MARGAM SUBSTATION

Hedgerows Regulations Assessment

Laing O'Rourke

2488240-D21 (01)

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EXPERTS IN ECOLOGY

General Notes

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Where field investigations have been carried out, these have been restricted to a level of detail required to achieve the stated objectives of the work.

This work has been undertaken in accordance with the quality management system of RSK Biocensus.

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Executive Summary

1. This report presents the results of a Hedgerows Regulations Assessment commissioned by Laing O'Rourke in relation to works at Margam Substation, near Port Talbot.
2. The project requires the removal of 40 m of hedgerow to facilitate access to the BOC land from Heol Caer Bont.
3. An ecological survey and assessment in relation to the 'Wildlife and Landscape' criteria of the Hedgerows Regulations were carried out by RSK Biocensus in April 2026.
4. One hedgerow was assessed against the 'Wildlife and Landscape' criteria of The Hedgerows Regulations 1997, to determine its 'importance'.
5. The hedgerow determined <u>not</u> to be 'important' under these criteria.

   Note: The 'Archaeology and History' criteria of The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 have not yet been assessed but will be addressed by a separate assessment (Headland Archaeology, in prep).

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1 Introduction

1.1.1 RSK Biocensus was commissioned by Laing O'Rourke to provide a Hedgerows Regulations Assessment to inform the removal of a 40 m section of hedgerow within BOC land at Margam Substation, near Port Talbot. The section of hedgerow must be removed to provide access from Heol Caer Bont for the proposed installation of an underground cable.

1.1.2 Under The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 it is against the law, with certain exceptions, to remove or destroy 'important' hedgerows without permission from the local planning authority. 'Important' hedgerows are those that meet criteria, as set out in the Regulations.

1.1.3 This document reports the findings of an assessment of the 'Wildlife and Landscape' criteria (as defined by The Hedgerows Regulations 1997, Schedule 1 Part II Sections 6, 7 & 8), which are used to determine whether the hedgerow qualifies as being 'important'.

1.1.4 It should be noted that the 'Archaeology and History' criteria (The Hedgerows Regulations 1997, Schedule 1 Part II Sections 1-5) have not been assessed; but these will be assessed and presented in a separate report (Headland Archaeology, in prep.).

2 Methods

2.1 Desk study

2.1.1 A search was made for relevant habitat and species data from the following ecological reports prepared for this project and for other recent development projects at the nearby Tata steelworks:

- *Margam Substation – Ecological impact assessment report* (Stantec UK, 2025)
- *Margam Substation – Wintering birds survey report* (RSK Biocensus (2025)
- *Electric Arc Furnace – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal* (RSK Biocensus, 2024a)
- *Electric Arc Furnace – Dormouse Survey Report* (RSK Biocensus, 2024b)

2.1.2 Each of these reports were based on empirical field data, and/or local environmental records purchased via the Southeast Wales Biodiversity Records Centre.

2.1.3 The documents were searched for records of protected and priority species on the hedgerow. In accordance with the Regulations, these were records from the last five years (animals) or ten years (plants), and comprised species listed in or categorised by:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 1 (birds), Schedule 5 (animals) or Schedule 8 (plants)
- Birds of conservation concern (declining breeders) – this included 'red' and 'amber' listed species from the most-recent UK Birds of Conservation Concern report (Stanbury, et al., 2021)
- Or any species listed as 'endangered', 'extinct', 'rare', or 'vulnerable' in:
  – *Vascular Plants* (Perring et al 1983)
  – *Insects* (Shirt, 1987)

– *Invertebrates other than insects* (Bratton (1991)
– *Stoneworts* (Stewart & Church, 1992)

2.1.4 A search for the presence of the hedgerow in historic Ordnance Survey maps and historic Google Earth satellite imagery was also made.

2.2 Field survey

2.2.1 A field survey was carried out on 20 April 2026 by a surveyor certified to Field Identification Skills Certificate (FISC) Level 4.

