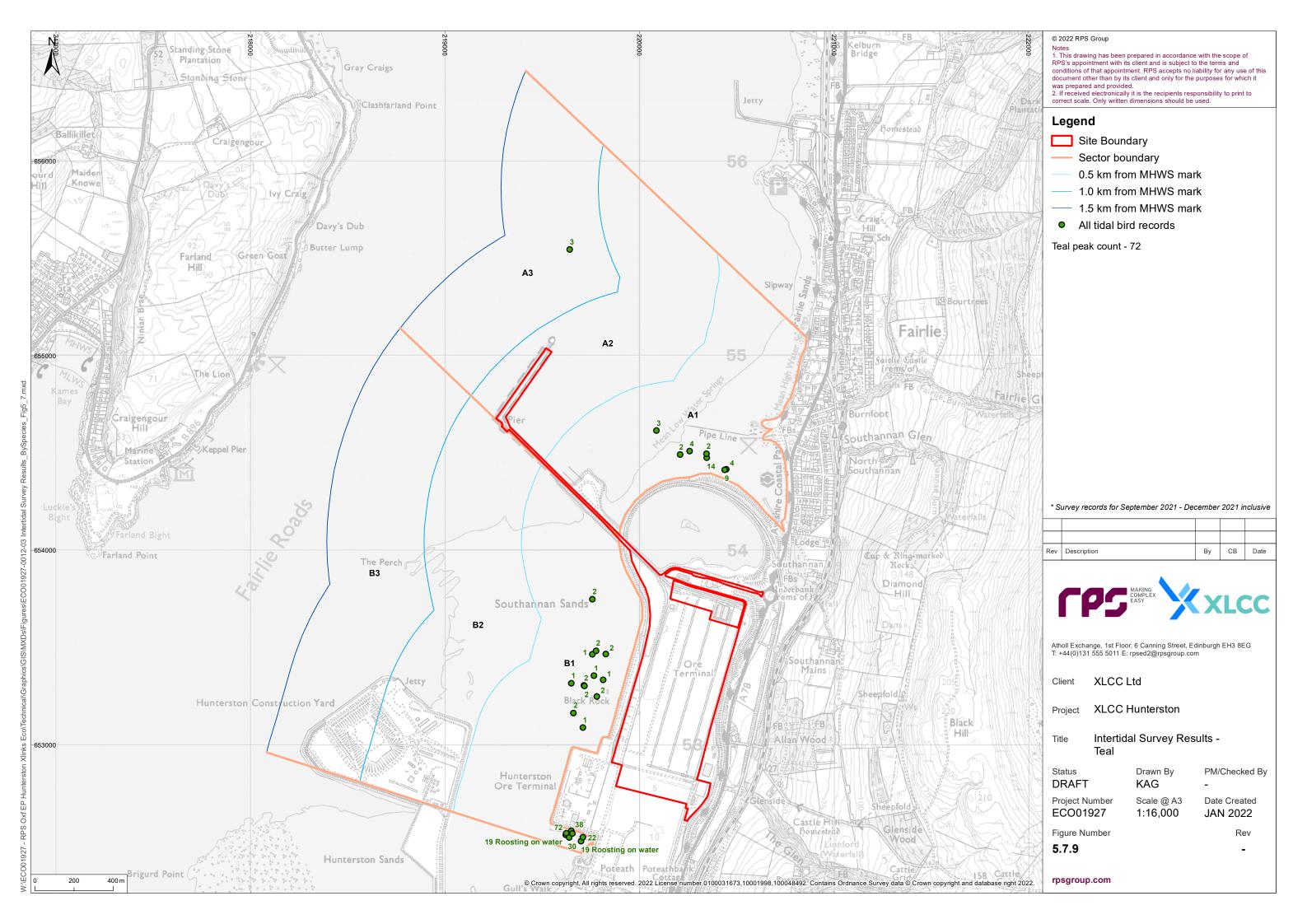


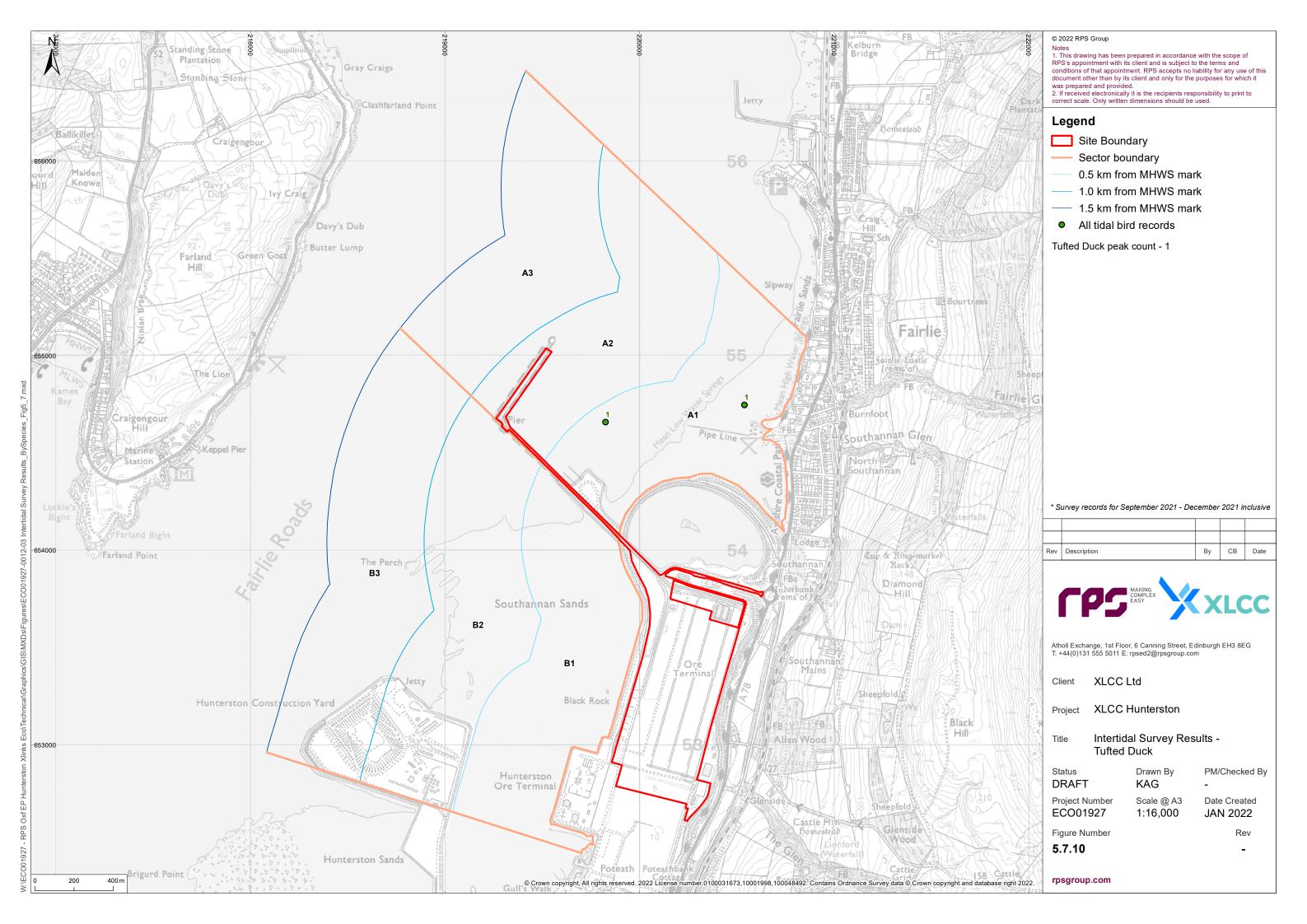


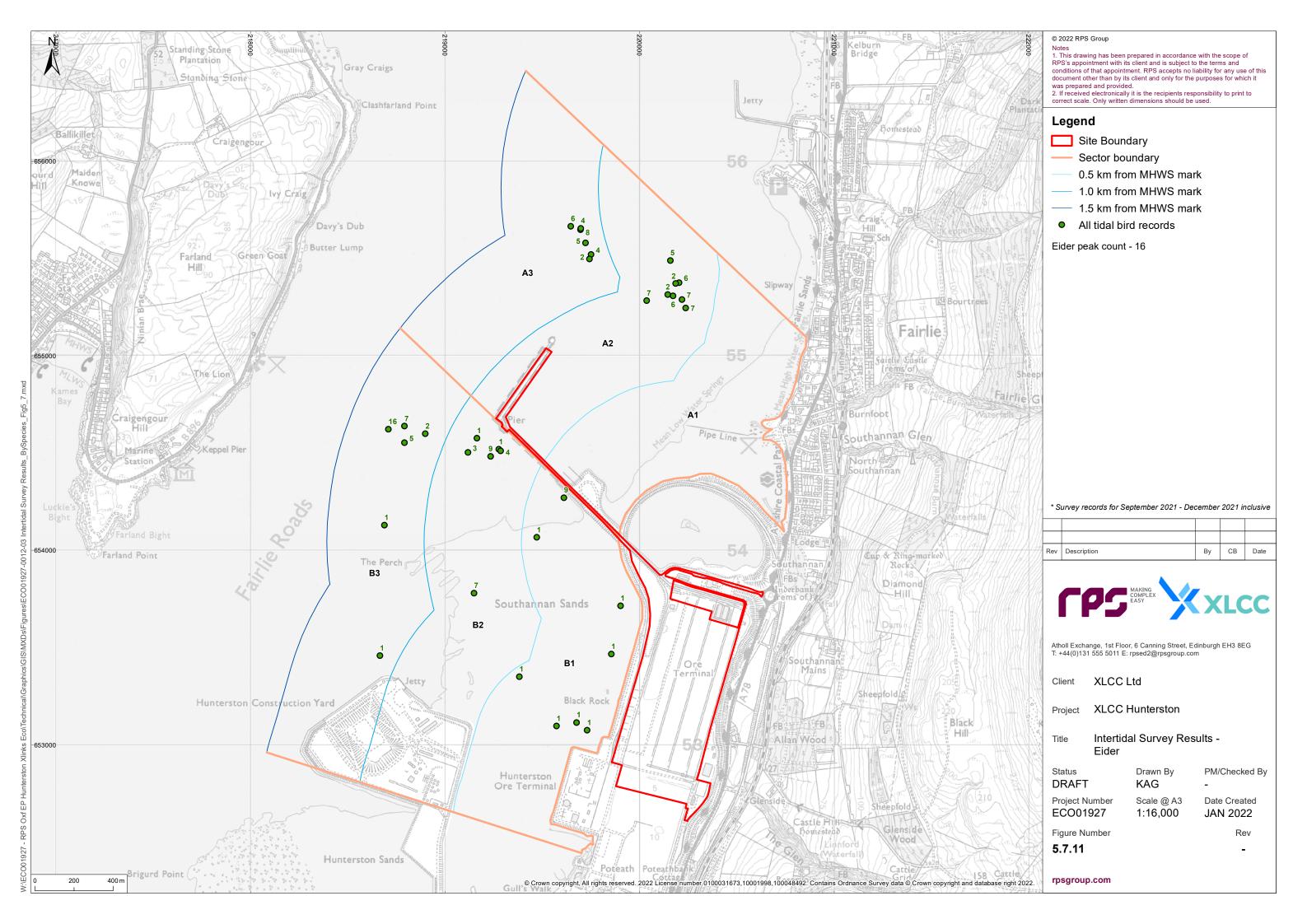


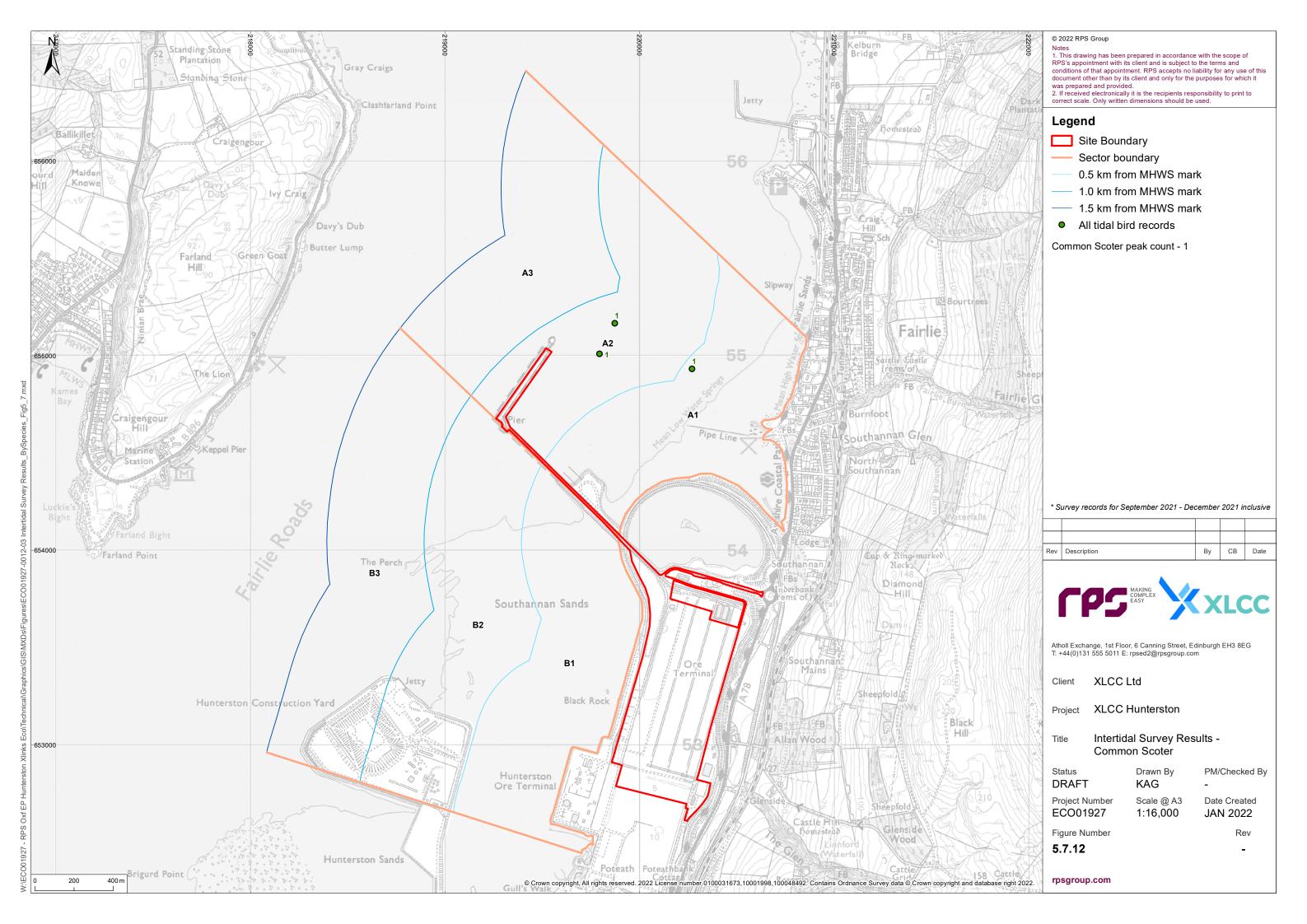


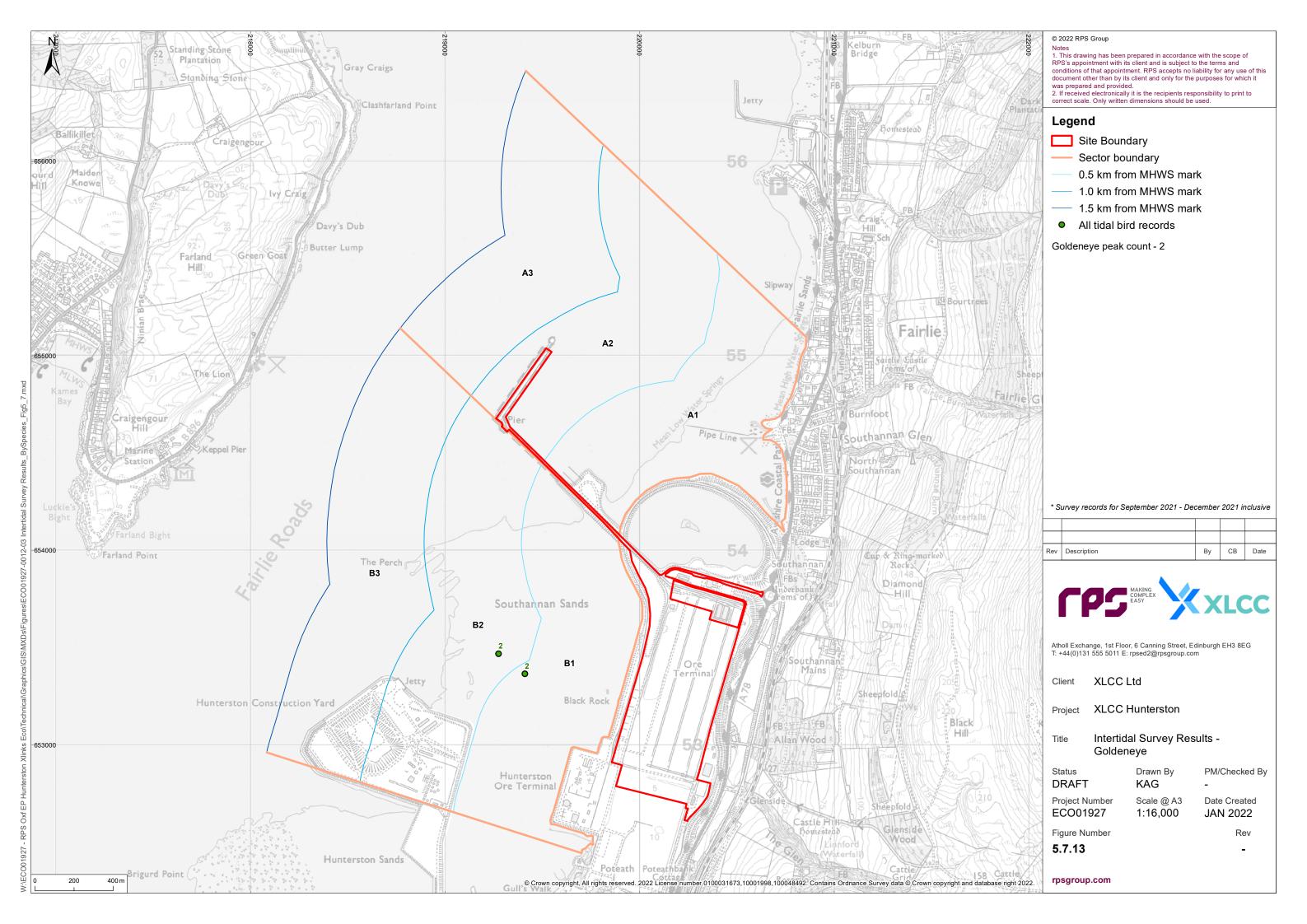


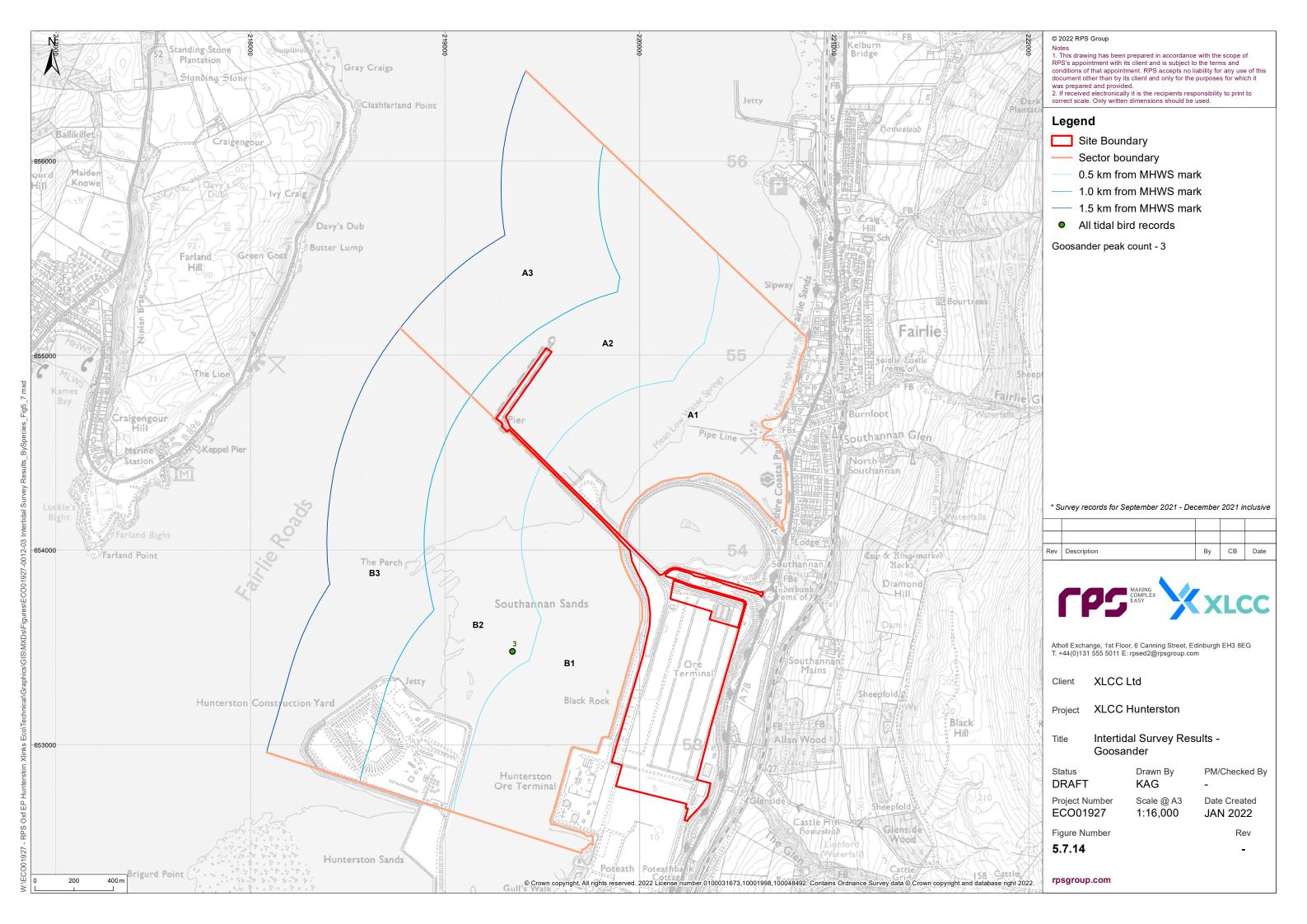


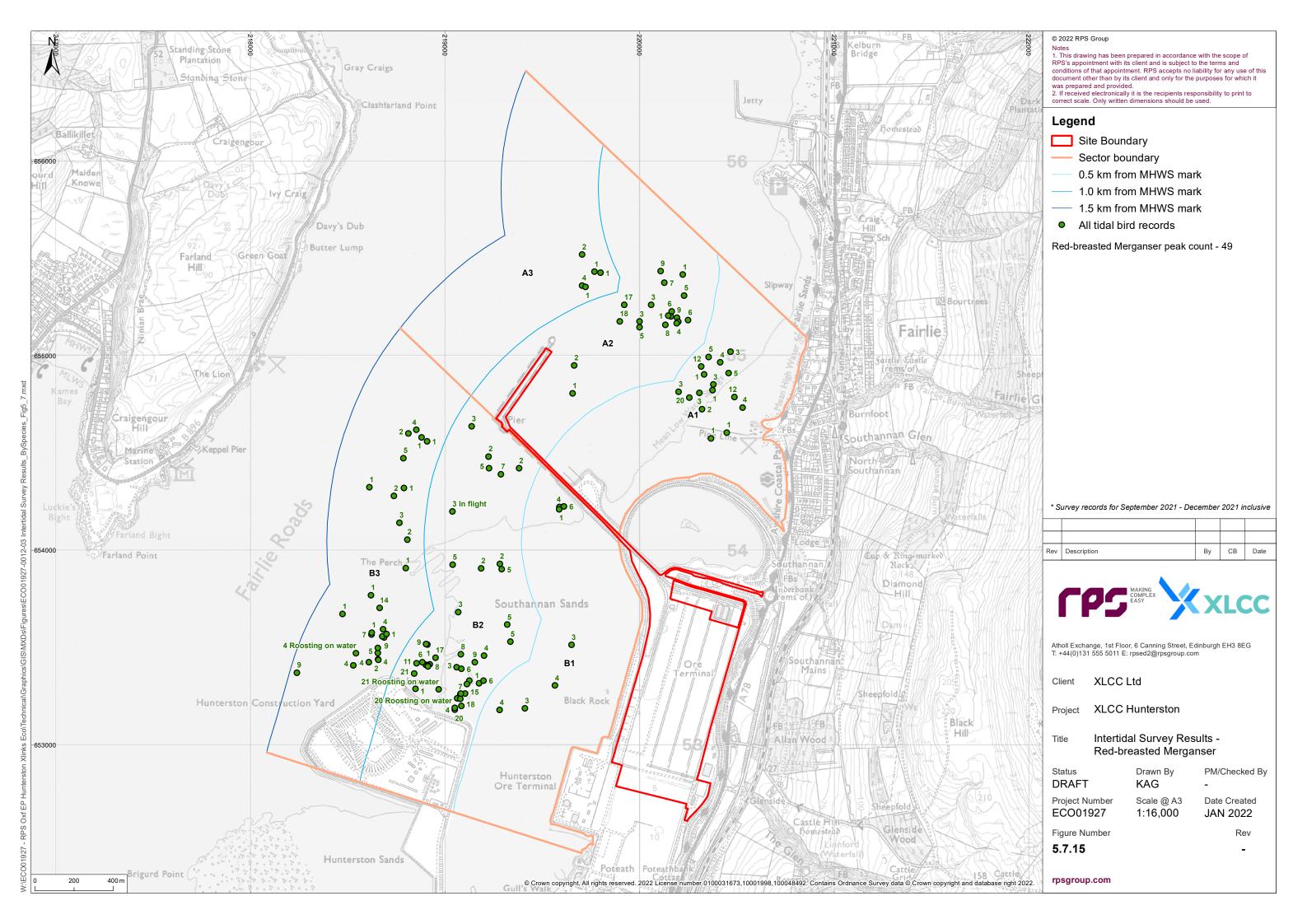


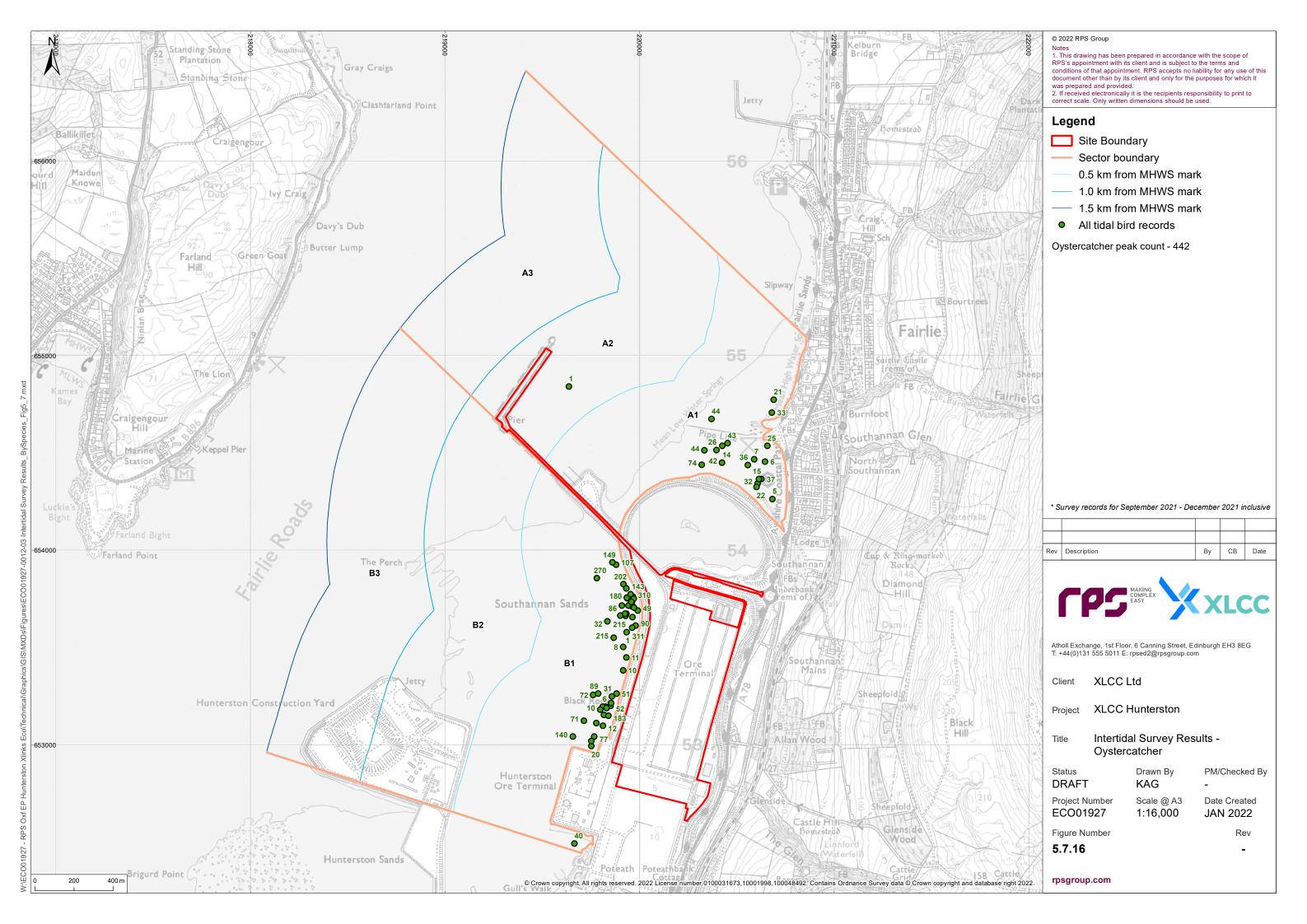


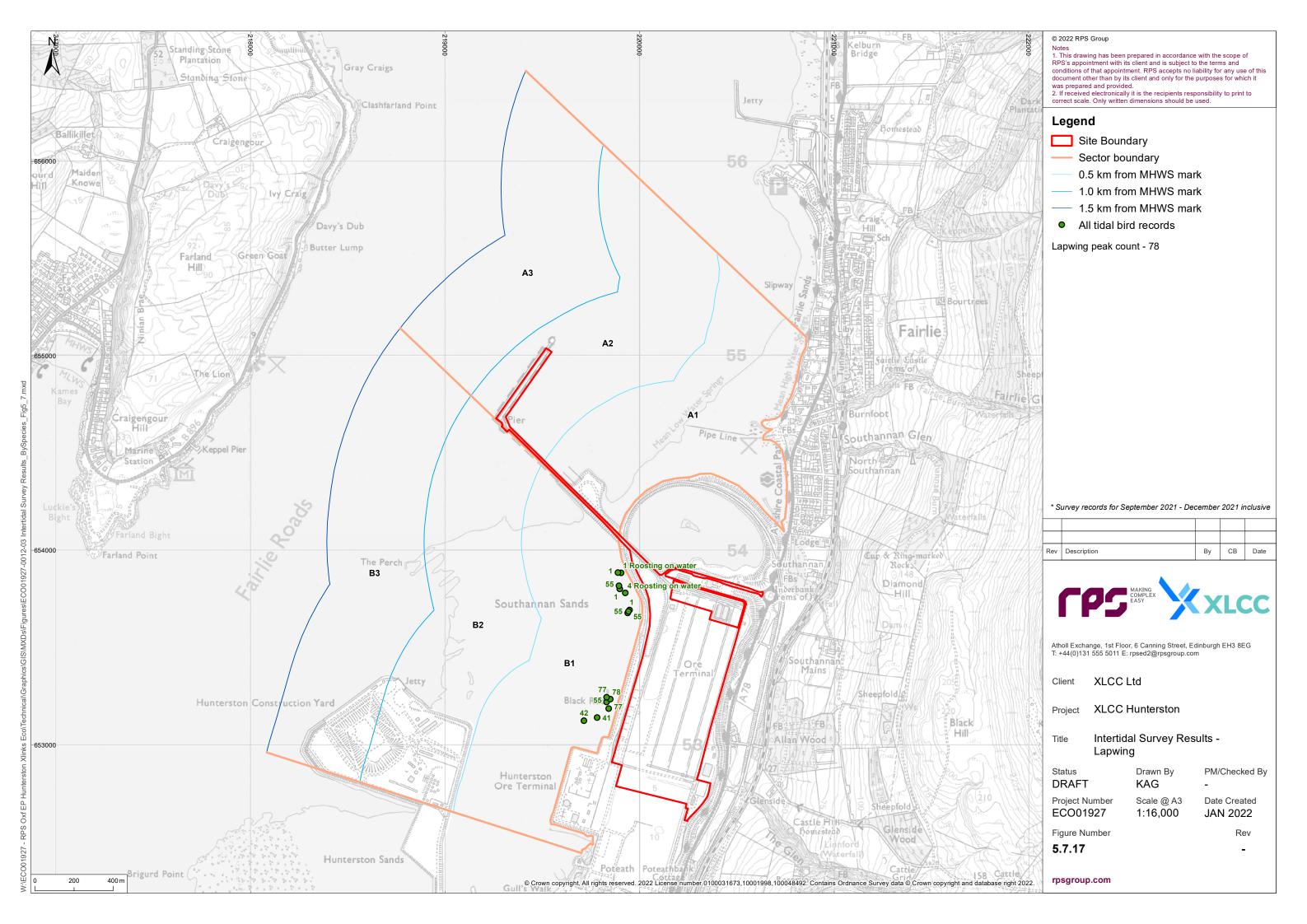


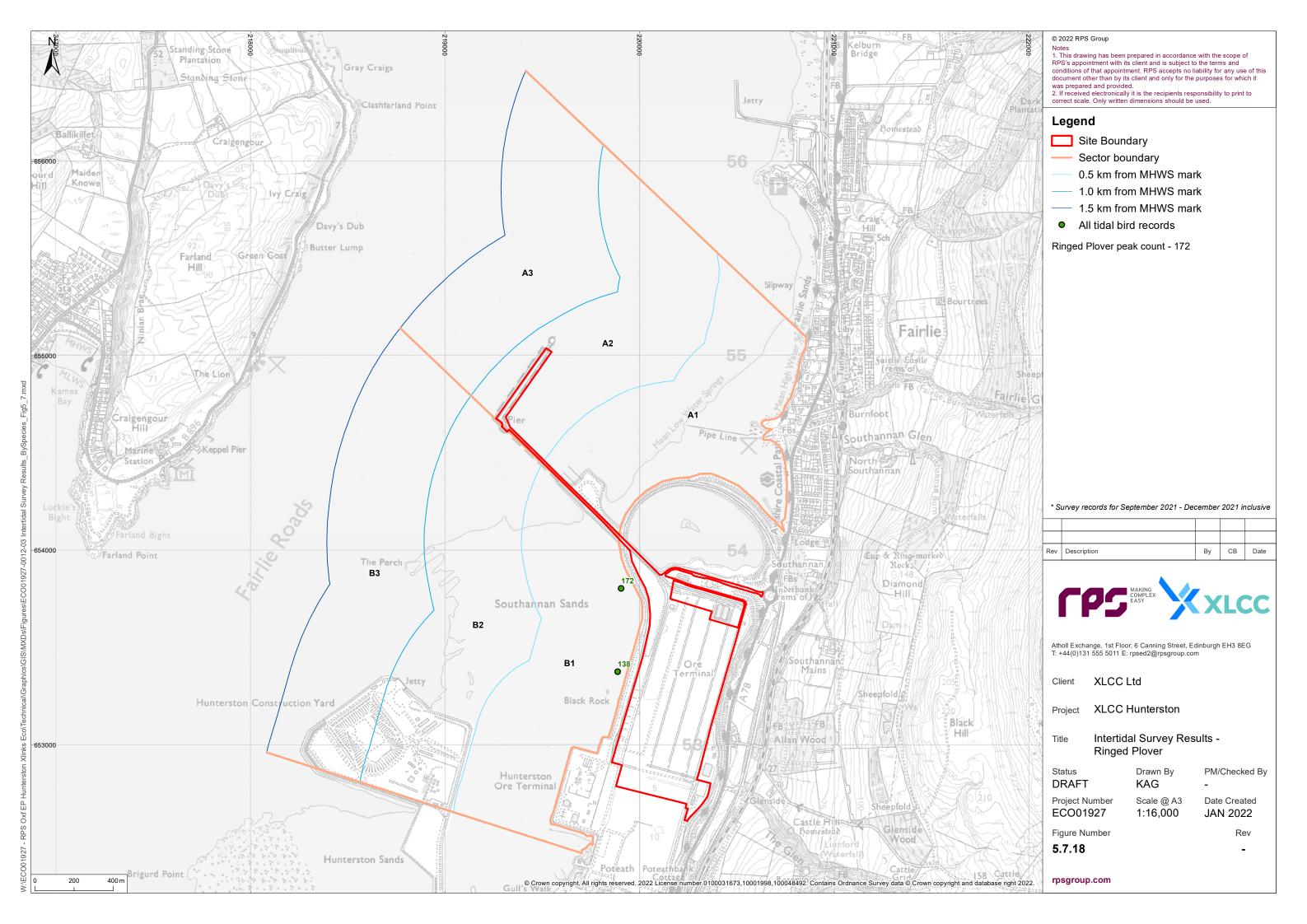


