



9011M: THE TIP, COED DARCY, LLANDARCY, NEATH

TEHNICAL SUMMARY NOTE: ECOLOGY

Introduction

1. Ecology Solutions Limited have been commissioned to undertake ecological work on the Tip at Coed Darcy, Llandarcy, Neath (the Site), and to advise on emerging proposals.
2. It is understood that the proposals seek to remediate the Site through removal of topsoil and capping with clay substrate, followed by the creation and enhancement of a range of habitats to form part of the dedicated ecology area in the OPP.
3. This note serves to summarise the main ecological considerations for the Site, as identified through habitat and protected species surveys undertaken between 2020 and 2023. Full details of ecological considerations are shown in the Ecological Assessment (November 2023).
4. Where relevant, reference is made to proposed mitigation strategies to be implemented to address any potential constraint and ensure works can proceed in accordance with relevant legislation and policy.

Summary of Survey Findings

Designated Sites

5. The Tip lies adjacent to Crymlyn Bog Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Crymlyn Bog and Pant Y Sais National Nature Reserve (NNR) (all collectively referred to as Crymlyn Bog designated site complex) as shown on Plan ECO1. These sites are afforded strict legal protection.
6. The proposals will need to come forward with appropriate safeguards to protect adjacent designated sites. It is considered that relevant construction safeguards can be adopted to prevent harm, such as the prevention of direct land take, hydrological and air pollution, and lighting impacts.
7. It is recommended that the proposals come forward in accordance with a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), with this to detail specific working methodologies to safeguard these sensitive Receptors.

8. A portion of the site is also designated as Coed Darcy GCN Area SINC (as shown on Plan ECO1), which was formerly designated as a receptor site for historic GCN translocation activities. It is recommended that this area is also safeguarded from harm.

Habitats

9. The Tip supports a component of a wider habitat resource which is deemed to be of value at the local level. Habitats of heightened value includes areas of wet grassland and scrub, secondary woodland and vegetated waterbodies (as shown in Plan ECO2).
10. Notwithstanding the value of some of these habitats, they are not afforded any direct legal protection. There are no specific requirements identified at this stage for targeted construction safeguards or mitigation measures to be deployed as part of the remediation scheme.
11. It is noted that some habitats within the Site offer opportunities for protected species, as identified below full details can be found in the Ecological Assessment (2023).

Protected Species

12. Protected species surveys have identified or confirmed the likely presence of the following faunal species / assemblages within the Tip area:
 - Great Crested Newts (GCN) – Medium population Size (waterbody B)
 - Common Reptiles – small populations
 - Breeding / Nesting Birds
13. Information on the above species groups, as well as the broad mitigation requirements for these species are summarised below.

Breeding / Nesting Birds

14. A number of confirmed nesting bird species were recorded within the Tip area in 2020 (as shown in Plan ECO3). Species include (but not limited to) Bullfinch, Coot, Cetti's Warbler, Dunnock, Little Grebe, Reed Warbler, Sedge Warbler and Willow Warbler. The Site also supports a small number of Wintering Birds including Kingfisher, Teal and Tufted Duck.
15. Of relatively higher importance are the presence of Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler, given that these are qualifying bird species / assemblages on the adjacent Crymlyn Bog Designated Sites Complex. However, these species were predominantly recorded within the Coed Darcy GCN Area SINC which is to be fully retained as detailed in the proposals.
16. In addition, the wider Coed Darcy Site is known to support ground nesting bird species, and therefore their presence cannot be fully scoped out. It is recommended that works are undertaken outside of the main bird nesting season (March – August) or otherwise preceded by the completion of nesting bird checks by a suitably qualified ecologist.

17. It is considered that post-development the Site will form part of the dedicated ecology area as detailed in the OPP. Therefore, it is considered that the proposals can be delivered in a way that will enhance the current situation for a range of breeding, wintering and ground nesting bird species.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

18. GCN have been recorded within waterbody PB (as shown in Plan ECO4) with a peak count of 35, recorded in 2021, which indicates a medium population. In addition, ponds Proto 1 and Proto 2, were created in autumn 2022 to determine viability of future pond creation within the tip area, also found small populations of GCN.
19. Whilst it is proposed that the Proto ponds will be fully retained, waterbody PB and suitable terrestrial habitat will require destruction to facilitate the proposals. As such, a translocation exercise will be required within all areas with foreseeable impacts.