2.2.2 Surveys followed the methods set out in the Hedgerow Survey Handbook (Defra, 2007). This required surveying samples objectively, starting 30 m from one end of the hedgerow, collecting a 30 m sample then leaving a 30 m gap before starting the next 30 m sample. The entire length of the hedgerow which will be impacted, is required to be surveyed.

2.2.3 The following data was collected:

- Number of 'woody' species (those listed in Schedule 3 of the Regulations) within the 30 m sample sections
- Number and length of any gaps
- Presence of banks, walls, ditches and other hedgerows
- Presence number and spacing of standard trees
- Adjacent land use such as bridleways and public footpaths
- The proximity of ecological features such as ponds, woodlands or parallel hedgerows.
- The presence and abundance of ground flora listed on Schedule 2 of the Regulations
- Evidence of use by animal species, in particular protected species.

2.3 Assessment

2.3.1 An assessment of 'importance' was made using the data collected. To qualify as 'important', a hedgerow must satisfy one (or more) of the criteria set out in the Regulations (Schedule 1 Part II). For 'Wildlife and Landscape', these include consideration of the number of 'woody' species, the number of 'features, and the presence of certain 'special' or protected species of plant or animal.

2.4 Limitations

2.4.1 It is possible that species referred to in Schedule 1 Part II of the Regulations may not have been visible within sampled sections, but may have been present elsewhere. Therefore, it is possible that factors that would deem the hedgerow as 'important' may have been missed.

3 Results

3.1 Desk study

3.1.1 The hedgerow is believed to be more than 30 years old. Ordnance Survey map of 1952 appears to show a hedgerow at this location (but note: hedgerows were not specifically listed in the map legend); and aerial imagery from Google Earth shows a well- established hedgerow present in December 2006.

3.1.2 The following records of protected or priority species (i.e. species belonging to the categories stated in Schedule 1, Part II Section 7 of the Regulations) were obtained:

- Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula)* was recorded at the hedgerow during a wintering bird survey undertaken in November 2024 (RSK Biocensus, 2025). The bird was recorded perching on the hedgerow during the second of six, repeat survey visits; but it was not recorded there at any other time. The species is a bird of conservation concern, listed as 'Amber' (due to moderate breeding population decline over the longer term) in Stanbury, et al, (2021).

3.1.3 No records of other protected or priority species were known; and the hedgerow was not referred to in any record of such species held by Aderyn (the Biodiversity Information and Reporting Database of Local Environmental Records Centres Wales).

Note: The desk study found no records of hazel dormouse within 2 km of the site. A hazel dormouse survey undertaken on Tata Steel land between October 2021 and August 2022 concluded that the species was absent (RSK Biocensus, 2024b). The author notes that the hazel dormouse has been recorded to the north-east of Kenfig Hill; however, this lies approximately 6 km east of the site, and is separated from the site by the M4 motorway.

3.2 Field survey

3.2.1 The hedgerow subject to this assessment (identified as 'H1' **Figure 1**) was intact and unmanaged. It was 135 m in length, 2.5 m in height and 3.5 m in width. Two 30 m survey sections were identified, both overlap the section of hedgerow which is planned for removal.

3.2.2 Three different 'woody' species were identified throughout the sampled areas and only one standard tree was identified across the whole hedgerow length.

3.2.3 Three connection points were identified and gaps less than 10%.

3.2.4 A bank runs along the length of the hedgerow, with ditch adjacent for the entire length on one side. A public right of way was present adjacent to the hedgerow, and a parallel hedgerow was present within 15 m, on the opposite side.

3.2.5 No evidence of protected or priority species was observed during the survey.

3.2.6 Ground flora identified included *Geranium robertianum* (Herb Robert), *Sonchus* sp. (Thistle sp.), *Rubus fruticosus* (Bramble), *Holcus lanatus* (Yorkshire fog*), Phragmites australis* (Common reed), *Urtica dioica* (Common nettle), *Galium aparine* (Cleavers) and *Achillea millefolium* (Yarrow).