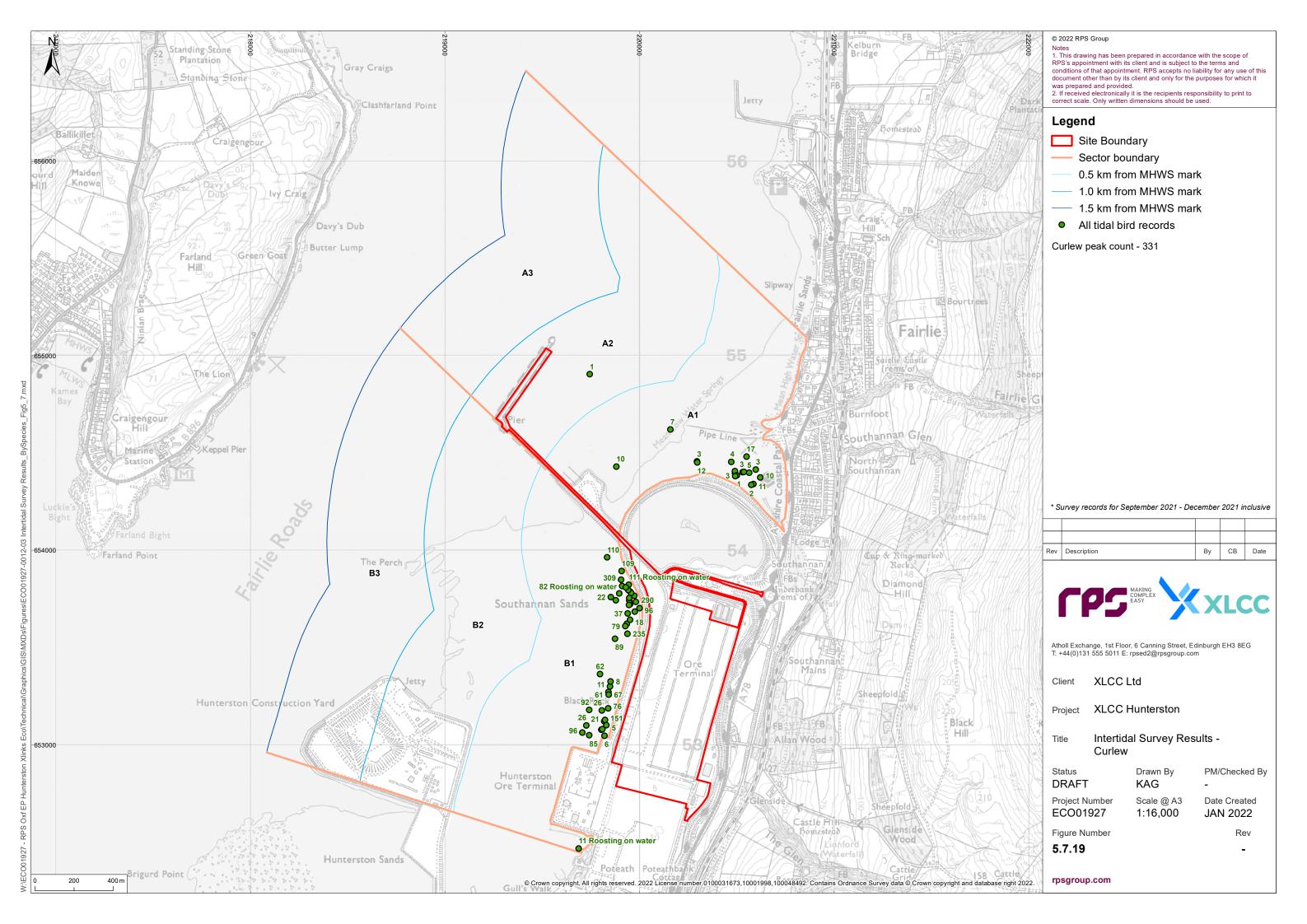


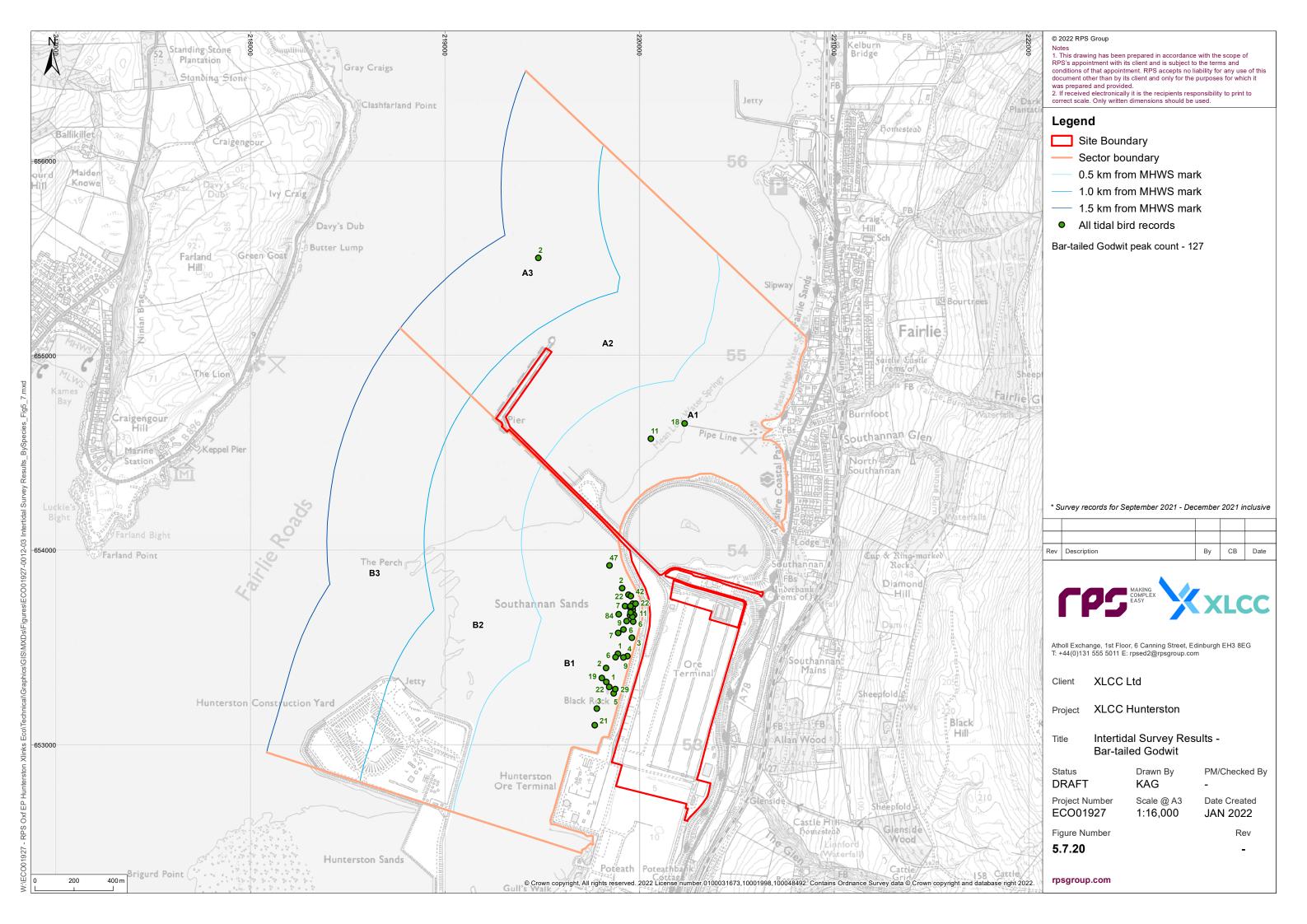


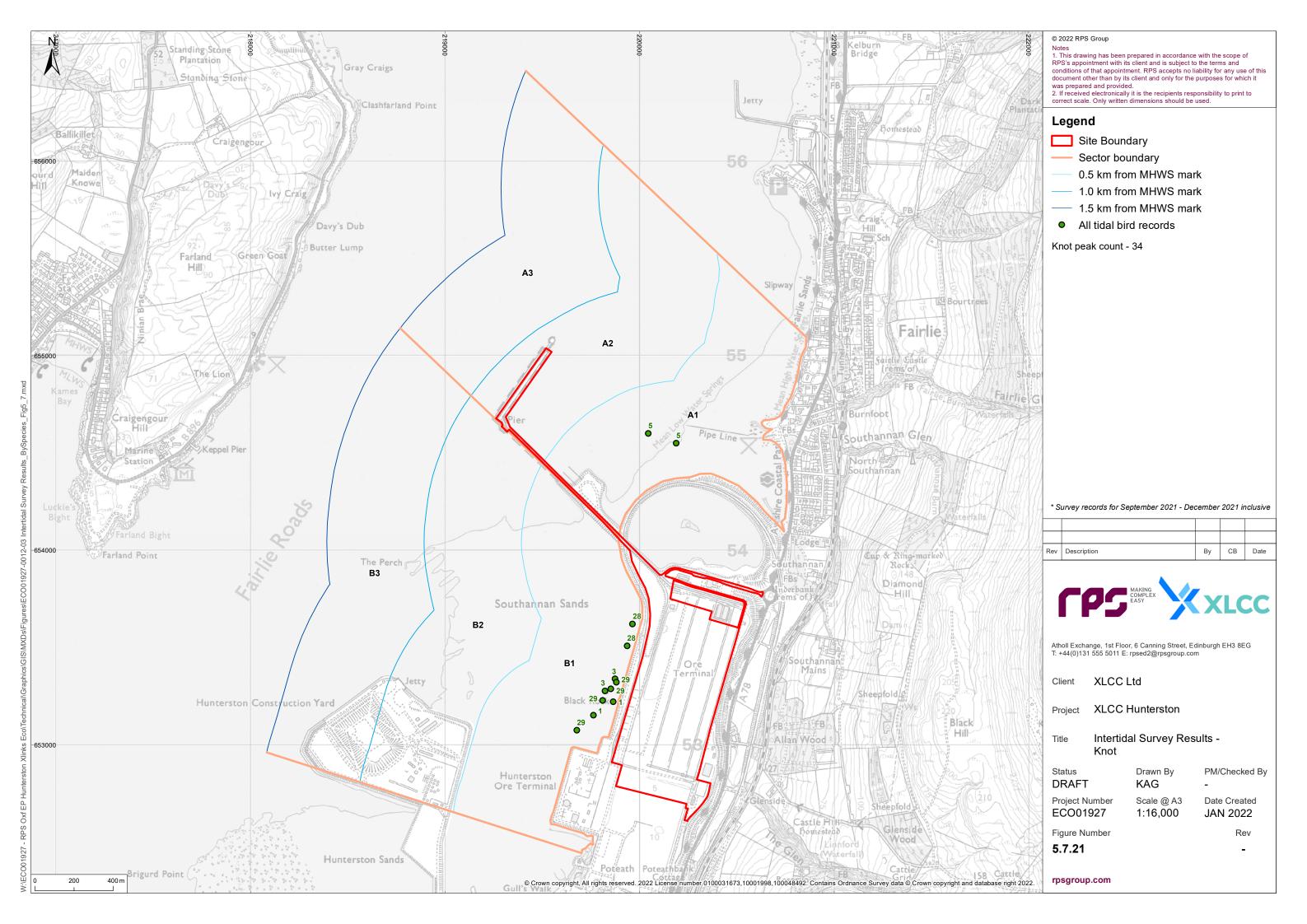


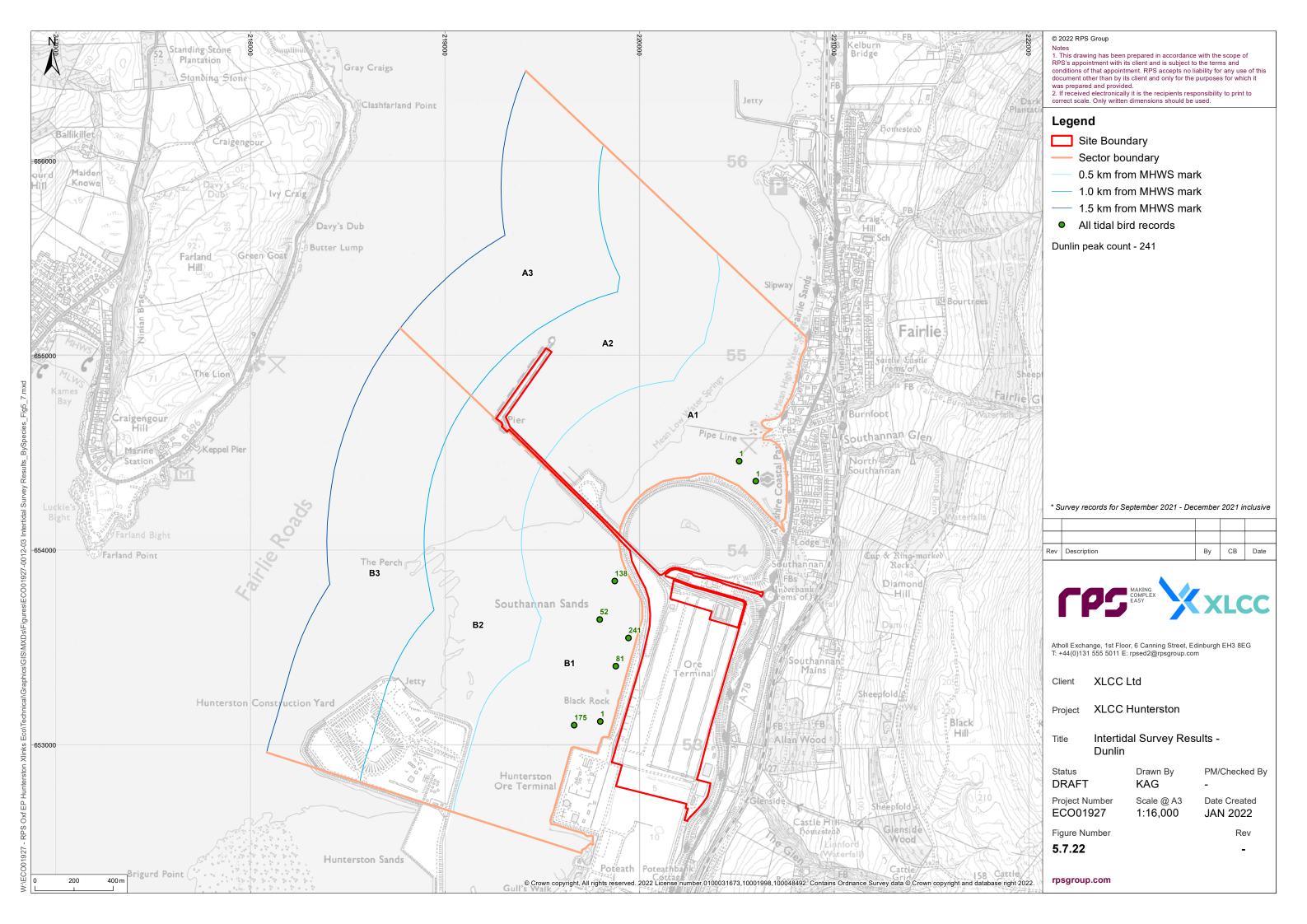


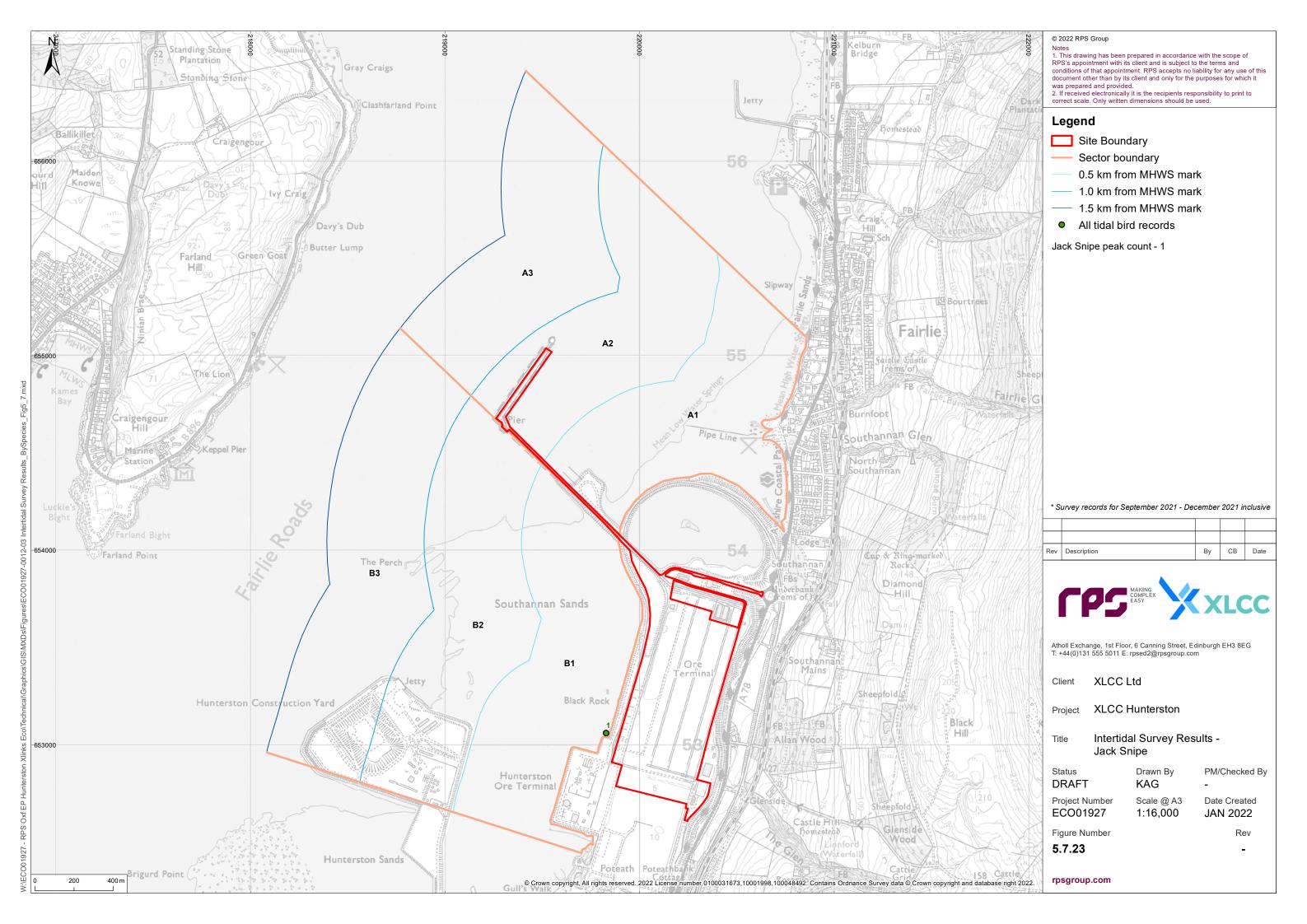


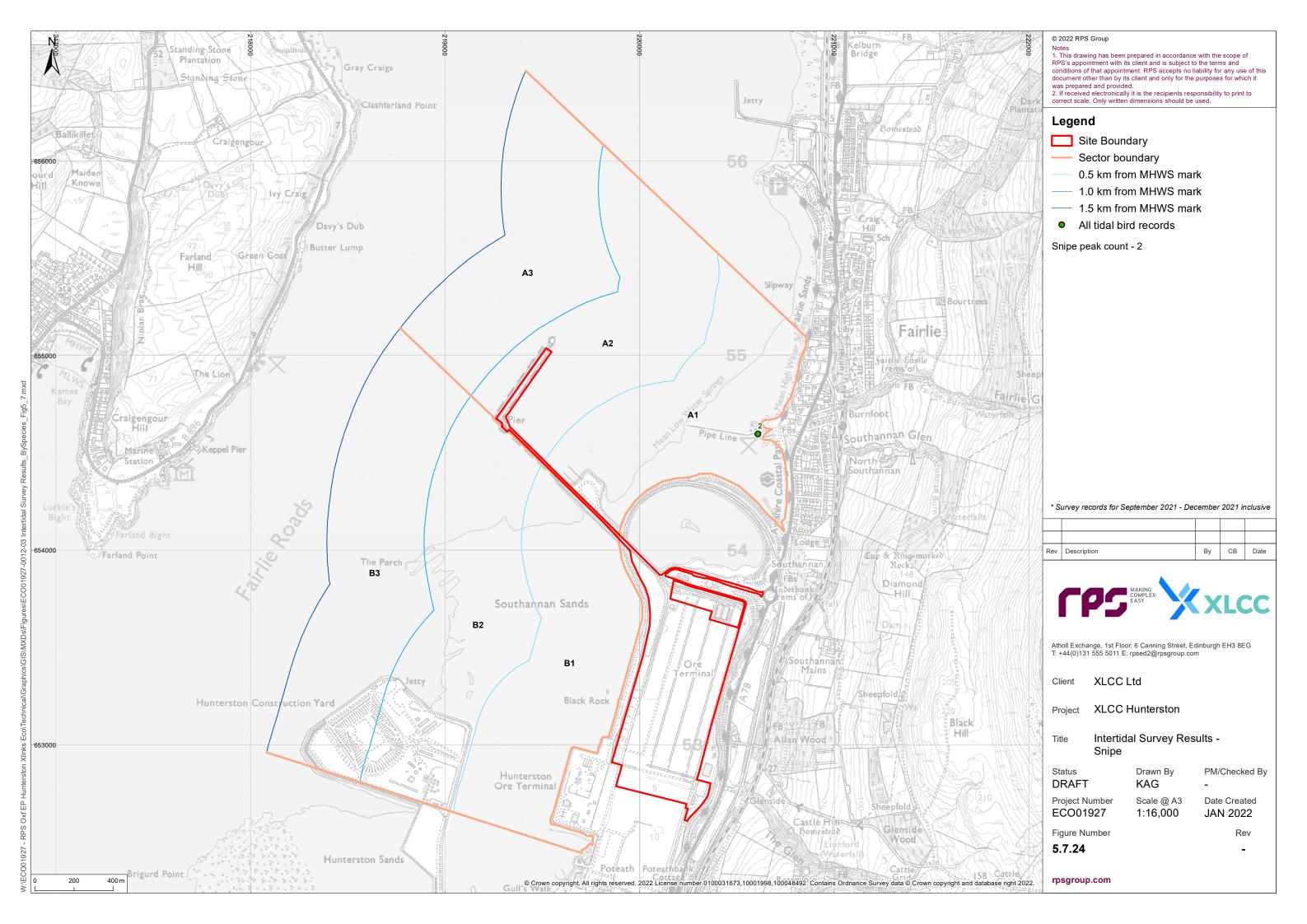


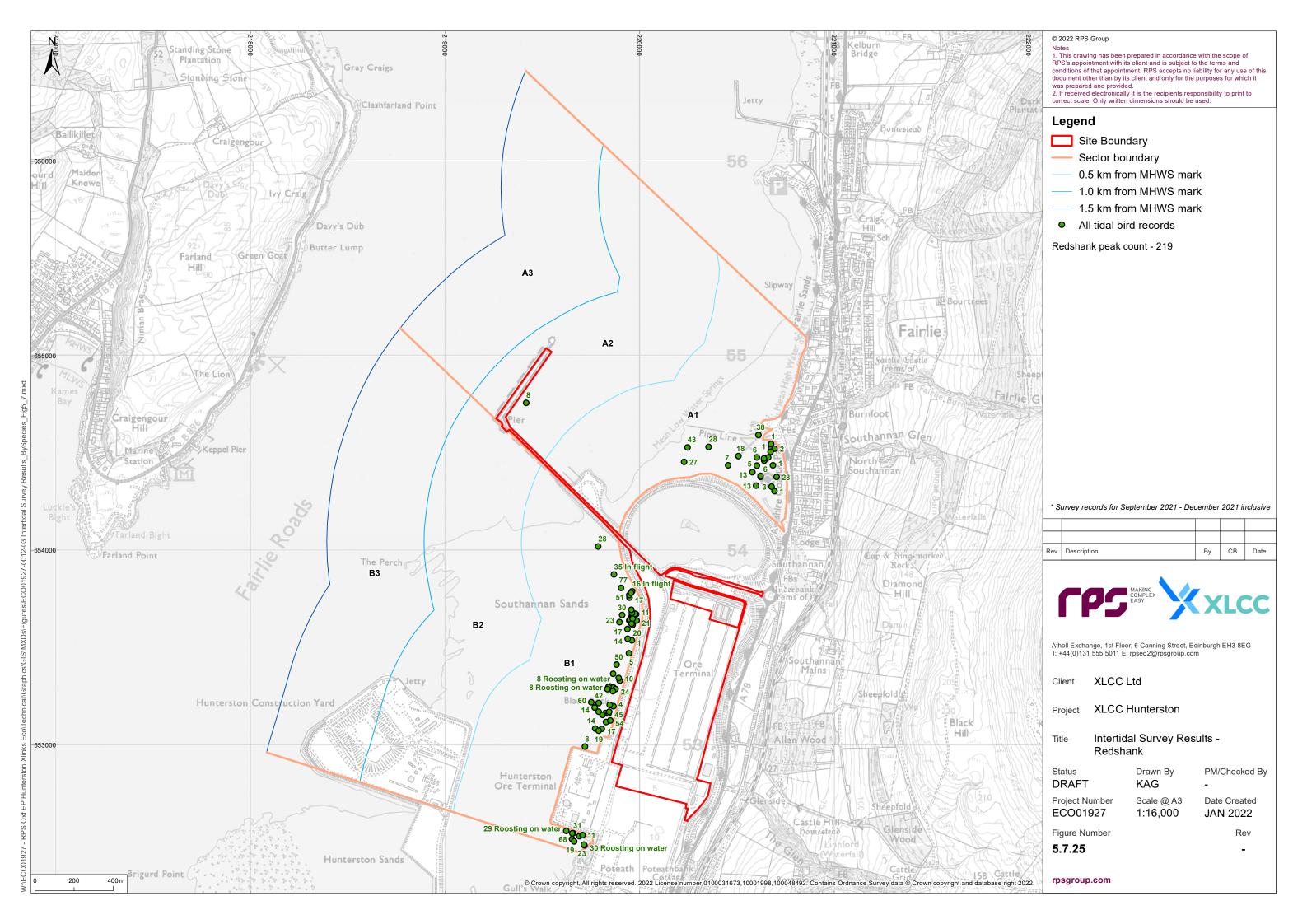


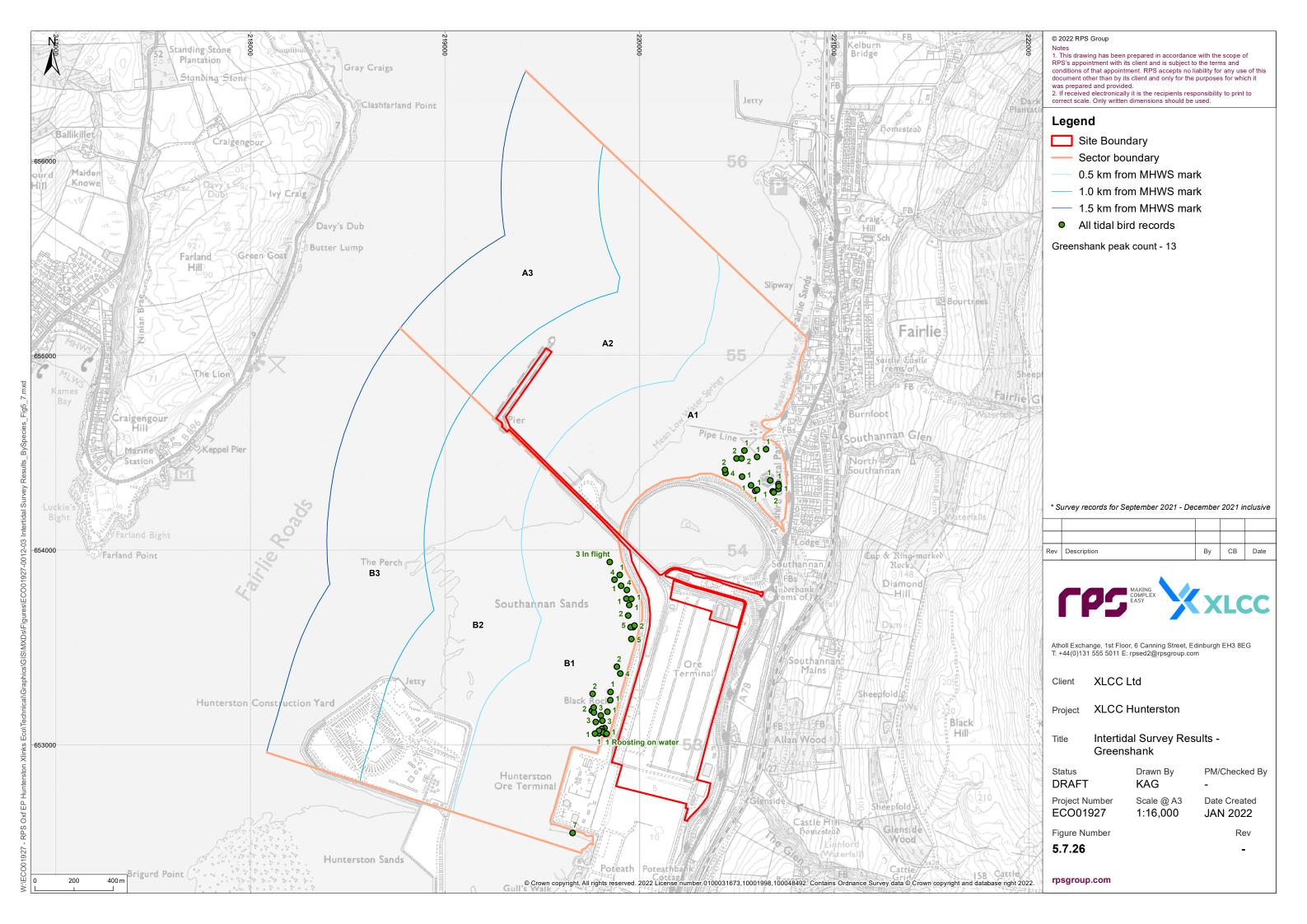


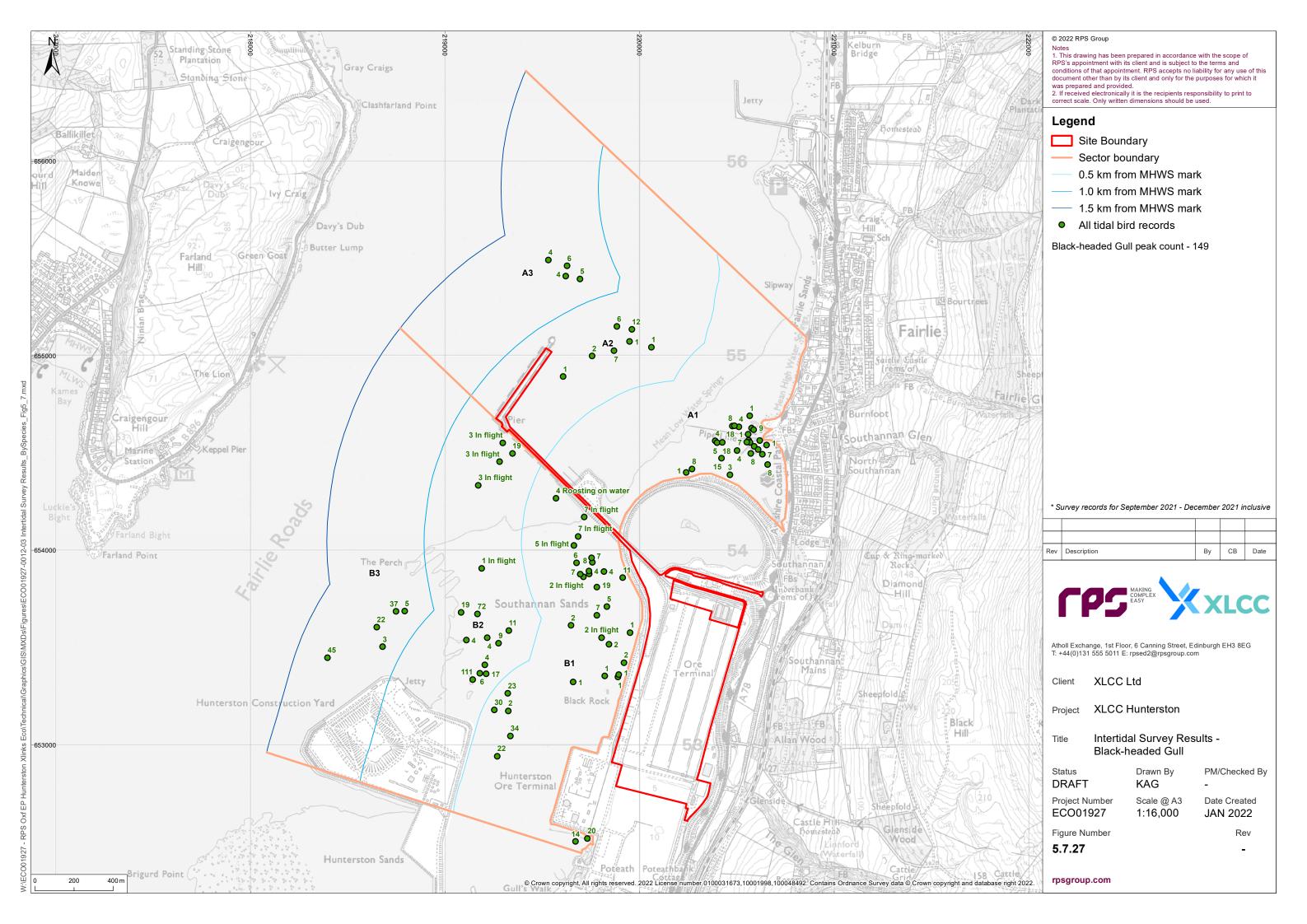


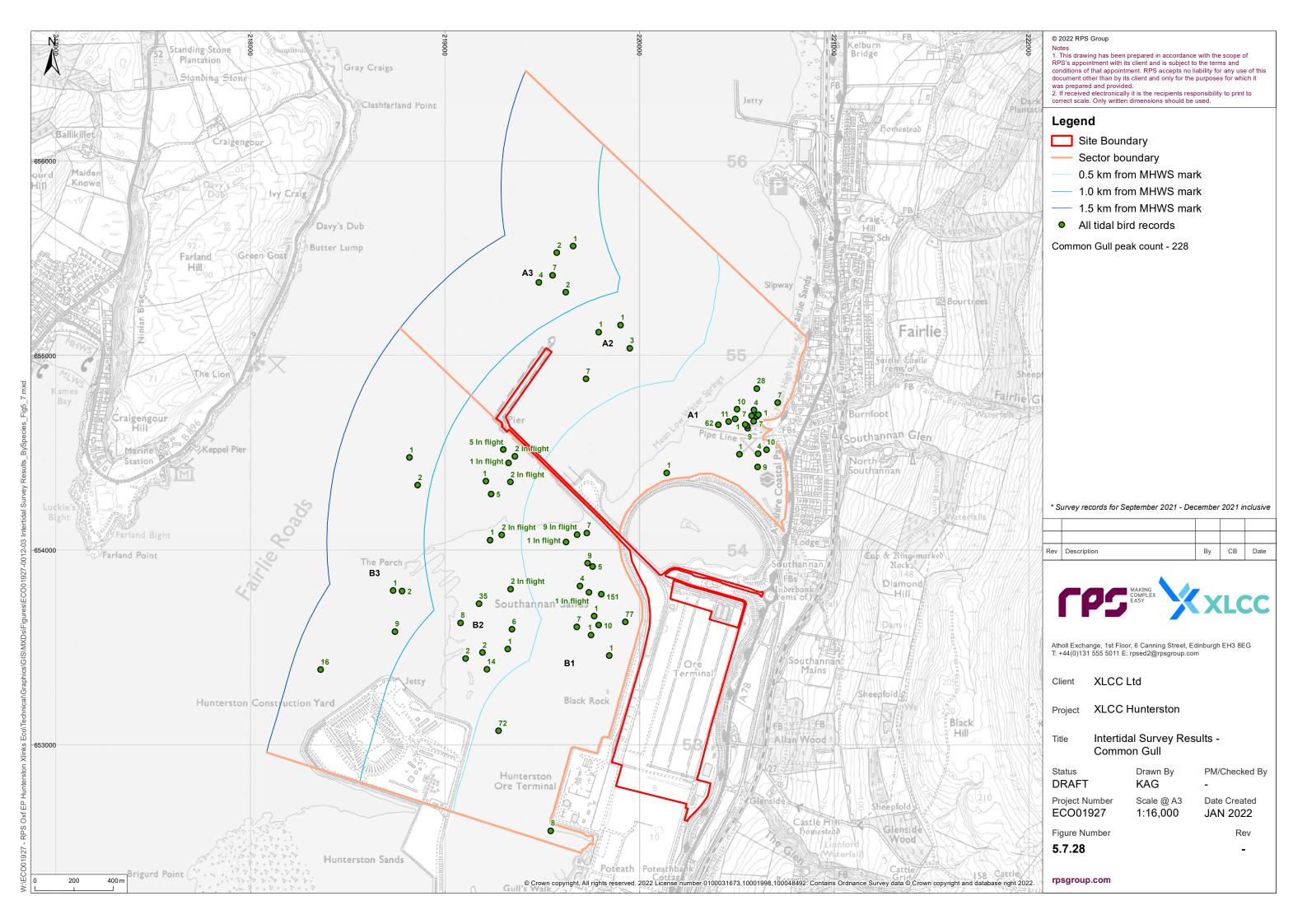


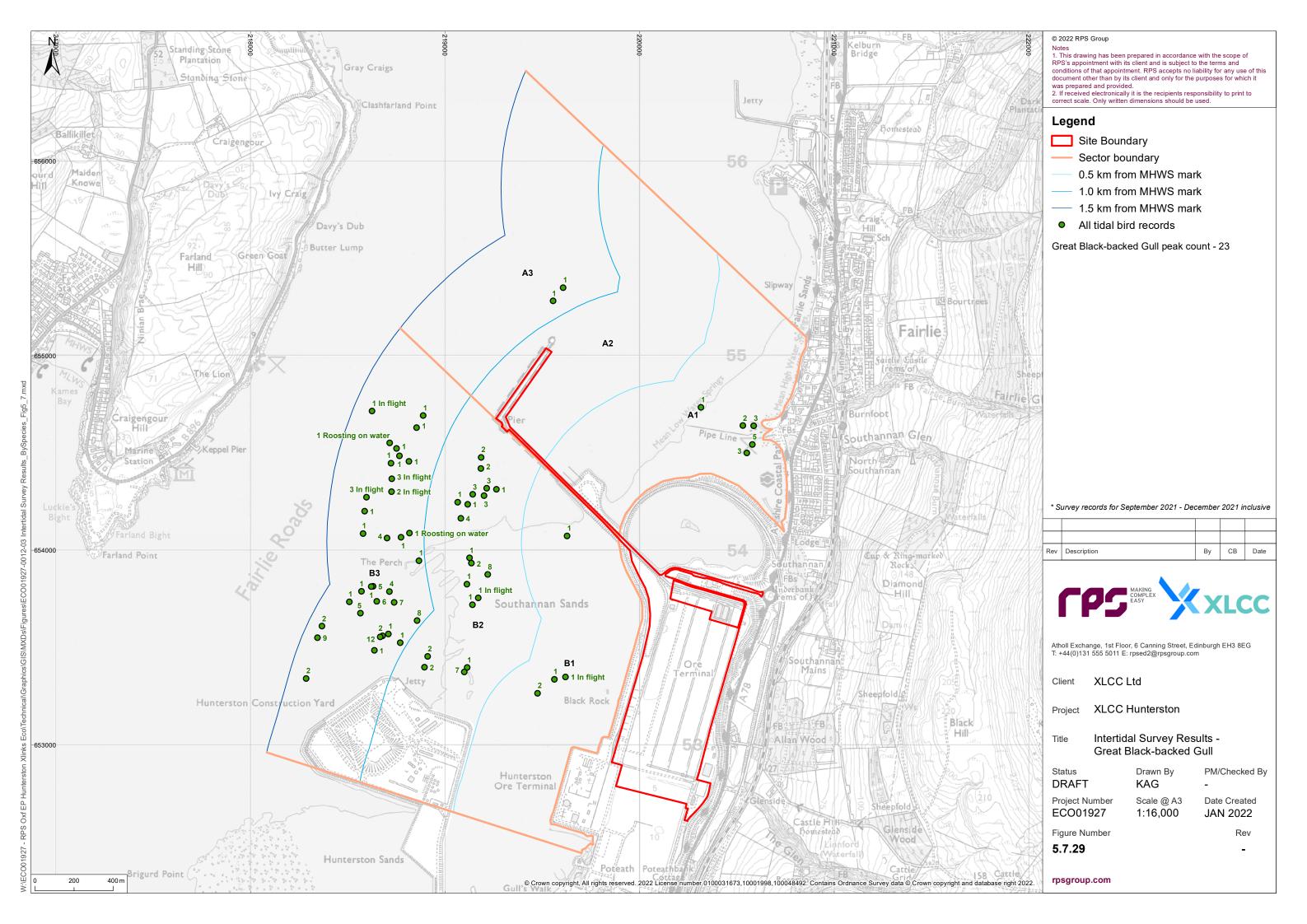


