



Reptile & Amphibian Survey and Mitigation Plan

Land at Former Tirbach Washery, Ystallyfera,
Neath Port Talbot

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Summary

I & G Ecological Consulting Ltd were commissioned to undertake an updated Reptile and Amphibian Survey on land at Tirbach Washery near Ystallyfera, Neath Port Talbot, (see Fig. 1). The survey was undertaken on the section of land within the current LDP (H1/31) and is part of a larger area of the former washery (edged yellow, see Fig. 2) the whole of which covers an area of approximately 11 hectares in size, on the north-eastern edge of Ystallyfera, in the Upper Swansea Valley.

The land within the larger site boundary (edged yellow, see Fig. 2), consists predominantly of previously developed land, colonised by a mixed scrub and ephemeral/short perennial vegetation, with large areas of hardstanding and bare ground with broad-leaved woodland forming a central belt and a riparian corridor along the eastern boundary. Drainage ditches, ephemeral standing water were present during the PEA undertaken in March 2019 and the updated PEA in July 2026.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 I & G Ecological Consulting Ltd were commissioned by the Landowner to undertake an updated Reptile and Amphibian Survey in connection with a proposed planning application to develop the site for residential unit
- 1.2 The site lies on the periphery of the Ystallyfera in the administrative county of Neath Port Talbot. The proposed site for the new development is an area of previously developed land, bounded by the River Twrch. The site is approximately 4 hectares.
- 1.3 This report is being produced following a request for a Reptile and Amphibain Survey by the LPA Ecologist for NPT as part of the planning application.
- 1.4 This report provides a summary of the reptile survey undertaken between July and August 2026 includes recommendations on any ecological constraints/opportunities associated with development at the site.

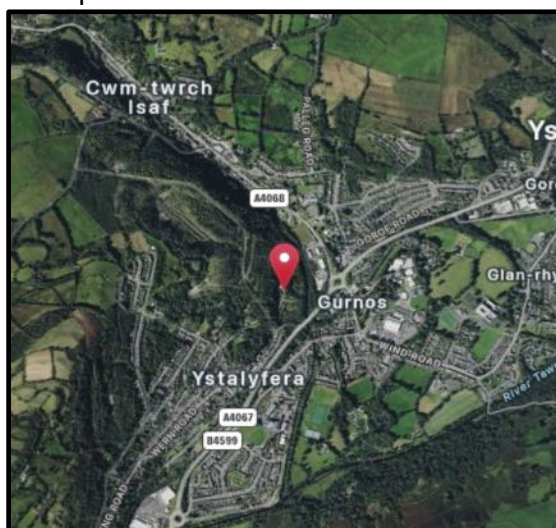


Figure 1. Location of site Grid Ref: SN 77145 09450

2. Regulatory & Planning Framework

- 2.1 All terrestrial native reptiles are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are protected under Section 9 of the Act.
- 2.2 Reptiles are protected (under Section 9 of the Act), against intentional killing, injury and taking. The Act also prohibits selling, offering for sale, possessing or transporting for the purpose of sale or publishing advertisement to buy or sell.
- 2.3 Where any works would affect Reptile and Amphibian species, appropriate mitigation measures would be required to prevent killing or injury.
- 2.4 The legislation covers all life stages. Eggs, juveniles and adults are covered equally by the legislation.
- 2.5 Under the Planning Policy Wales PPW12, the presence of any Protected Species (which includes Common Toad and all reptile species) need to be considered as part of the planning process.
- 2.6 Environment Act (Wales) 2016. This Act has replaced the section 40 duty in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act 2006), in relation to Wales, and applies to those authorities that fell within the previous duty. It came into force in May 2016.
- 2.7 Section 6 of the Act places a duty on public authorities to 'seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity' so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions. In so doing, public authorities must also seek to 'promote the resilience of ecosystems'. Under Section 6 public authorities will be required to report on the actions they are taking to improve biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience
- 2.8 Section 7 of the Act places a duty on public authorities to take steps to maintain and enhance biodiversity. This section replaces the duty in section 42 of the NERC Act 2006. The Section 7 Priority Species under this act is a list of the living organisms of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in relation to Wales. The Section 7 Priority Habitats is a list of the habitats of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in relation to Wales.