Overview of GCN Translocation Works

20. On receipt of planning permission, a NRW Protected Species Licence will be applied for to allow for the translocation of GCN from the Site into the Coed Darcy GCN Area SINC.
21. Subsequent clearance works (i.e. ground layer habitat removal as will be required for remediation) will likely need to be informed by a NRW Licence and be preceded by a minimum 60 day translocation exercise (as determined by medium population of GCN).
22. A licence would take NRW up to 40 days to review and approve. Regarding a translocation, the minimum 60 day timeframe accords with adopted best practice for translocating sites where a medium population of GCN is present. The 60 days is a minimum period. If periods of unsuitable weather are experienced (e.g., prolonged heat and drought, prolonged overnight frosts), or GCN continue to be recorded, a longer exercise will be required.
23. The 60 day exercise may only commence once appropriate herpetofauna fencing, pitfall traps and carpet tiles have been installed to facilitate the translocation. Given the size of the site, the installation of sufficient fencing (etc) can reasonably be expected to take between 2-4 weeks. It would be acceptable for a translocation to commence and finish on a staggered basis, as and when relevant 'compartments' of land are sufficiently fenced.
24. With reference to the historical presence of large numbers of GCN, it is considered prudent to allow for a buffer in trapping effort. A 75-day trapping period is recommended to be planned for on a precautionary basis.
25. Following the completion of the exercise, it is likely that localised areas will require a 'destructive search', with this overseen by an ecological clerk of works. It is recommended that ten days of oversight is allowed for.
26. Works associated with the translocation of GCN can only be undertaken in the amphibian active season. In general terms, this comprises the period of March – October, where weather conditions remain appropriate.

Reptiles

27. Sample surveys across the wider Coed Darcy site confirmed the presence of small reptile populations. Noting that suitable habitats are located within the Tip area, it is considered that reptiles are likely to be present in this area within suitable habitats, namely the grassland. This is supported by the 2021 survey results as a small number of Grass Snake and Common Lizard were recorded approximately 100m north-east of the Tip boundary in 2021.
28. Therefore, the grassland habitats within the Site can be expected to support small populations of common reptiles.
29. As for GCN above, a translocation exercise will be undertaken to facilitate remediation works. This translocation will be undertaken in tandem with that for GCN above. At this stage, it is anticipated that reptiles will be relocated to the same receptor area as identified in respect of GCN.
30. This exercise would likely comprise twice daily visits (morning and evening) for a minimum 30-day period during suitable weather conditions (>10C, dry) between March – October. This exercise could run concurrently with the GCN translocation.
31. Again, a degree of destructive search work is likely to be required.

Other Species

32. Detailed surveys of the Site and wider Coed Darcy site have not identified the presence or likely presence of any other protected species. It is however recommended that a walkover survey is conducted prior to commencement of works.

Discussion

33. Subject to following the recommendations as set out the Ecological Assessment (2023), the development proposals will fully safeguard the existing ecological interest of the Site. Where possible measures to enhance biodiversity value have been indicated within the Ecological Assessment (2023), with these giving regard to the setting of the Site, not least the proximity of the nearby Crymlyn Bog.
34. Based on the surveys undertaken, and the assessment for the presence and potential presence of protected species, due regard to the necessary measures to enhance the Application Site for such species have been put forward.
35. Noting the low value of the losses, and that in any event new landscaping and/or habitat management is proposed to off-set these impacts, and secure enhancements for the Site, no net losses of significance to biodiversity are predicted as part of the Proposals.