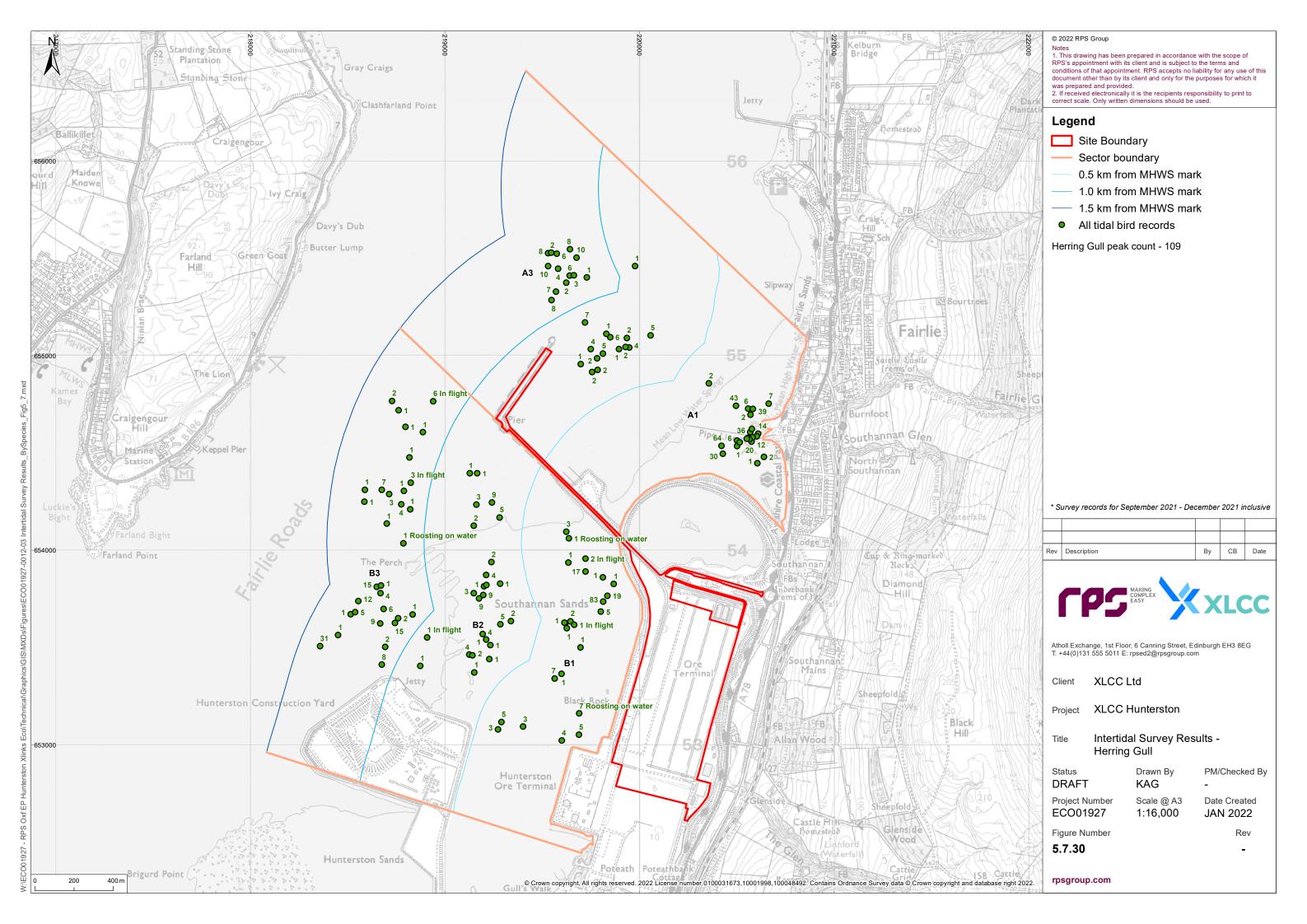


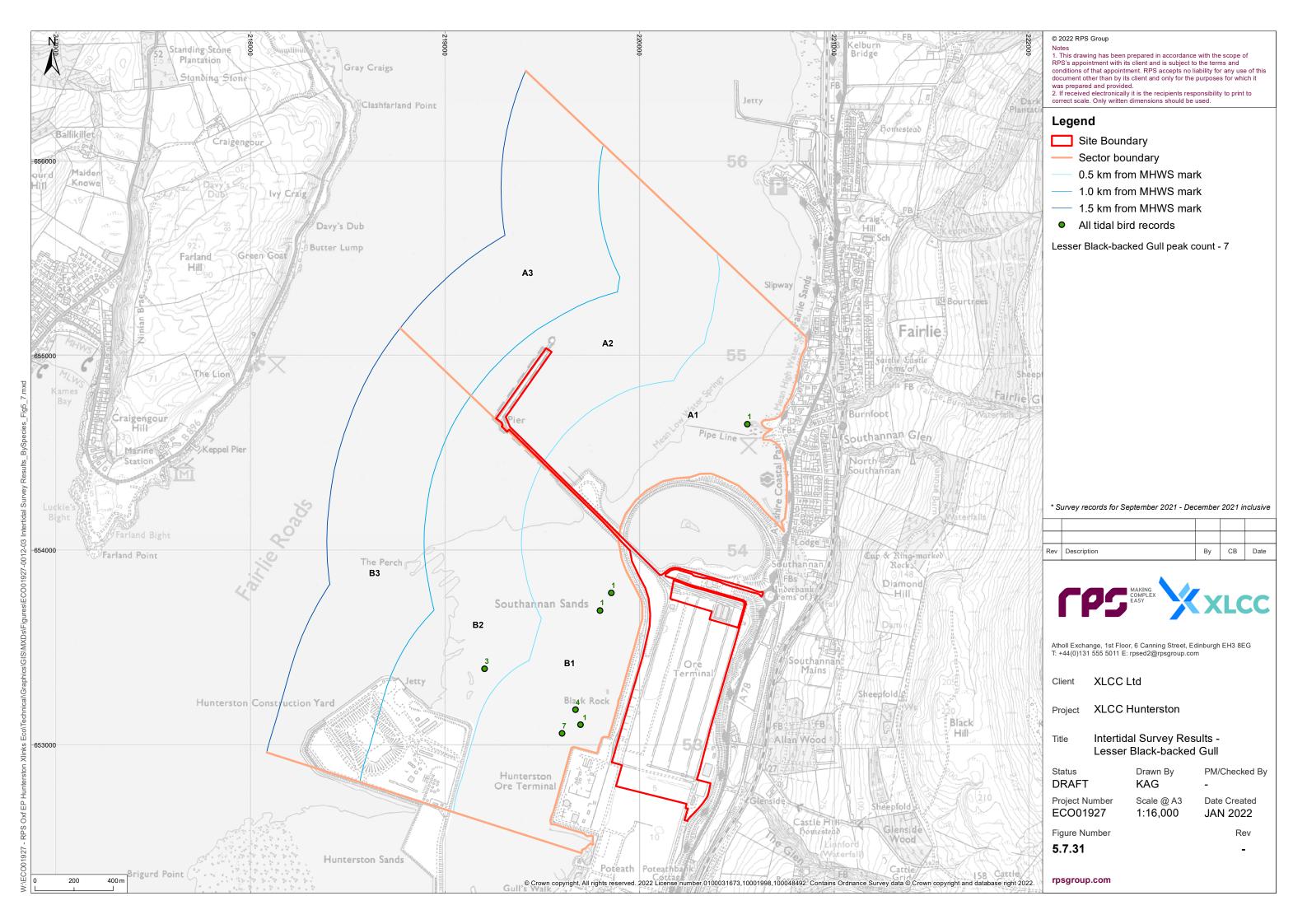


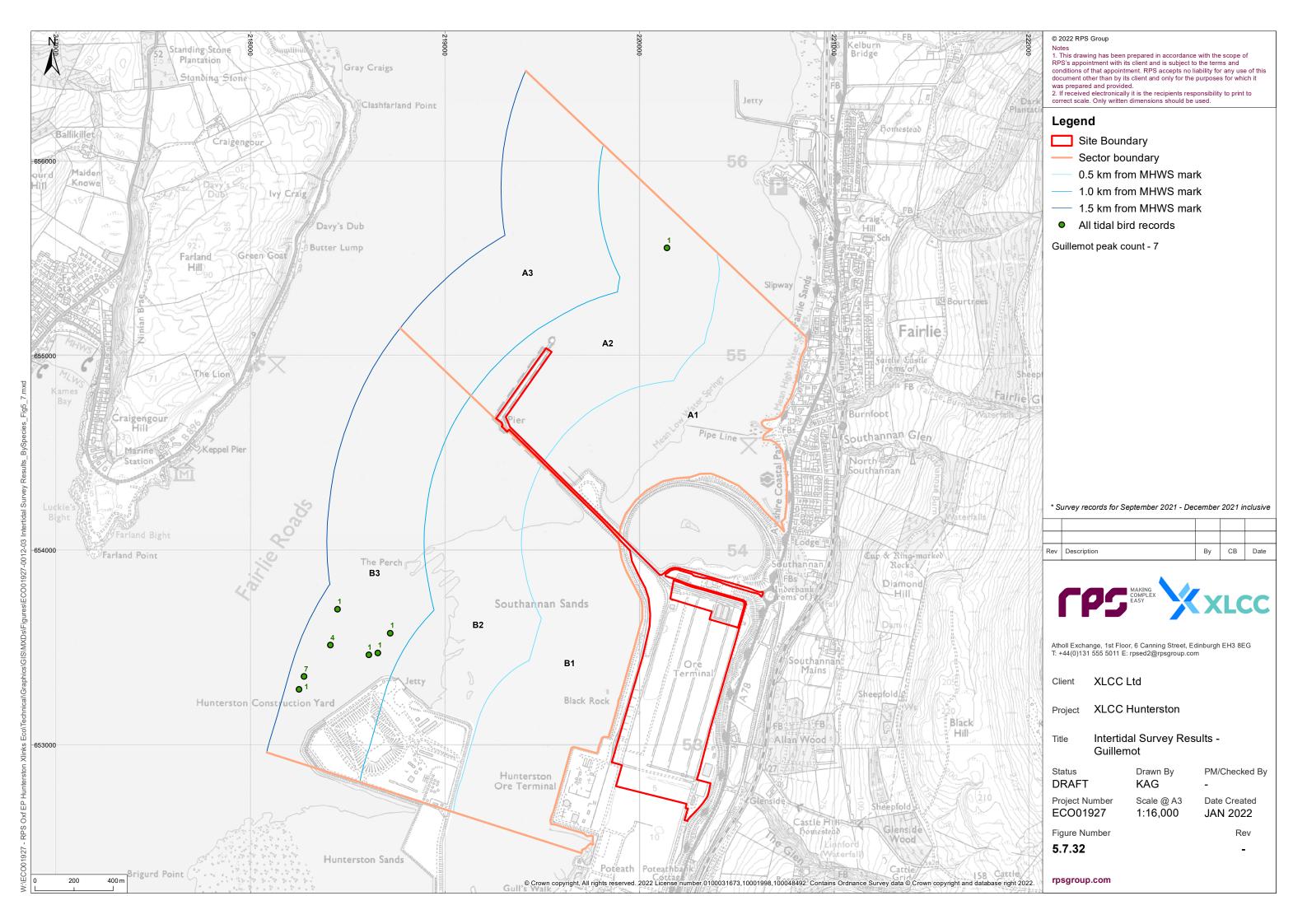


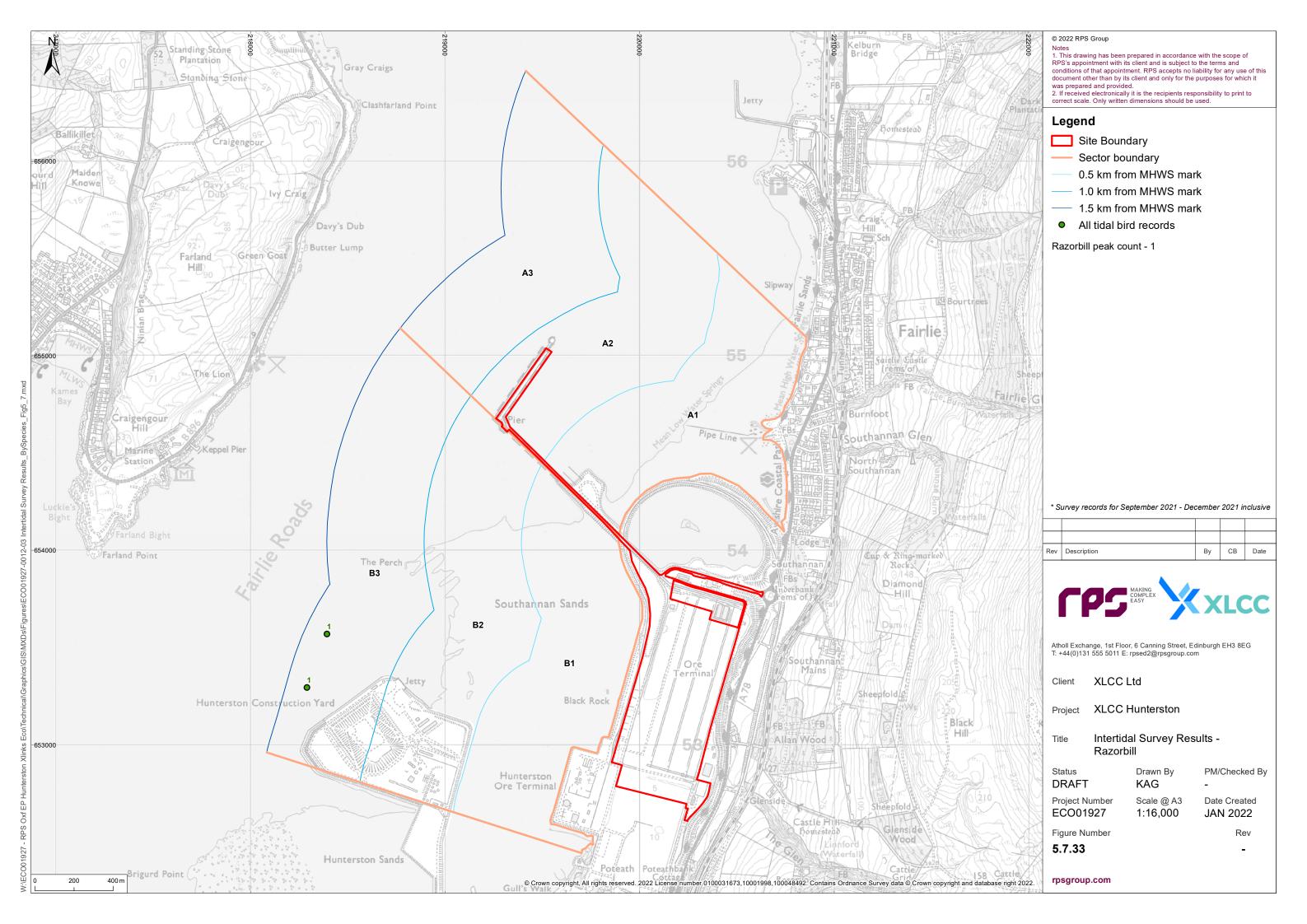


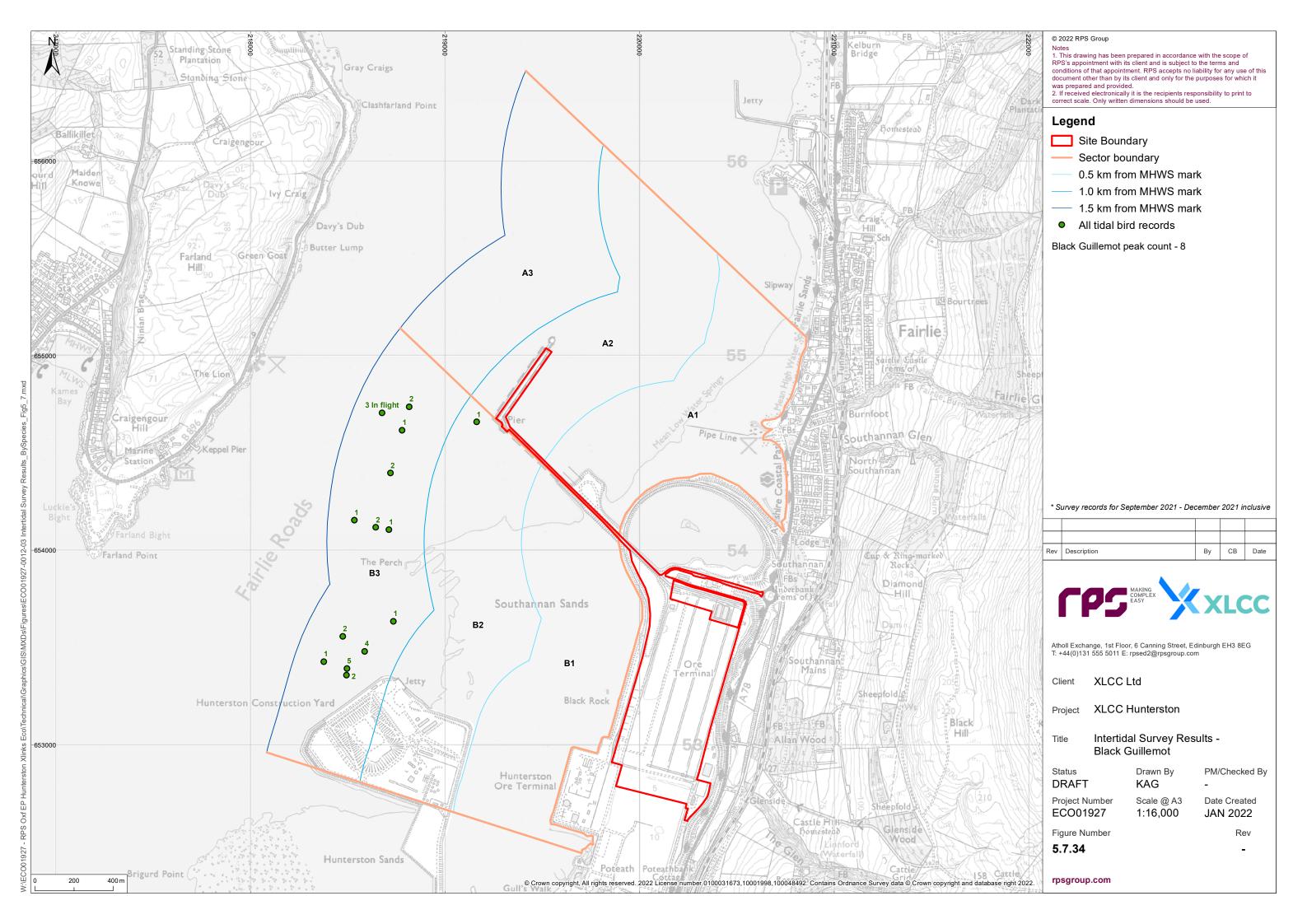


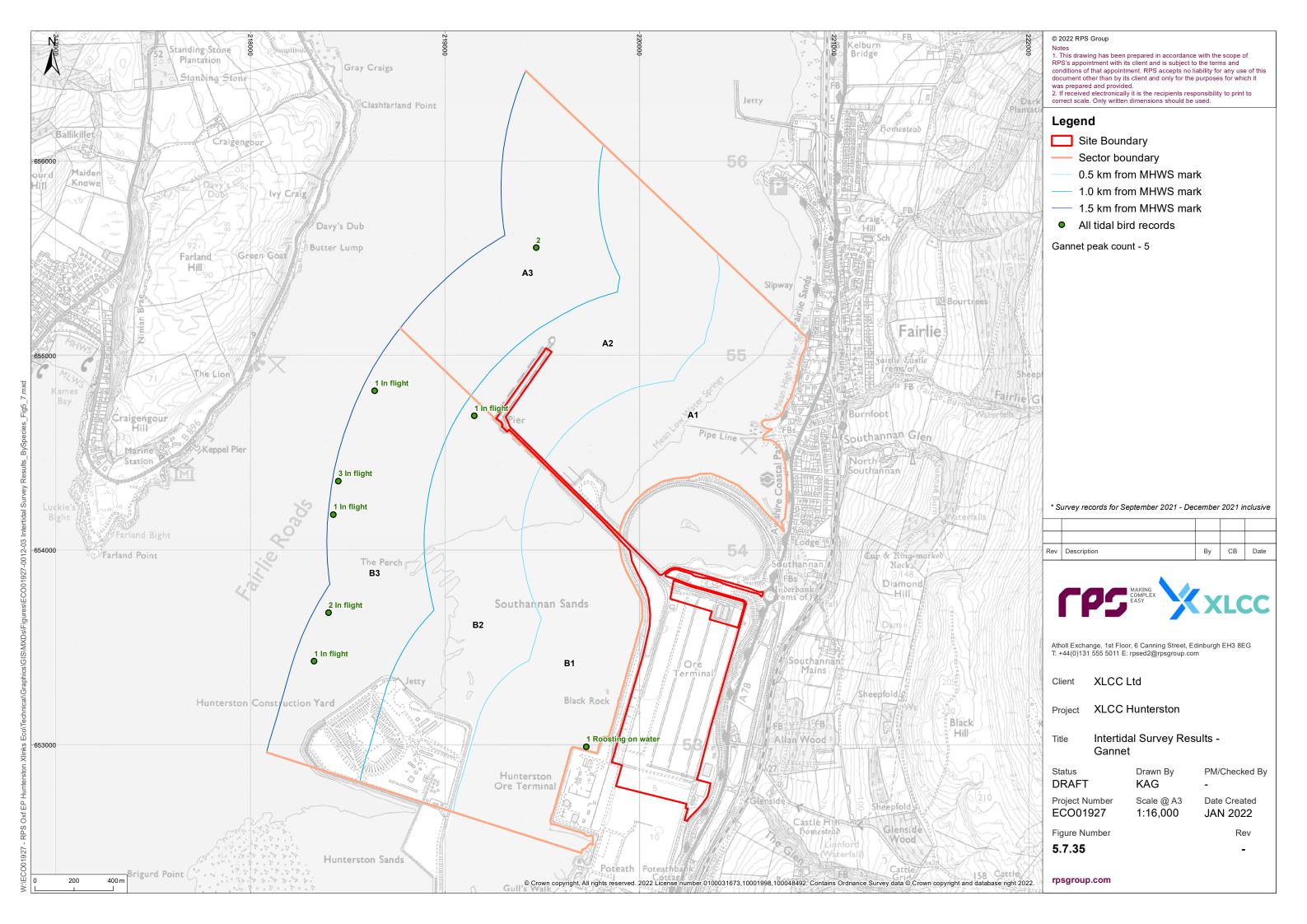


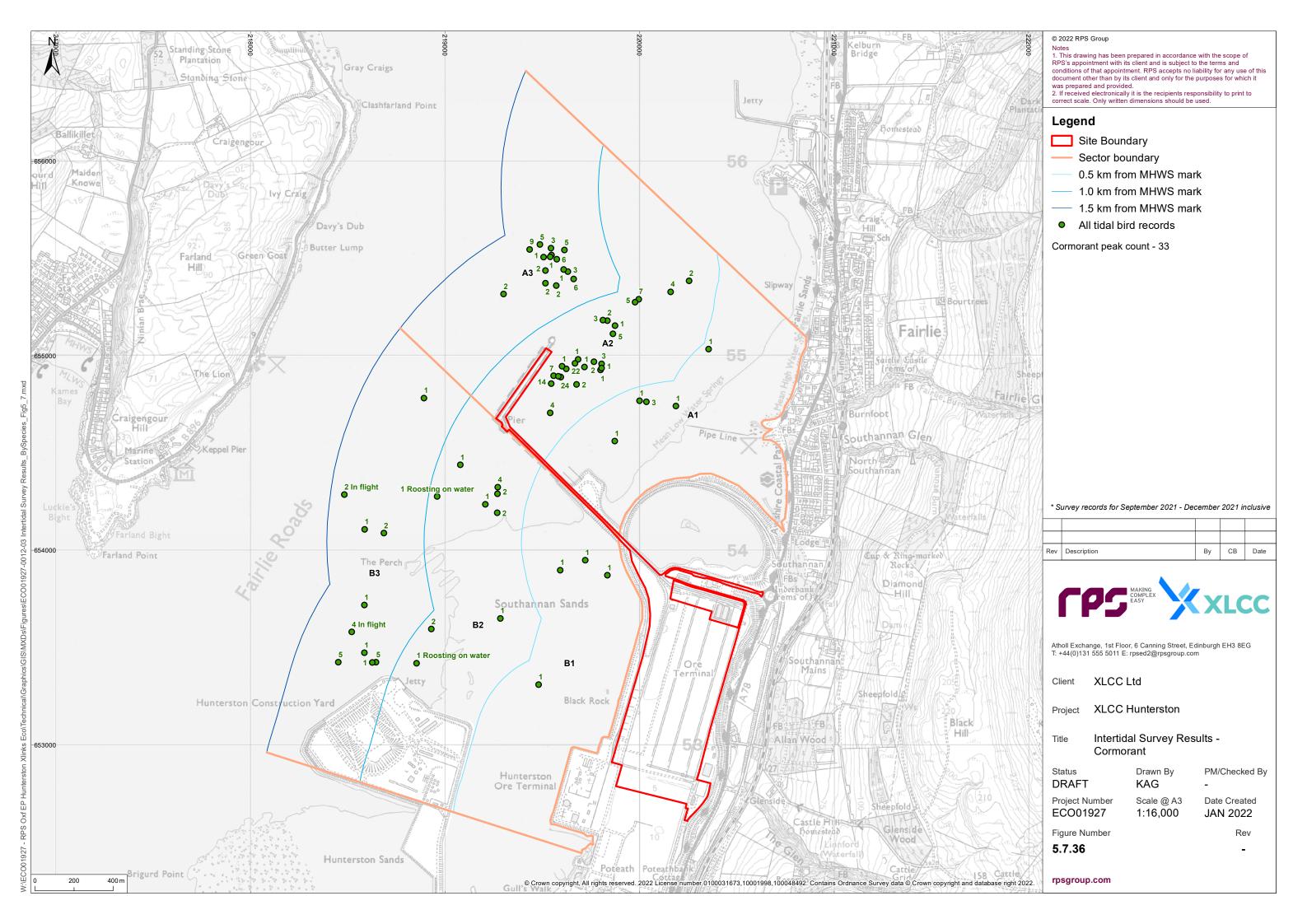


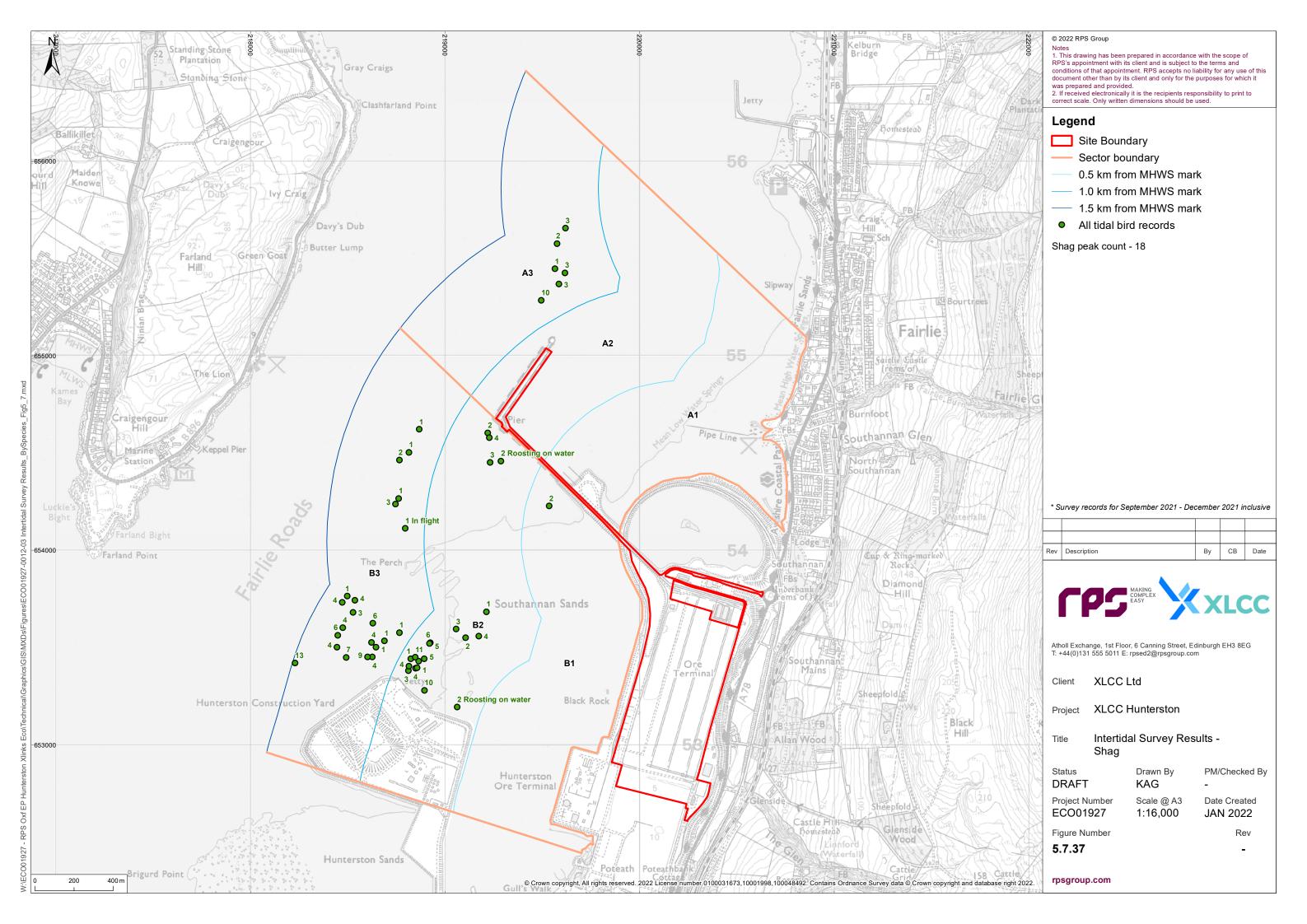


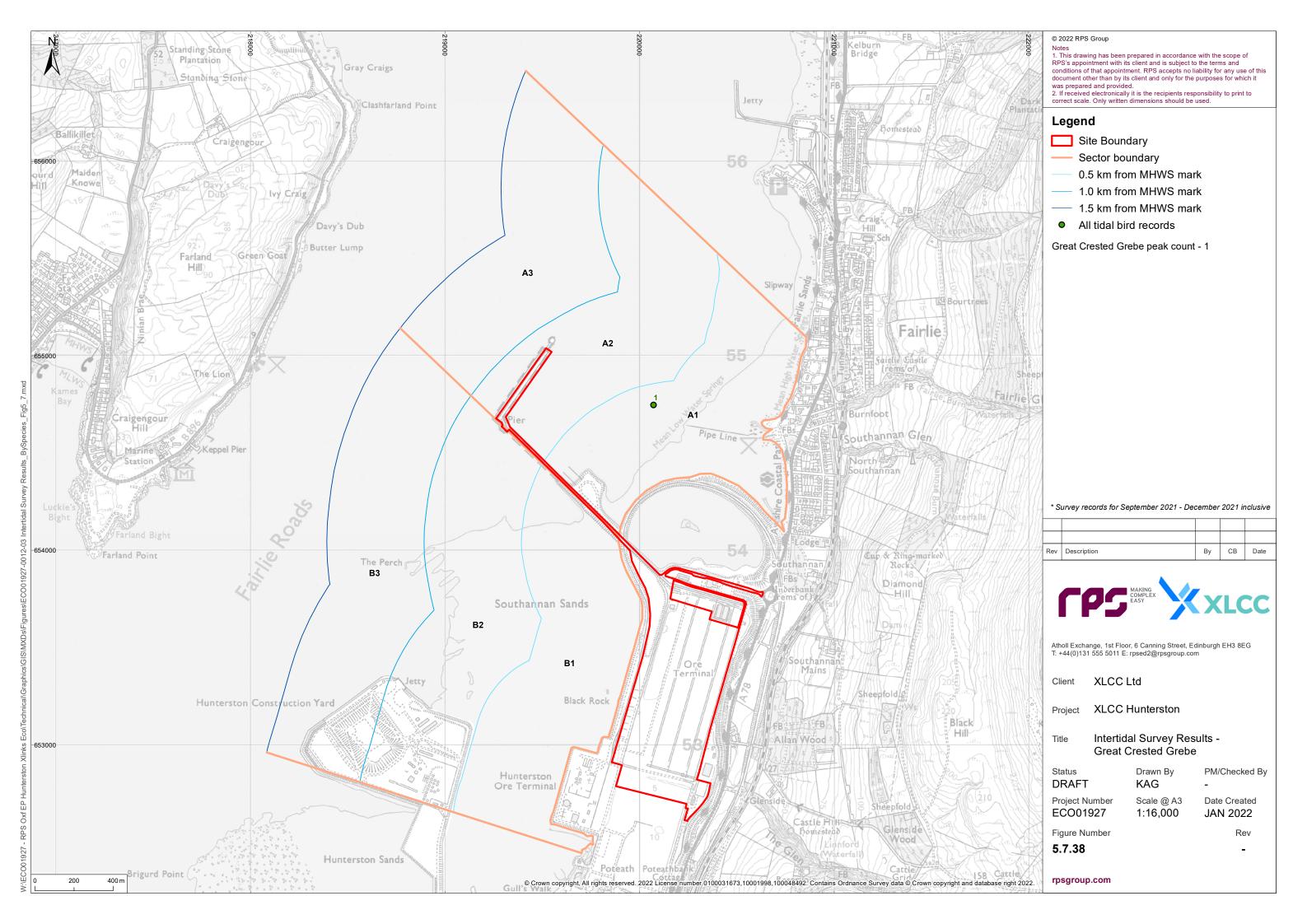


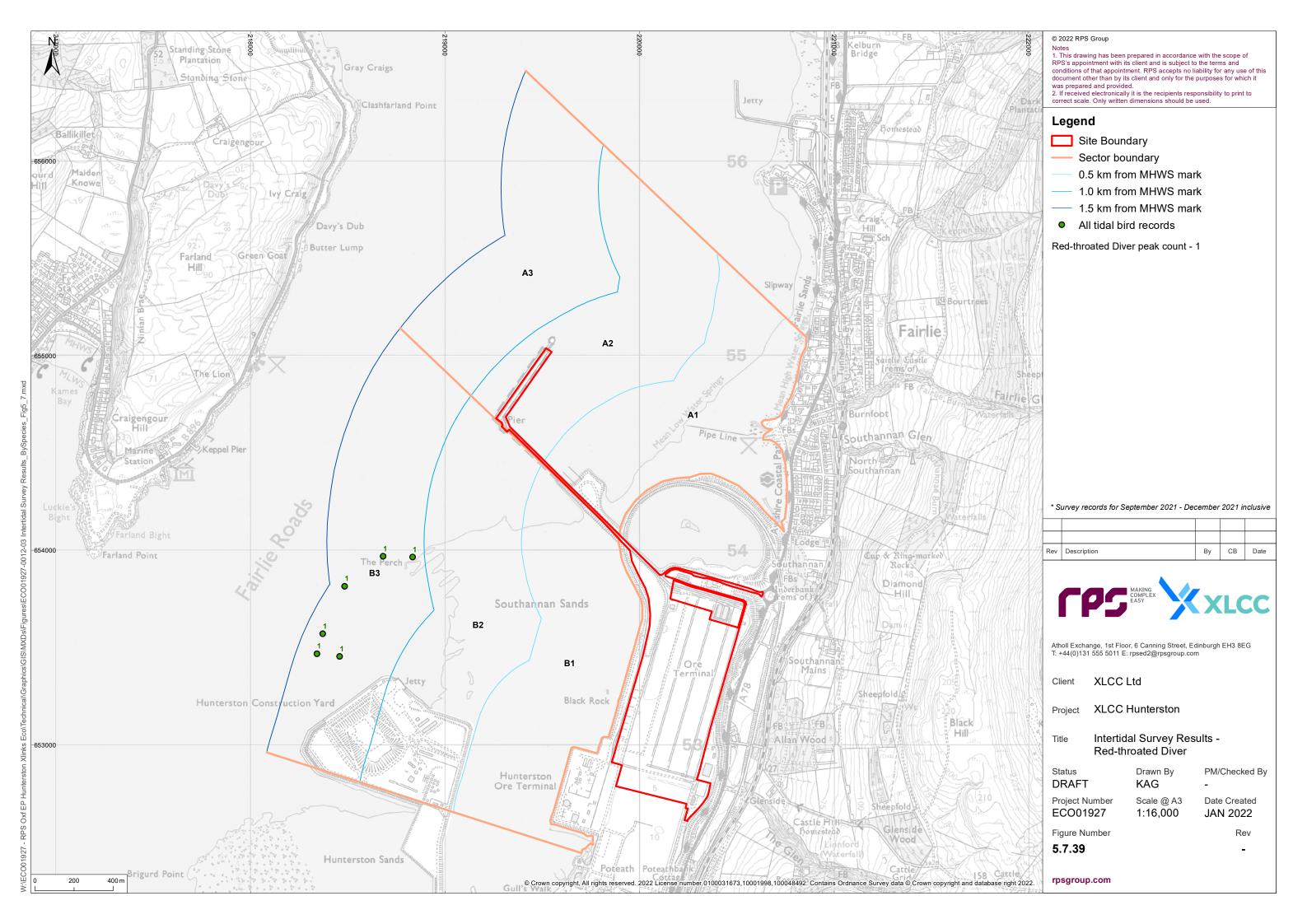