3. Habitat Description

- 3.1 The site is located on the periphery of existing housing off Tirbach Road and is separated from the residential area and business premises of Lower Cwmtwrch by the Afon Twrch.
- 3.2 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (I&G Ecological Consulting March 2019 & updated 2026) noted the presence of a number of features making the site potentially suitable for Reptiles and Amphibians. Habitats include dense and scattered scrub, ephemeral water bodies, woodland edge and ephemeral/short perennial vegetation developing on gravelly substrate. Where vegetation is more established, grassland is developing.
- 3.3 There is evidence to suggest that the site is subject to disturbance from off-road bikes/scramblers and dog walkers; well-worn bike trails, temporary ramps, and dog fouling.
- 3.4 The site possessed a number of features suitable for reptile and amphibian habitation. These features were mainly concentrated around the edge of the site, while potential basking sites such as concrete hard-standings and gravelled/spoil areas were more central.

3.4.1 Features include:

- Stone walls
- Scrub
- Woodland edge
- Piles of discarded materials
- Ephemeral water/drainage ditches

See Appendix 10

- 3.5 The site is a mosaic of habitats covering around 4ha, but only 1.5ha was considered to be suitable for use by reptiles. The aerial image below shows that there are further areas spoil-heap habitats to the west. See Fig 2 below.



Figure 2: Approximate site boundary.

4. Survey Methodology

- 4.1 **The impact of the proposed development is considered to be high as it constitutes habitat destruction and removal as well as the potential for direct killing.**
- 4.2 Therefore, in order to confirm which species are present, a Presence/Absence survey was chosen. Additionally, as the proposed development is of considerable size, a Population Size Class estimate was considered useful; to inform the mitigation which would be necessary should reptiles & amphibians be present in good number. This survey methodology has been based on the Natural England Technical Information Note TIN102 - Reptile Mitigation Guidelines (2011). A Presence/Absence survey being the initial approach, together with a Population Size Class estimate.
- 4.3 In order to undertake the Presence/Absence survey a combined approach was taken: Direct Observation Survey (DOS), existing refuge survey (ERS) and Artificial refuge survey (ARS) were carried out during each visit.
- 4.4 DOS involved walking slowly around the site and watching for moving or basking reptiles, particularly around edge habitats, debris such as fallen wood and areas of quality grassland. ERS was carried out by lifting items such as logs and discarded waste items.
- 4.5 ARS Standard methodology involved the deployment and subsequent checking of artificial refugia (0.5 x 0.5 m squares of corrugated roofing material Onduline). A total of 80 refugia sheets were deployed (on 15th July) within potentially suitable habitat, the majority being in the areas shown at Fig. 4, placed at approximately 7-10m apart throughout the development site

5. Survey Results

A total of 7 visits were made during optimal conditions (sufficient temperature, dry, with little or no breeze) between the 17th July and 3rd August 2026. No Reptiles or Amphibians were observed during the Artificial Refugia checks. No reptiles or amphibians were seen during any of the Direct Observation Surveys or Existing Refuge Surveys. See Appendix 1 for table of results.

5.1 Interpretation of Results

No reptile or amphibian species were observed; however, habitat is considered to be suitable for reptiles and amphibians. A reptile and amphibian survey in 2019 found Amphibians; Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*) and Toad (*Bufo bufo*), and mammals; Wood mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) and Common Shrew (*Sorex araneus*) on site.

Prey abundance was high and consisted of a variety of invertebrates such as grasshoppers, woodlice, spiders, beetles and day flying moths.

Other species:

No other species were observed under sheets during the surveys.

* Using Table 9 of **Natural England Technical Information Note TIN102 Reptile mitigation guidelines**

6. Mitigation & Enhancement Measures

- 6.1 Although the survey did not record the presence of Reptiles or Amphibians, it is advised that a Precautionary Approach be taken. Amphibians and small mammals were recorded in a previous survey report in 2019. The Amphibian species on site are afforded varying levels of protection under current wildlife legislation (including WCA 1981 as amended, NERC 2016 and PPW12). Therefore, it is advisable to consider safeguarding them during site clearance, and throughout the development of the site. Mitigation methods below will also help safeguard any reptiles that are on site.
- 6.2 It is advised that mitigation measures are employed to ensure that Amphibians and Reptiles on site are protected during the development phase from killing, injury and capture within suitable terrestrial habitats within the site. In the absence of mitigation, Amphibians/Reptiles could possibly be trapped within excavations and subsequently killed when they are filled, or utilise spoil piles for refuge and hibernation purposes and subsequently be injured or killed.
- 6.3 **Mitigation for loss of habitat will include re-instatement of pond or creation of replacement pond, or a series of smaller ponds across the site. The design and position of these features must be worked in tandem with the SARBS/SUDS layout plan, together with retention of a selection of vegetated areas/features suitable for Reptiles and Amphibians.**