4 Evaluation

4.1.1 For a hedgerow to be determined to be 'important' in relation to the 'Wildlife and Landscape' criteria, it must have existed for 30 years or more *and* satisfy at least one of the criteria listed in Schedule 1 Part II of the Regulations.

4.1.2 The hedgerow has existed for 30 years or more.

4.1.3 The hedgerow did not contain protected or priority species. A record exists of one bullfinch (Amber list) perching at the hedgerow in November 2024. However, it is considered that the single bird perching on the hedgerow cannot meet the criteria for the hedgerow 'containing' the species, because there was no evidence for nesting or roosting, and it was not recorded there during any of the other survey visits carried out as part of the same survey.

4.1.4 Although the hedgerow was associated with a bank and with a ditch, it did not have gaps exceeding 10%, and a parallel hedgerow was present within 15 m, the hedgerow contained fewer than five woody species.

4.1.5 Although the hedgerow was adjacent to a footpath, it contained fewer than four woody species.

4.1.6 A summary of the assessment results is presented in **Table 1.**

5 Conclusion

5.1.1 With regard to the 'Wildlife and Landscape' criteria (as defined by The Hedgerows Regulations 1997, Schedule 1 Part II paragraphs 6, 7 & 8), the hedgerow identified as 'H1' on **Figure 1** is <u>not</u> classified as 'important'.

Note: The 'Archaeology and History' criteria of The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 have not yet been assessed but will be addressed by a separate assessment (Headland Archaeology, in prep).

Table 1 Hedgerows Regulations Assessment Results

Hedgerow measurements			
Length			135.0 m
Average width			3.5 m
Average height			2.5 m
'Woody' Species			
Survey section	**S1**	**S2**	
Crataegus monogyna (Hawthorn)	x	x	
Prunus spinosa (Blackthorn)	x	x	
Rosa sp. (Rose sp.)	x		
Total	**3**	**2**	
Average number of Schedule 3 (woody) species per 30 m (not including special (woody) species)			**3**
Number of special (woody) species present			**0**
Associated features along the hedgerow length			
Bank or wall associated with >50%			Yes
Less than 10% gaps			Yes
≥1 standard tree, on average, per 50 m			No
At least 3 Schedule 2 (woodland) species within 1m from the hedgerow base			No
Ditch for >50% of hedgerow length			Yes
Four or more connection points (within 10 m, where a connection with a hedgerow scores 1 point and a connection with a pond or broad-leaved woodland scores 2 points)			No
Parallel hedge within 15 m			Yes
Number of Qualifying Associated Features			**4**
Protected species			
Presence of protected or notable species (in the last 5 years (animals) or 10 years (plants)			No
Additional features			
Adjacent to a footpath, bridleway, public path or byway			Yes
Assessment of "importance"			
(a) Has the hedgerow existed for 30 years or more?			Yes
(b) And does it satisfy one of the following Wildlife and landscape criteria?			No
Protected or notable species are present (in the last 5 years (animals) or 10 years (plants)			No
At least 7 woody species			No
At least 6 woody species with at least 3 qualifying associated features			No
At least 6 woody species including one of the qualifying woody species			No
At least 5 woody species with at least 4 qualifying associated features			No
At least 4 woody species, adjacent to a footpath, bridleway, public path or byway and with at least 2 qualifying associated features			No
If the answer is 'yes' to both questions (a) and (b) above, the hedgerow is 'Important'.			
Is hedgerow deemed as "important"?			**No**

References

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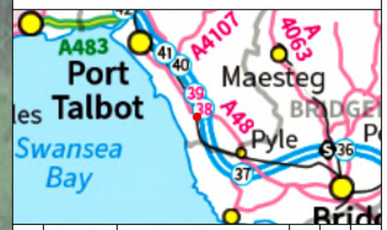
Figure 1 Hedgerows Regulations Assessment

Legend:

- Site Boundary
- Hedgerow
- Surveyed section of hedgerow
- Hedgerow removal section



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Margam Substation Port Talbot

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TITLE: Figure 1:

Hedgerows Regulations Assessment

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Metres
SCALE: 1:600 @ A3

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Hedgerow:
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