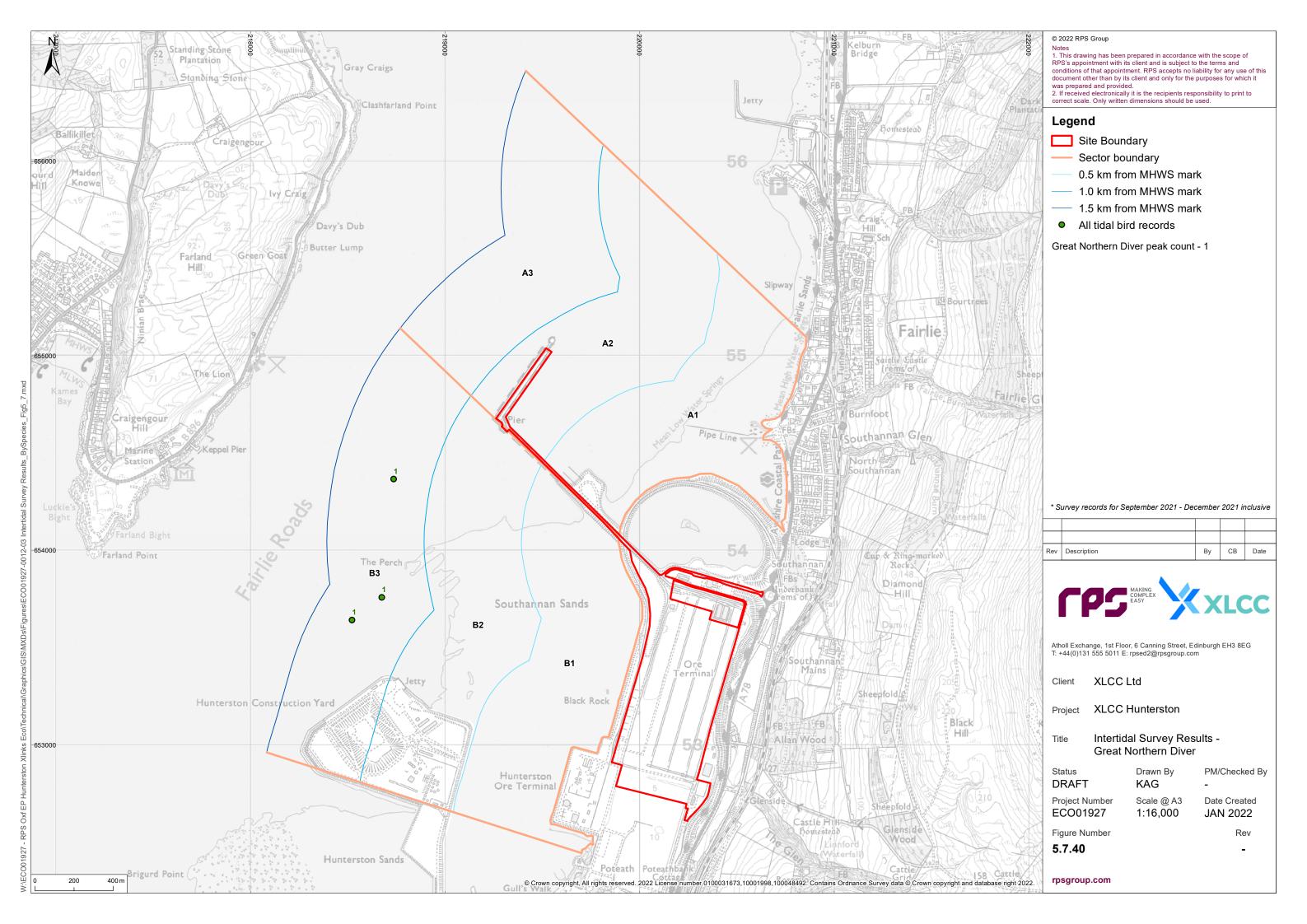


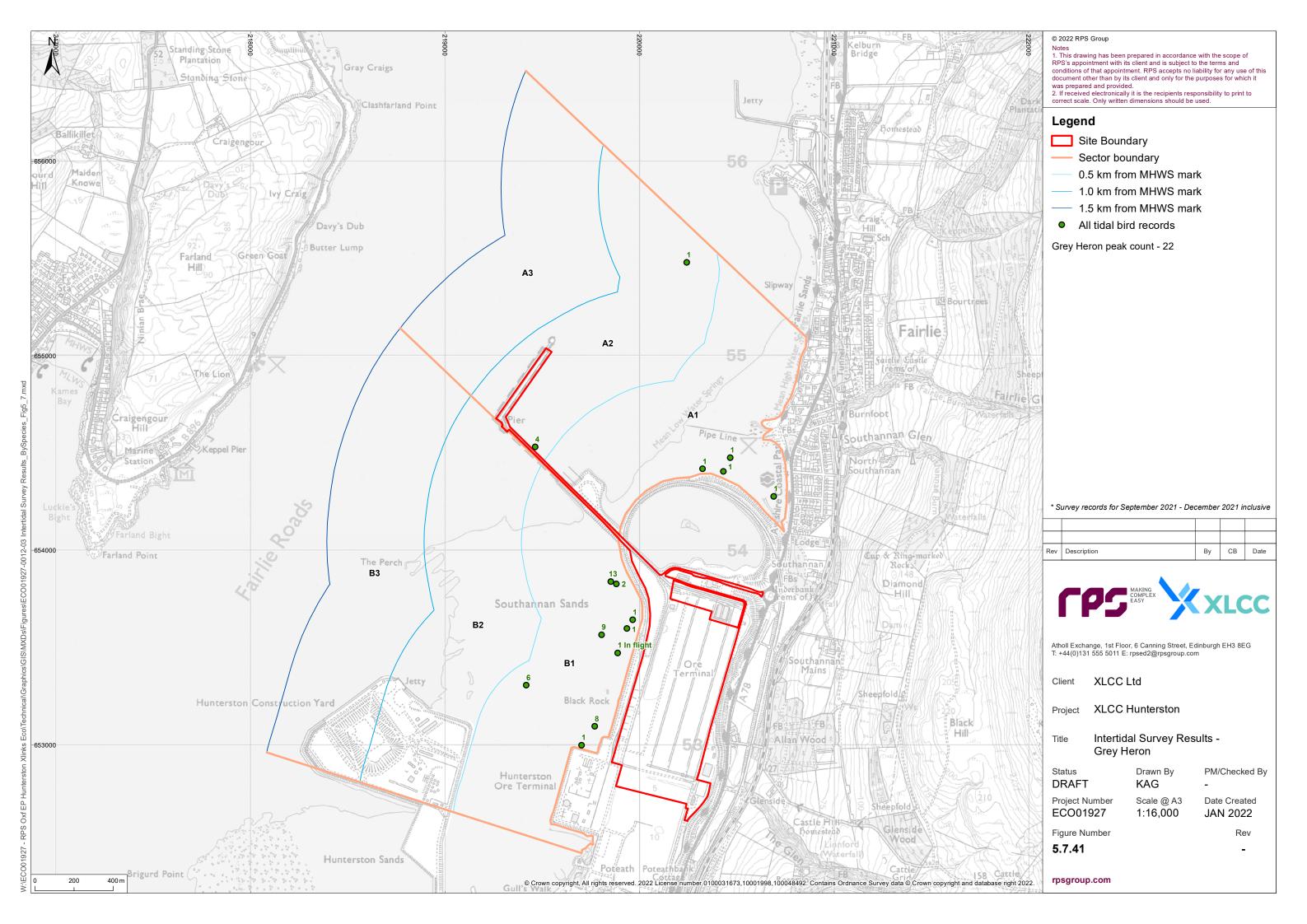


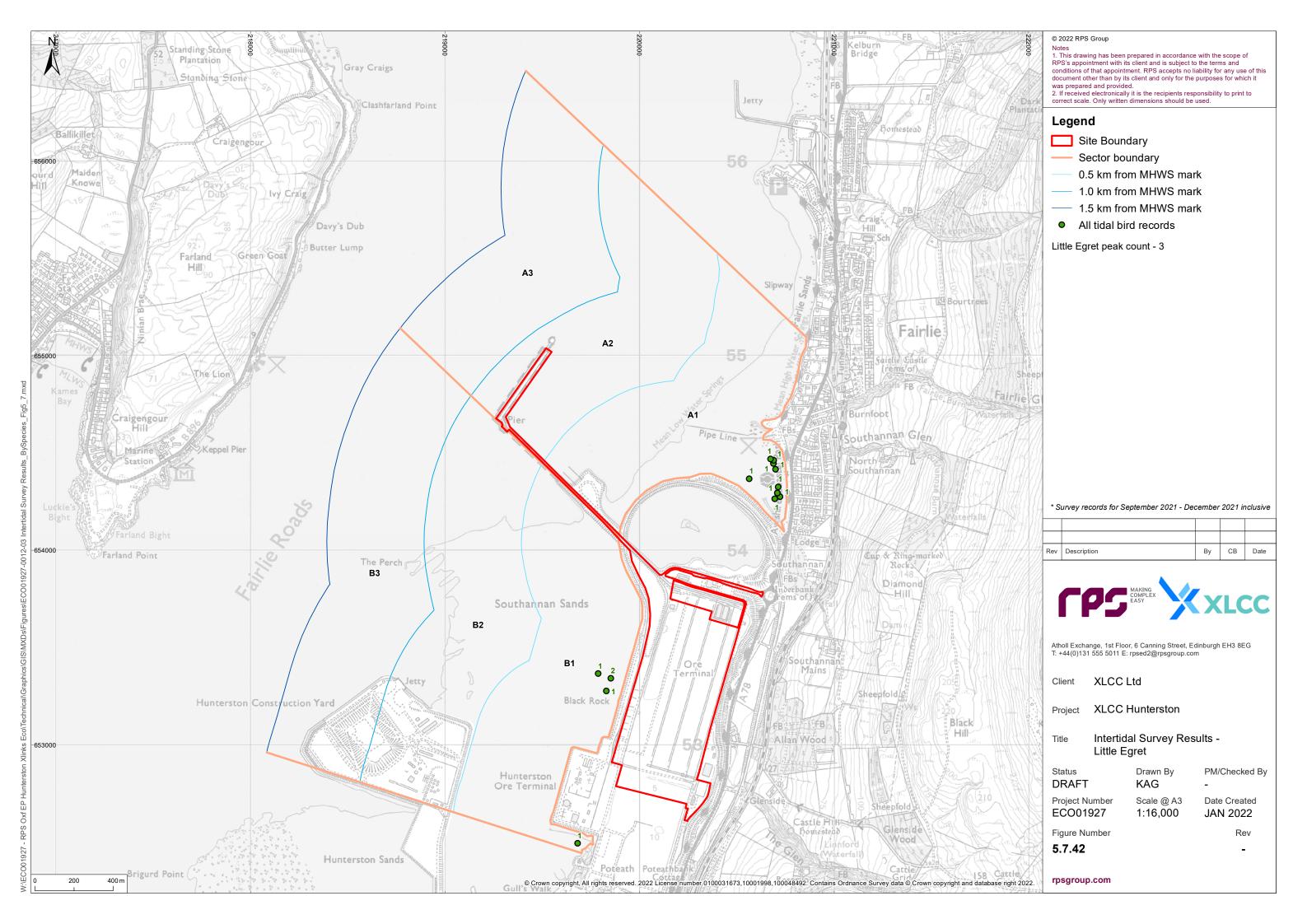


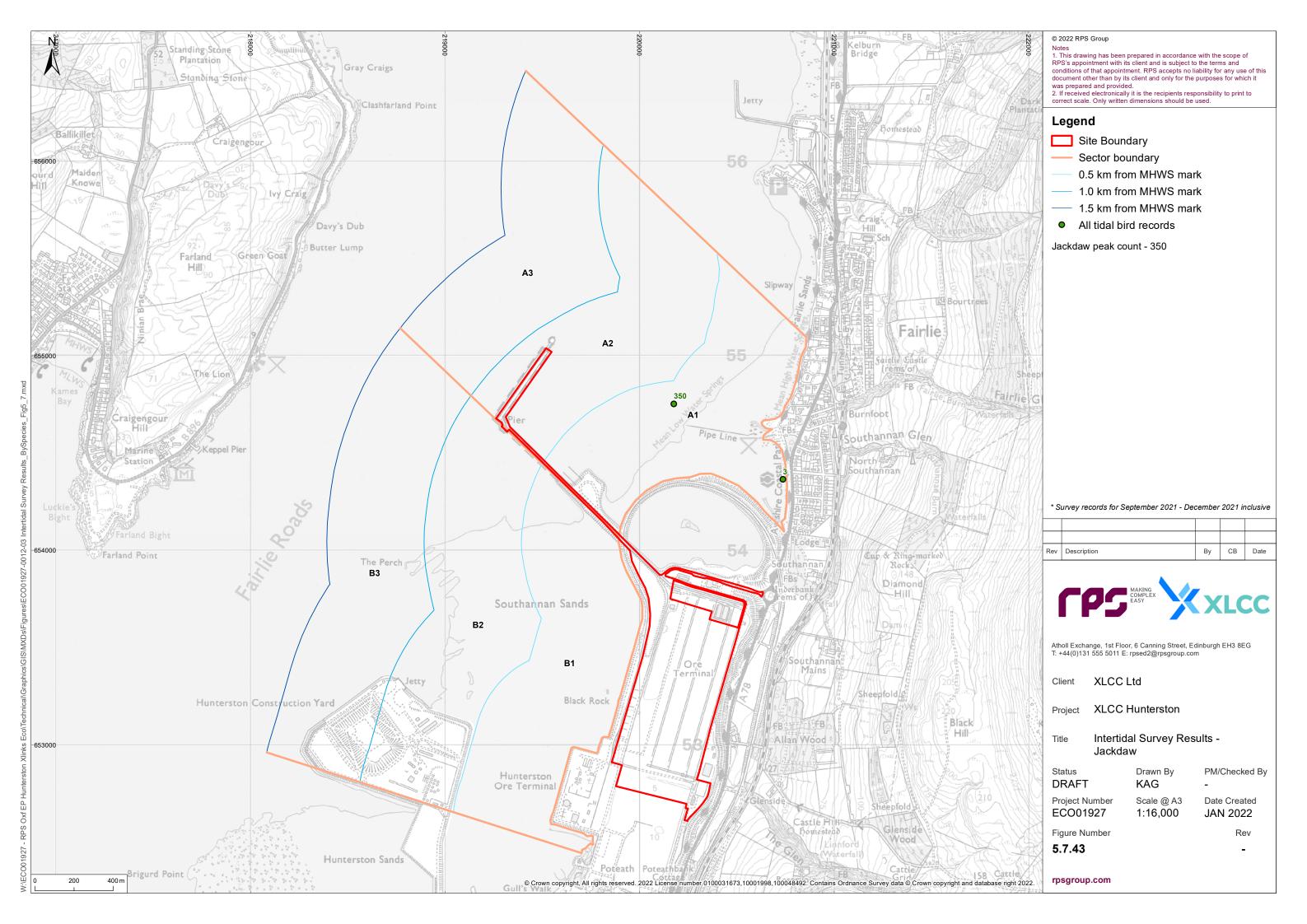


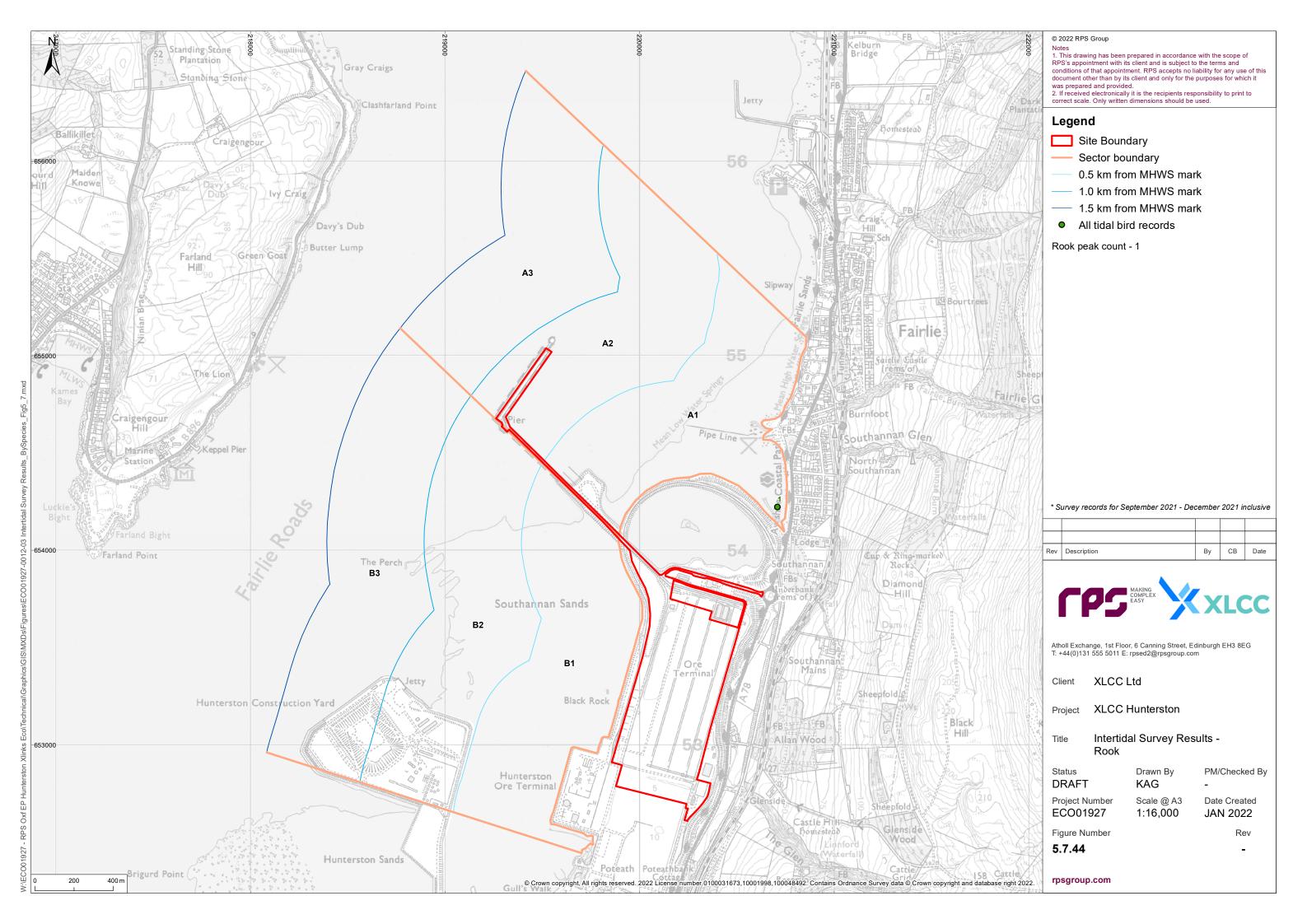


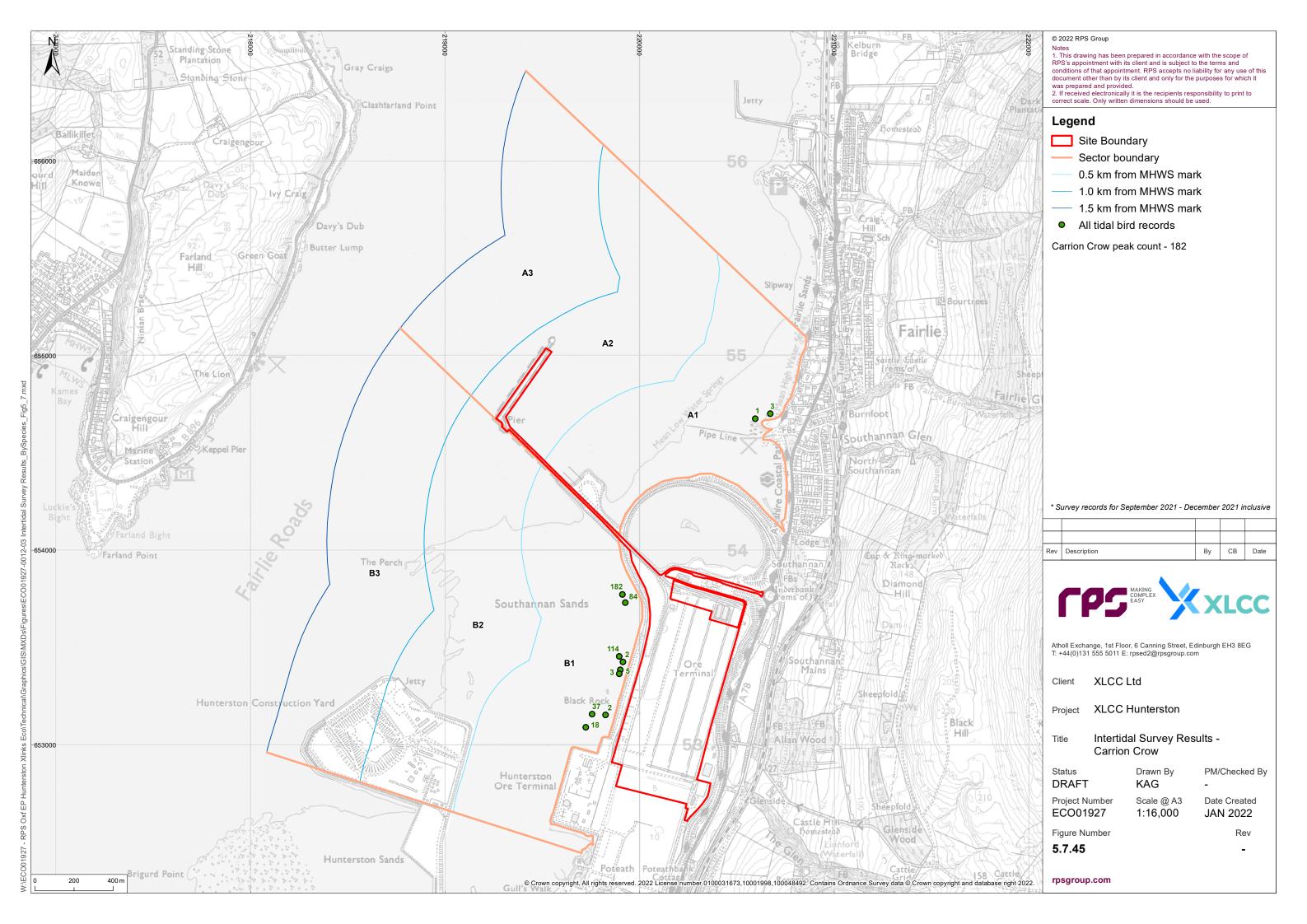


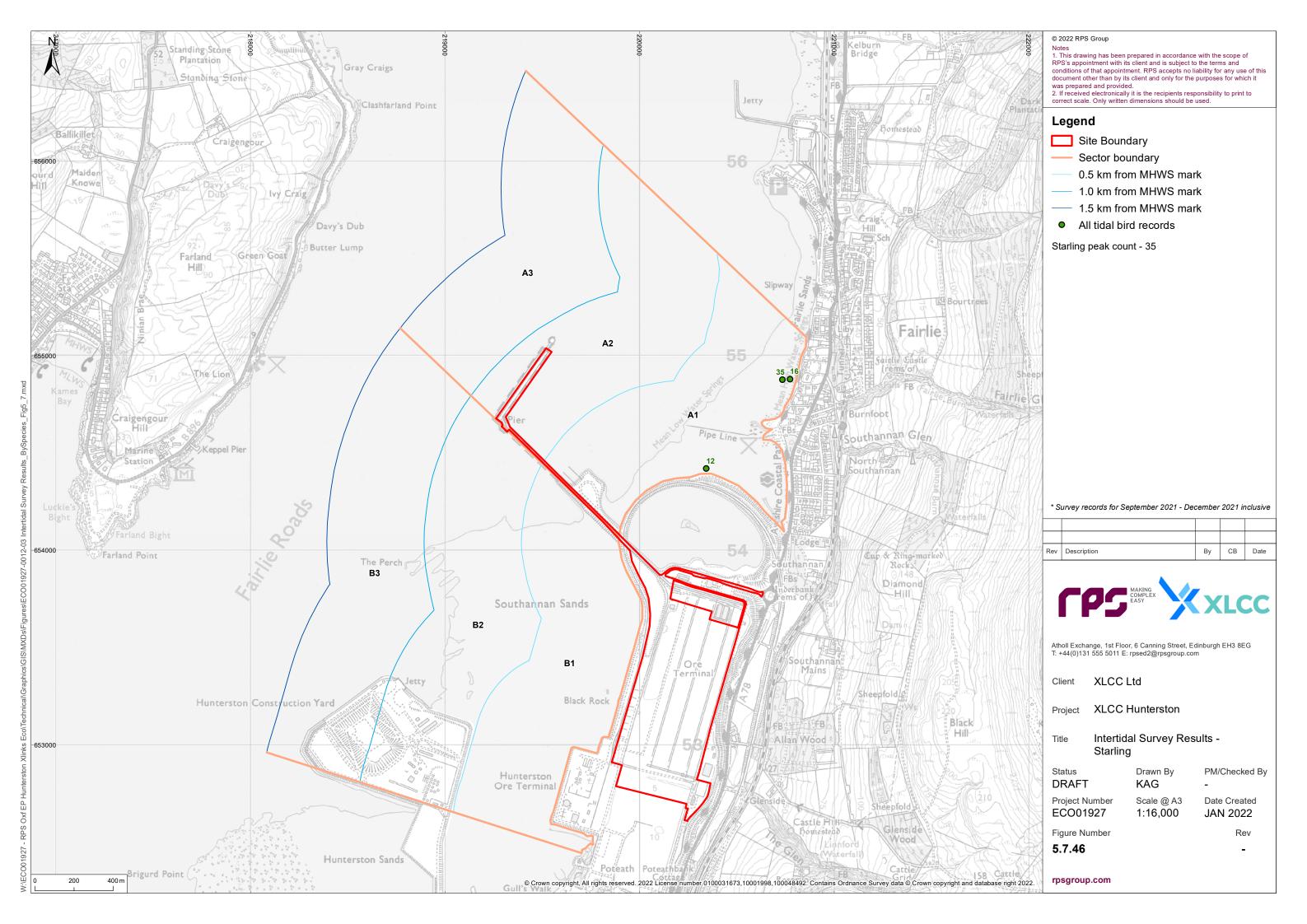


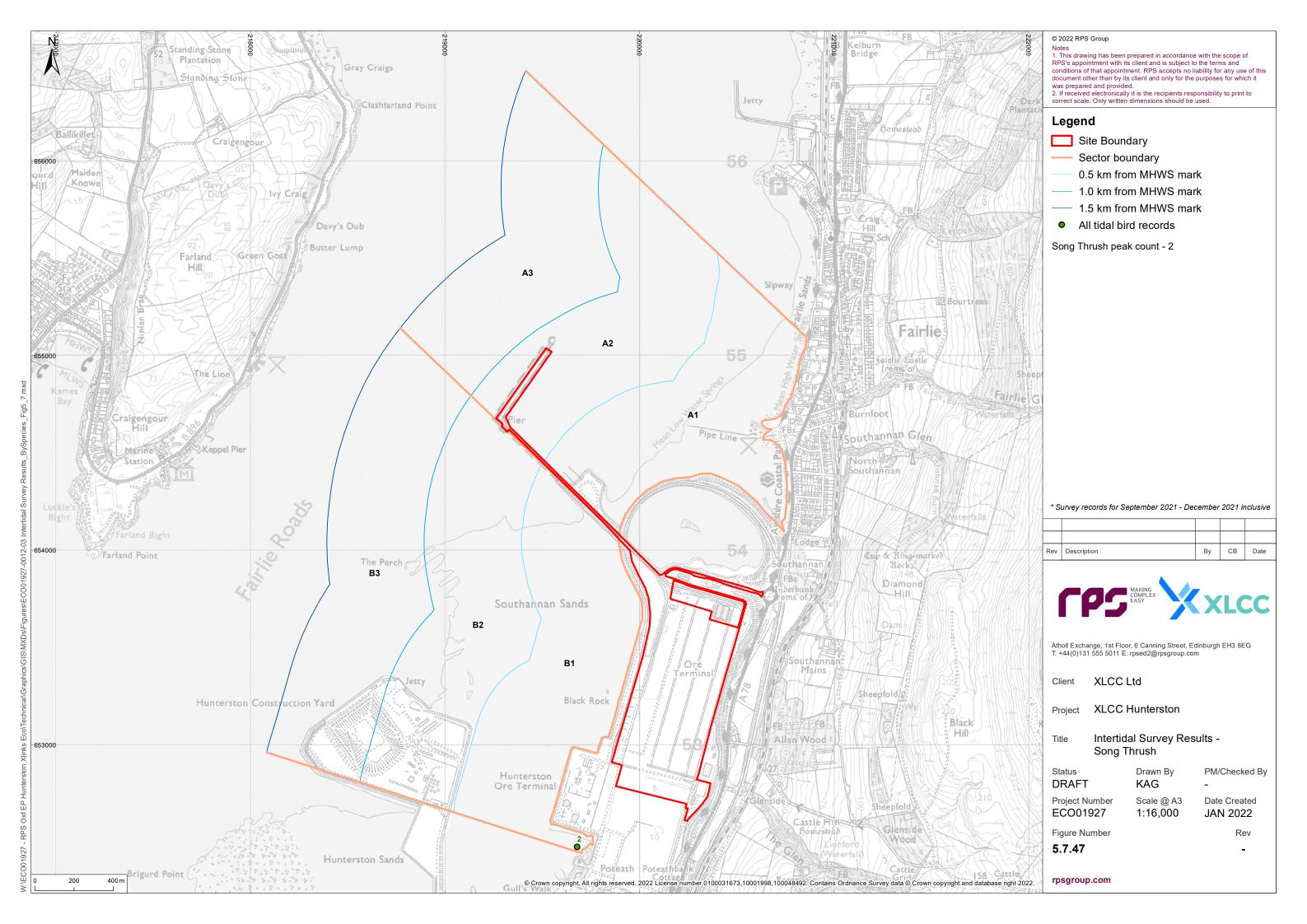


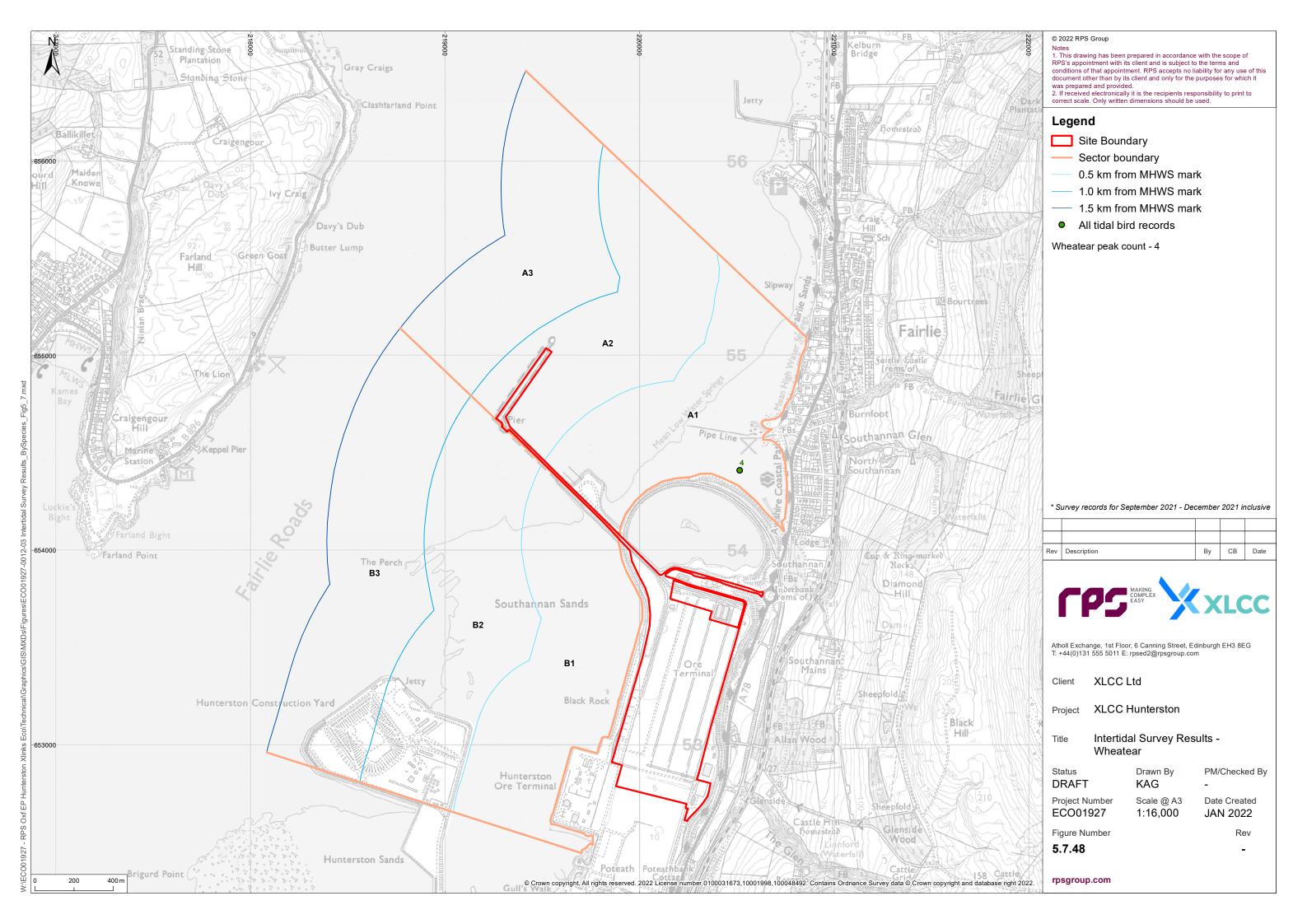


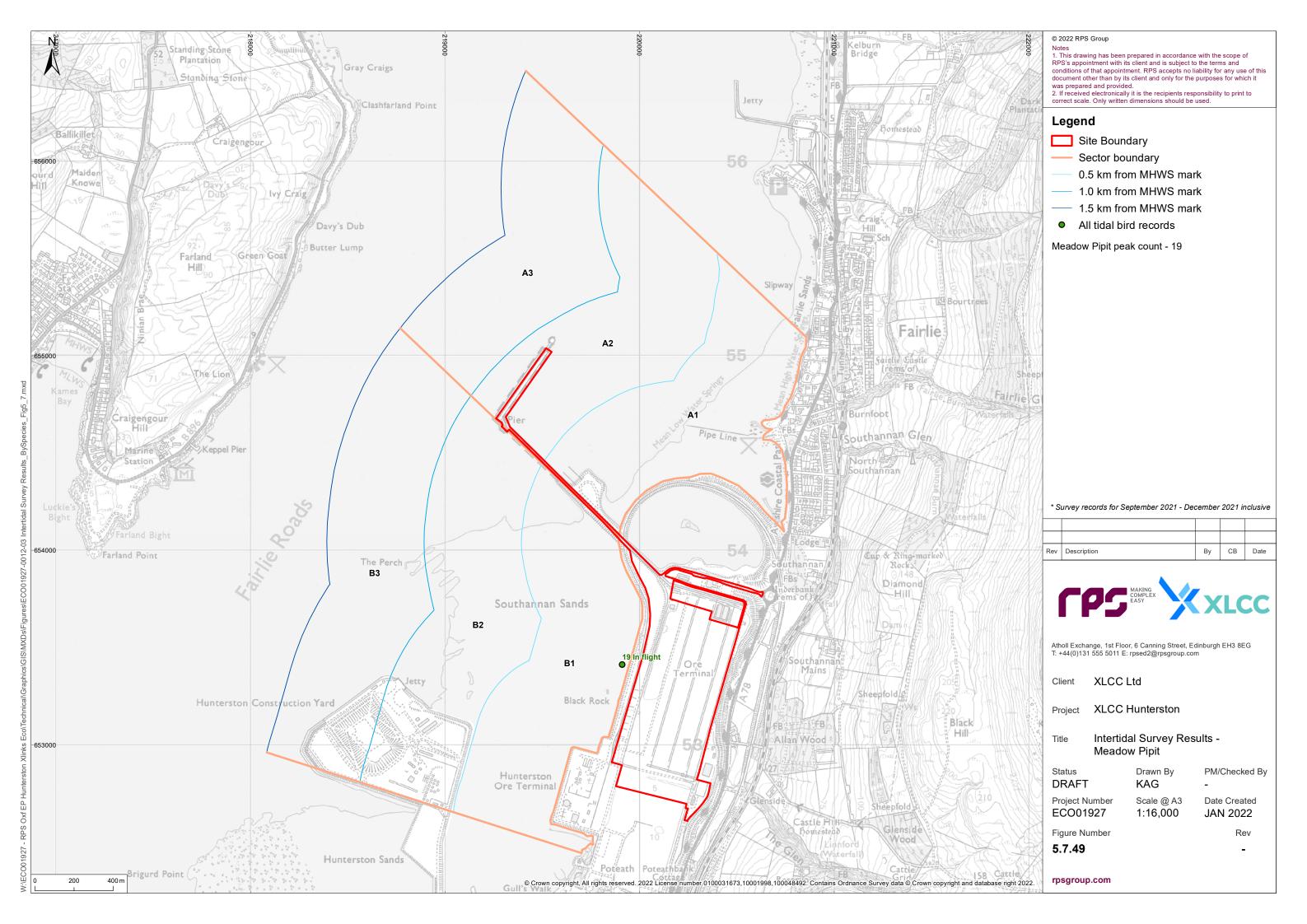