- 6.4 Site Clearance – it is recommended that initial site clearance in respect of features such as rubbish piles, fallen logs, brash and other loose materials be undertaken by hand. This should be only be carried out during the active season* on days which are suitable (i.e. suitable temperature, dry, no wind) and so the on-call ecologist is best placed to determine if the conditions are optimal. This clearance process should be supervised by an ecologist and any animals found during the clearance should be moved to safety in approved method, following current good practice guidelines. *(approximately February – October but will vary according to weather conditions and temperature).
- 6.5 Any reptiles or amphibians found during the works shall be carefully relocated to suitable habitat retained within the site, (or land adjacent if in same ownership), utilising suitable container and suitably experienced personnel. The container will comprise good ventilation, a secure lid and plenty of bulky vegetation such as leaves/bark. Best practice methods will be used as outlined within Herpetofauna Workers Manual (JNCC, 2003).
- 6.6 A destructive search of the site, in the presence of an ecologist, will then be undertaken if considered appropriate*. The first few centimetres of undisturbed areas of ground will be scraped up with the ecologist present to rescue any individual reptiles/amphibians found. This will be undertaken during periods of warm and dry weather (when reptiles are likely to be active). * if site becomes more suitable in the interim (between this survey report and proposed site clearance date).
- 6.7 A toolbox talk will be provided to all construction workers, as part of regular toolbox talks in respect of ecological protection.
- 6.8 All excavations to be covered at night to prevent trapping of animals. Where impractical to cover, ramps/planks to be positioned with excavation to allow egress of animals.
- 6.9 In the unlikely event that Great Crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is found or suspected, all works will stop immediately, and the acting ecologist contacted for advice.
- 6.10 At post-construction phase/landscaping, suitable "open" type fencing such as chain-link or close-board but with gap underneath which will allow free-movement of Reptiles, Amphibians and other animals between retained habitat and existing adjacent habitat and the wider environs.

7. Enhancement

7.1 Recommended Ecological enhancement measures for Amphibians/Reptiles will include:

- Creation of at least 2 reptile and amphibian refugia and hibernacula – log, rock and turf pile within areas of retained habitat. (See Appendix 2). The design details and position of refugia and any grassland/habitat retention will need to be finalised and agreed once a Proposed Site Layout has been made available.
- Creation of pond/ponds suitable for Amphibians, again designed in tandem with SARBS/SUDS requirements.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1** The mitigation and enhancement at the site have been designed following best practice measures but will need to be finalised and agreed with LPA Ecologist once a Development Layout is available. During the initial preparation and subsequent development of the site, any reptiles/amphibians found will be relocated to suitable retained habitat within the site. Suitable fencing will ensure that retained habitat remains connected to adjacent land and there will be no fragmentation effects upon any displaced reptiles/amphibians. Ecological enhancements will be factored into any site design, and work in tandem with the SARBS requirement.

9. References

Beebee, T. C, & Griffiths, R A. (2000). Amphibians and Reptiles. A Natural History of the British Herpetofauna.

Foster, J. (2011). Natural England Technical Information Note TIN102. Reptile mitigation guide lines.

Gent, Tony & Gibson, Steve. 2012. Herpetofauna Workers' Manual

Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland. Evaluating Local Mitigation/Translocation Programmes : Maintaining best practice and lawful standards.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

The National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 (NPPF)

10. Survey Images



11. Appendices

Survey Results Table

Survey	Date	Weather	Rep/Amph Found
1	17 th July 2026	Dry, sunny, no wind, 20° C	None
2	21 st July 2026	Dry, sunny, no wind, 20° C	None
3	22 nd July 2026	Dry, cloudy, light wind, 19° C	None
4	23 rd July 2026	Dry, sunny, no wind, 20° C	None
5	24 th July 2026	Dry, sunny, no wind, 19° C	None
6	30 th July 2026	Dry, partly cloudy, no wind, 17° C	None
7	3 rd August 2026	Dry, cloudy, light breeze, 20° C	None

Table 1. Survey Data at Tirbach Washery site 2026

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Advice in this report is based on the judgement of I&G Ecological Consulting and the interpretation of data gathered during the course of their survey on the property named in this document.

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