

Fife quarry expansion plan ‘could face significant delay’ as independent report raises environment fears

Balmullo campaigners hope the findings will set the planning application back by at least a year.

By [Claire Warrender](#)

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Balmullo Quarry could double in size if a planning application is approved. Image: Fife planning portal.

Plans to double the size of a Fife quarry could hit rare birds and butterflies, an independent environmental report has found.

Edinburgh consultancy firm Sweco has concluded a study done by Balmullo Quarry owners Breedon is limited and possibly inaccurate.

And surveyors say there is not enough evidence to rule out significant environmental effects.



Campaigners fear for species living on Lucklaw Hill. Image: Supplied by Sally Northcott

Locals campaigning against the expansion plans have taken heart from the findings.

They hope Breedon will be asked to redo their initial study or even resubmit the entire planning application.

Sally Northcott, from the Save Lucklaw Hill Community Action Group, said: “This report sends the message that this is an important site for biodiversity and you won’t just be able to blow it up.

“It could mean a significant delay to the proposal.”

Fears for several species backed up by independent report

Breedon wants to expand the size of Balmullo Quarry by seven acres.

This would increase its lifespan by at least 20 years, allowing it to extract a further 3.2 million tonnes of aggregate.

However, [almost 250 people have submitted official objections](#) amid fears it would mean the loss of half of Lucklaw Hill.



Green hairstreak butterflies are among the rare species found on Lucklaw Hill. Image: Gillian Fyfe.

Breedon claims noise, dust and vibration from the expansion would not have a significant effect.

However, Sally says concerns it would affect several rare species are backed up by the new independent report.

Fife Council commissioned the study after its own natural heritage officer declared an interest.

It found Lucklaw Hill is home to “a mosaic of inhabitants”.

Balmullo Quarry expansion plans could face ‘significant delay’

It concludes a butterfly study should have been carried out over several months rather than weeks.

It also finds a survey of breeding birds is limited given the size of the development.

A peregrine falcon nesting site could be lost, while a proposed buffer to protect pine martens should be extended.

The report continues: “The loss of habitats is not suitably mitigated.”



Sally Northcott, second left, and fellow campaigners hope the Balmullo Quarry expansion will see a delay. Image: Finn Nixon/DC Thomson

Sally told The Courier: “This is really, really good news.

“It’s significant because they can’t redo nesting surveys in autumn or winter.

“They’ll have to wait until spring and summer, which means next year.

“We are talking about a significant delay.”

The Balmullo quarry campaigners have also applied to Government agency NatureScot to [designate Lucklaw Hill as a Site of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\)](#).

If successful, it would become a criminal offence to damage the area.

“They’re in the early stages of looking at it and we’re hoping any delay will buy the time needed for them to make a decision, said Sally.

[The full Balmullo Quarry planning application can be found here.](#)