Summary and Conclusions

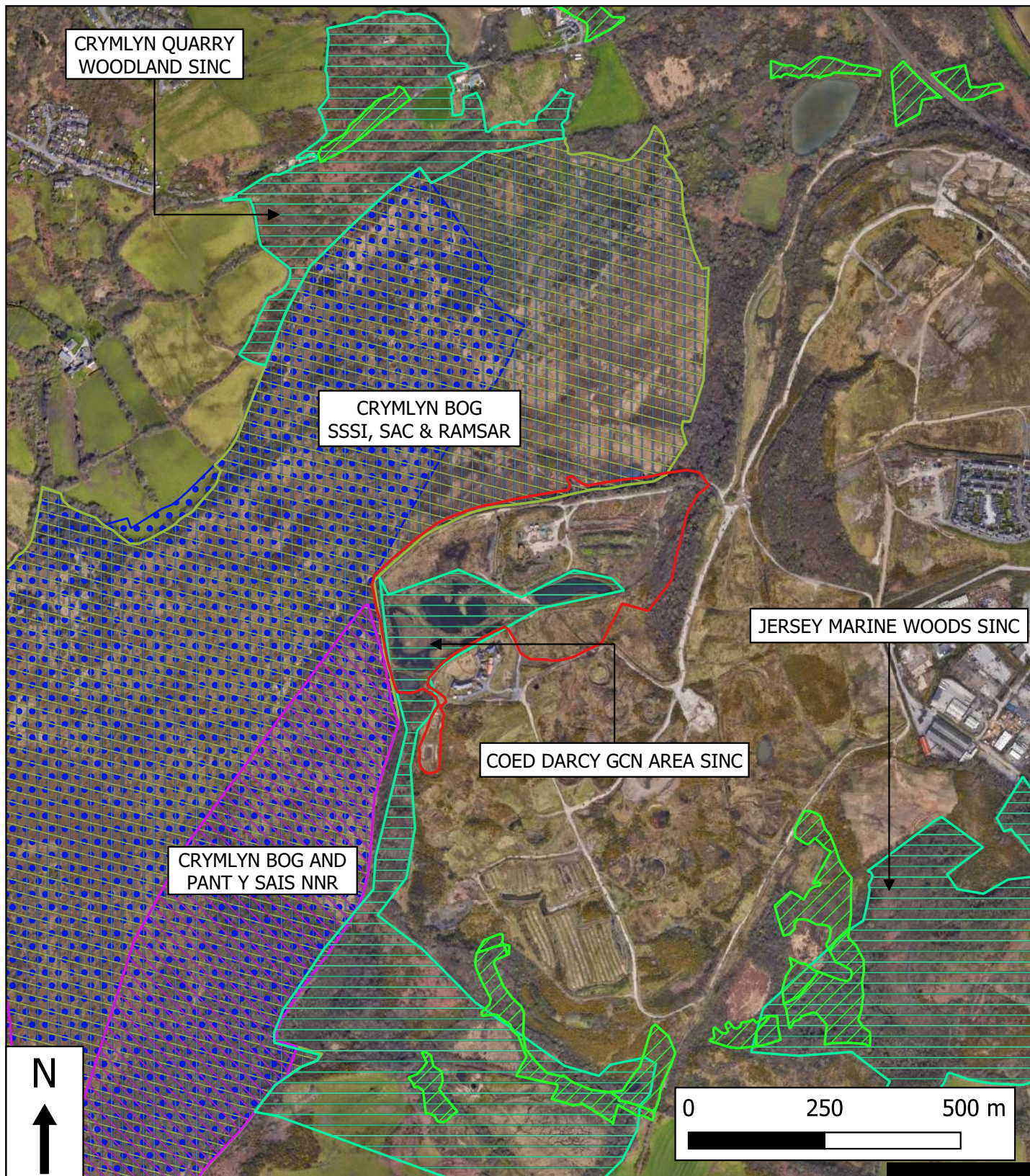
36. The Site is not identified to supports habitats of raised ecological significance, whilst opportunities for protected and notable faunal species are also limited with the exception of Great Crested Newts. On the basis of the emerging technical studies and assessments, it is considered potential adverse impacts on the nearby Crymlyn Bog designated sites complex can be avoided and indeed safeguarded (relevant to a no remediation scenario).

37. As such, it is concluded that the emerging proposals would not be likely to result in impacts of raised ecological significance in the local area. Where there is potential for ecological impacts to arise, appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures can be readily secured.
38. Noting the above, and subject to the adoption of measures set out in the Ecological Assessment (2023), it is considered that the emerging proposals may come forward in accordance with adopted legislation and planning policy insofar as this concerns matters of nature conservation.

PLANS

PLAN ECO1

Application Site Location
and Ecological Designations



Key:

- Application Site
- Ancient Semi-natural Woodland
- National Nature Reserve (NNR)
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Ramsar Site
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)