## Annex A

## Scientific Names of Bird Species Included in this Report

Brent goose Branta bernicla

Canada goose Branta canadensis

Mute swan Cygnus olor

Whooper swan Cygnus cygnus

Shelduck Tadorna tadorna

Gadwall Mareca strepera

Wigeon Mareca Penelope

Mallard Anas platyrhynchos

Pintail Anas acuta

Teal Anas crecca

Tufted duck Aythya fuligula

Eider Somateria mollissima

Common scoter Melanitta nigra

Goldeneye Bucephala clangula

Goosander Mergus merganser

Red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator* 

Great crested grebe Podiceps cristatus

Oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus

Lapwing Vanellus vanellus

Golden plover Pluvialis apricaria

Ringed plover Charadrius hiaticula

Whimbrel Numenius phaeopus

Curlew Numenius arquata

Bar-tailed godwit Limosa Iapponica

Knot Calidris canutus

Dunlin Calidris alpina

Jack snipe Lymnocryptes minimus

Snipe Gallinago gallinago

Redshank Tringa totanus

Greenshank Tringa nebularia

Black-headed gull Chroicocephalus ridibundus

Common gull Larus canus

## **XLCC CABLE FACTORY - HUNTERSTON**



Great black-backed gull Larus marinus

Herring gull Larus argentatus

Lesser black-backed gull Larus fuscus

Guillemot Uria aalge

Razorbill Alca torda

Black guillemot Cepphus grylle

Red-throated diver Gavia stellata

Great northern diver Gavia immer

Gannet Morus bassanus

Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo

Shag Gulosus aristotelis

Grey heron Ardea cinerea

Little egret Egretta garzetta

Hen harrier Circus cyaneus

Jackdaw Coloeus monedula

Rook Corvus frugilegus

Carrion crow Corvus corone

Starling Sturnus vulgaris

Song thrush *Turdus philomelos* 

Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe

Meadow pipit Anthus pratensis