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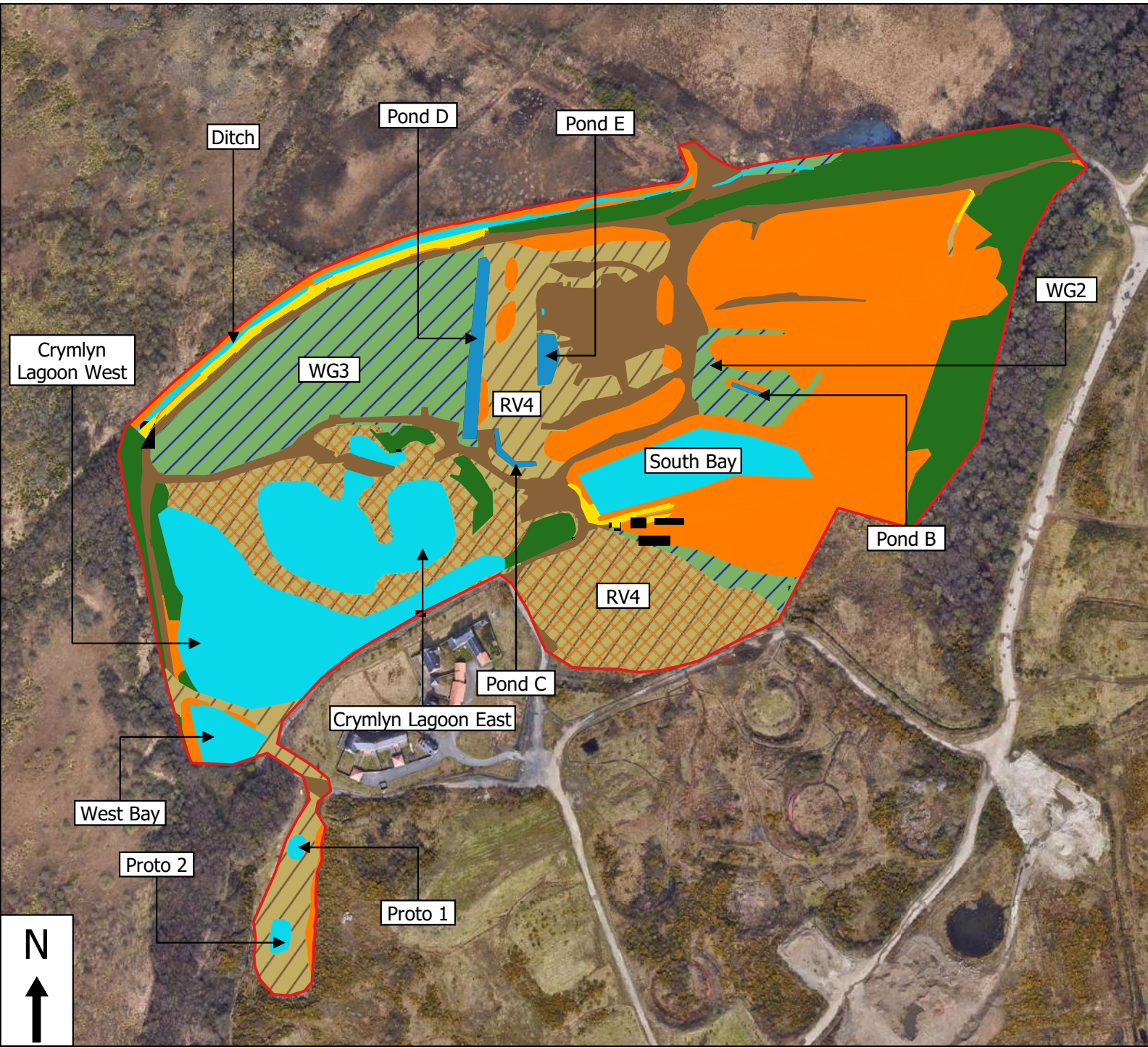
PLAN ECO1: APPLICATION
SITE LOCATION AND
ECOLOGICAL DESIGNATIONS

Rev: A

Nov 23

PLAN ECO2

Ecological Features



Key:

- Application Site
- Waterbody / Pond
- Ruderal
- Compacted Clay Soils With a Mosaic of Recolonising Vegetation
- Compacted Clay Soils With a Mosaic of Recolonising Vegetation and Scrub
- Dense Scrub
- Unsealed Hardstanding
- Wet Grasland
- Secondary Woodland
- Oil Recovery Waterbody



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PLAN ECO2: ECOLOGICAL
FEATURES

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PLAN ECO3

Breeding Bird and Wintering Bird Survey Results

- Application Site
- Wintering Bird Record
- Green Conservation Status
- Amber Conservation Status
- Red Conservation Status

Blackcap (BC) *Sylvia atricapilla*
Bullfinch (BF) *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*
Blue Tit (BT) *Cyanistes caeruleus*
Carrion Crow (C.) *Corvus corone*
Coot (CO) *Fulica atra*
Cetti's Warbler (CW) *Cetti cetti*
Dunnock (D.) *Prunella modularis*
Greenfinch (GR) *Carduelis chloris*
Great Tit (GT) *Parus major*
Garden Warbler (GW) *Sylvia borin*
Kingfisher (KF) *Alcedo atthis*
Little Grebe (LG) *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
Lesser Redpoll (LR) *Acanthis cabaret*
Long-tailed Tit (LT) *Aegithalos caudatus*
Mallard (MA) *Anas platyrhynchos*
Pheasant (PH) *Phasianus colchicus*
Reed Bunting (RB) *Emberiza schoeniclus*
Reed Warbler (RW) *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*
Song Thrush (ST) *Turdus philomelos*
Sedge Warbler (SW) *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*
Teal (T.) *Anas crecca*
Tufted Duck (TU) *Aythya fuligula*
Whitethroat (WH) *Sylvia communis*
Wren (WR) *Troglodytes troglodytes*
Willow Warbler (WW) *Phylloscopus trochilus*



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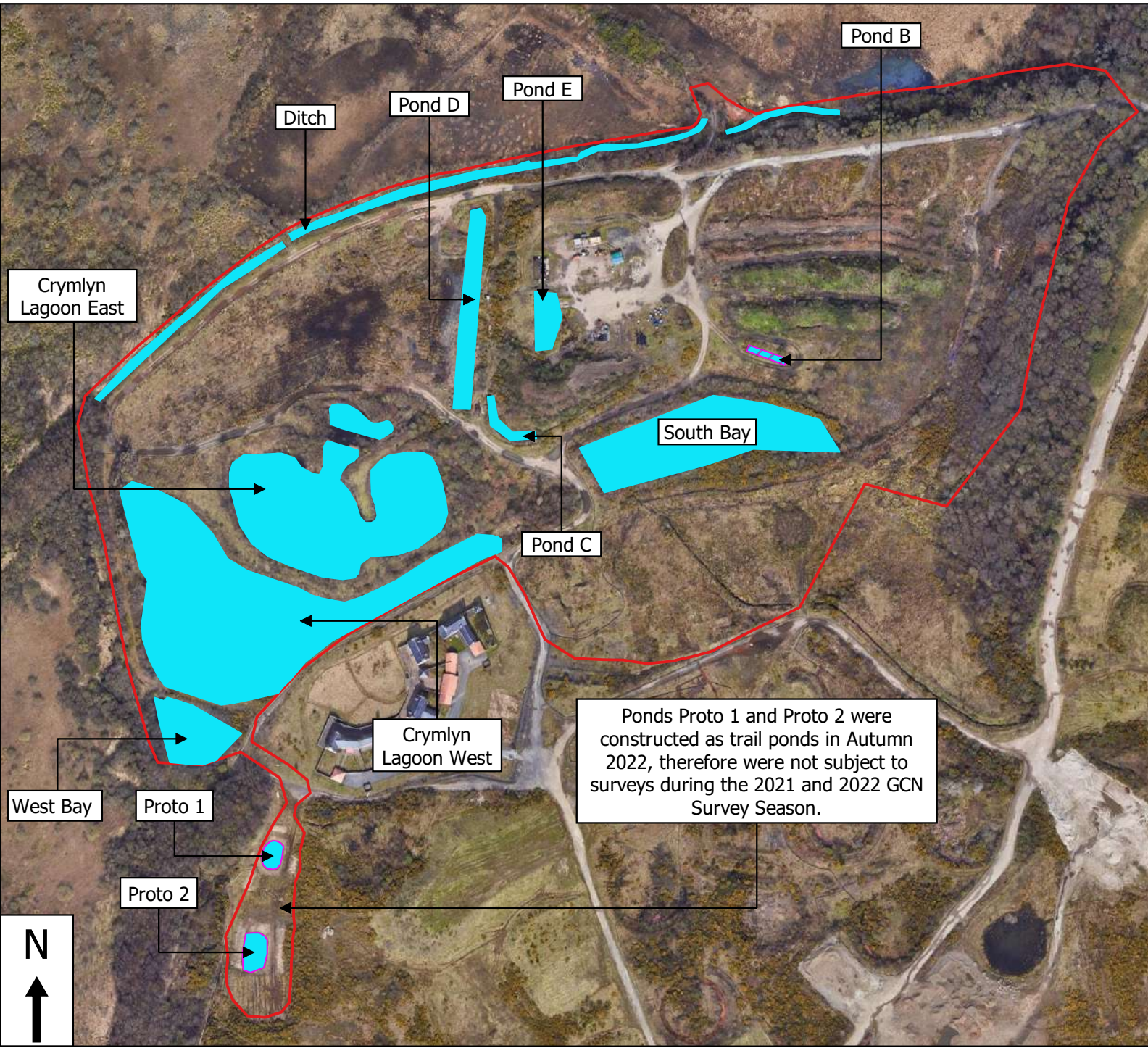
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PLAN ECO3: BREEDING BIRD AND WINTERING BIRD SURVEY RESULTS

Rev: A
Nov 23

PLAN ECO4

GCN Pond Survey Results



Key:

- Application Site
- Waterbody / Pond with no GCN Present
- GCN Present during 2021, 2022 and 2023 Surveys
- GCN Present during 2023 Survey



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PLAN ECO4: GCN POND
SURVEY RESULTS

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Nov 23