

Ecological Impact Assessment

Land west of Mount Road, Cefn Rhigos,
Rhondda Cynon Taf

04 March 2025

Ecology
Arboriculture
Land Management





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Site Details

Site Name and Location	Land west of Mount Road, Cefn Rhigos, Rhondda Cynon Taf
Central OS Grid Reference	SN 91210 06992
Client	REWE 11 Ltd

Boundary



Executive Summary

Site Location	The Site is located south of Rhigos Road, with the small hamlet of Cefn Rhigos to the east. The surrounding landscape is largely rural.
Proposals	Detailed application for construction of a battery energy storage system (BESS) with associated access and infrastructure.
Survey Work	Desk-based study, UK Habitat Classification survey and 'pilot' Wintering Bird Survey.
Designated Sites with Potential Impacts	Blaen Cynon SAC, Coed Wernhir SINC and Neath Port Talbot Watercourses SINC
Baseline Habitats	The Site comprises a single field of purple moor-grass and rush pasture and lowland dry acid grassland. The Site is bound by treelines to the north and east and occasional mature trees to the south and west. Several wet ditches are present throughout the Site and a watercourse and adjoining pond runs along the western boundary.
Protected/ notable Species	The Site provides suitable habitat for great crested newts (GCN) and other common amphibians, badgers, bats including Annex II species, breeding birds, hedgehogs, invertebrates including marsh fritillary butterfly, reptiles and otters. Provided precautionary measures and mitigation methods are implemented, no significant impacts are anticipated for species within the Site.
Mitigation and Compensation	- The development footprint is to be located away from priority habitat purple moor-grass and Coed Wernhir SINC to retain this habitat in its entirety and avoid impacts on the SINC. - Retention and buffering of tree lines, ditches and watercourses and adherence to Pollution Prevention for Businesses (2024) guidance during construction. This will protect these ecological features from impacts via pollution and run-off. - Enhancement of retained grassland habitats and reinstatement of hedgerows to offset loss of grassland and to enhance connectivity of the Site for protected species. - Method statement to protect reptiles and amphibians during vegetation clearance. - Sensitive methodology to protect commuting and foraging bats from light spill during construction, preventing foraging and commuting routes from being affected. - Precautionary measures for badger, breeding birds, hedgehog and otter to avoid adverse impacts during construction.
Enhancements	5 no. tree-mounted bat boxes within suitable retained trees 5 no. tree-mounted bird boxes within suitable retained trees. 2 no. hibernacula/ habitat piles within undisturbed boundary vegetation.

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1 Introduction

This report presents the results of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) at Land west of Mount Road, Cefn Rhigos, Rhondda Cynon Taf in relation to a detailed planning application. The surveys were commissioned by REWE 11 Ltd.

The area within the application boundary is hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.

1.1 Site Context

The Site is located directly south-west of Rhigos Road. Surrounding land use is largely undeveloped, with woodland to the north and sheep grazed purple moor-grass and rush pastures to the south and west. The small hamlet of Cefn Rhigos lies to the east.

1.2 Description of Proposed Development

Installation and operation of battery energy storage system (BESS), together with high voltage substation compound, underground cable route, transformer stations, inverters, site access, internal access tracks, security measures, access gates, other ancillary infrastructure, landscaping and biodiversity enhancements on land at Cefn Farm, Mount Road, Rhigos, Aberdare, CF44 9YS.

The development will consist of an enclosed compound area containing a BESS comprising battery containers mounted on concrete footings measuring approximately 6 metres in length, 2.2 metres wide and 2.8 metres in height. The development is proposed to be a temporary installation, being operated for a period of 40 years, after which the site would be restored to its current agricultural function.

The BESS system will have an import/export capacity of 200MW of power. It is proposed that the scheme would connect into Rhigos substation, which is located approximately 1.8km to the east of the proposed site. The connection is proposed via an underground cable within the adopted highway that will connect from a new substation on the site.

The containers will provide housing for battery infrastructure, a power distribution system and auxiliary systems such as fire suppression and alarm systems, ventilation and cooling system. The site area will be enclosed within a palisade fence, enhanced by screening from existing and proposed vegetation, reducing visual impact and increasing biodiversity.

The proposal will comprise the following:

- 👉 60 Battery storage units measuring approximately 6 m (L), 2.2 m (W) 2.8 m (height).
- 👉 LV-MV Transformer and Inverter Blocks measuring approximately 2.3m in height.
- 👉 New High Voltage Substation measuring up to approximately 12m in height.
- 👉 High Voltage transformer measuring approximately 9.4m in height.
- 👉 Substation control building measuring approximately 5.9m in height.
- 👉 Switchgear measuring approximately 3.1m in height.
- 👉 Associated ancillary buildings and electrical plant measuring approximately 10m in height.
- 👉 Security fencing and CCTV measuring approximately 2.4m in height.
- 👉 Water Tank measuring approximately 2.75m in height.
- 👉 Acoustic Fencing measuring approximately 3.3m in height.
- 👉 Associated underground cabling.
- 👉 Equipment foundations, including construction of site drainage.
- 👉 Internal access tracks.
- 👉 Landscape and ecological enhancements; and
- 👉 Temporary construction compound.

The proposed site layout plan is shown below in **Plate 1**.

Legend:

- Red line: Boundary of the site
- Blue line: Access road
- Green line: Path
- Yellow line: Boundary of the solar panels
- Red rectangle: Solar panel
- Blue rectangle: Transformer
- Green rectangle: Electrical equipment
- Yellow rectangle: Storage area
- Red circle: Access point
- Blue circle: Water point
- Green circle: Path point
- Yellow circle: Boundary point

Technical Specifications:

Parameter	Value
Area of the site	10.5 ha
Area of the solar panels	4.5 ha
Area of the transformer	0.5 ha
Area of the electrical equipment	0.5 ha
Area of the storage area	0.5 ha
Area of the access road	0.5 ha
Area of the path	0.5 ha

Summary:

Parameter	Value
Area of the site	10.5 ha
Area of the solar panels	4.5 ha
Area of the transformer	0.5 ha
Area of the electrical equipment	0.5 ha
Area of the storage area	0.5 ha
Area of the access road	0.5 ha
Area of the path	0.5 ha

The aims of this report are to:

- 👉 Identify and describe the habitats and species likely to be affected by the proposed development and assess the ecological value of these features;
- 👉 Identify key ecological constraints to the proposed development and evaluate the significance of any potential effects; and,
- 👉 Provide recommendations for mitigation and enhancement opportunities in accordance with relevant planning policy, legislation and other published guidance (see **Appendix 2**).

2 Methods

2.1 Desk Study

A desk-based study was undertaken in November 2024 whereby:

- 🦋 South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) was contacted for records of protected/ notable species and sites designated for nature conservation value within a 2km radius of the Site boundaries.
- 🦋 MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) was searched for international designated sites (SAC, SPA and Ramsar) within 10km;
- 🦋 Aerial photography of the wider area was reviewed to identify possible important habitat features.

2.2 Extended UK Habitat Classification Survey

A site walkover was undertaken on 23 October 2024 by Hamish Kidd BSc and Nick Hargreaves BSc MSc ACIEEM when weather conditions were dry with good visibility.

All habitats within the Site were identified, described and mapped during the field survey in accordance with the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) (UKHab Ltd., 2023 (V2.0) and Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Defra, 2024a) classifications for hedgerows), with other linear and point features mapped using Phase 1 Habitat Survey symbology (JNCC 2010).

Primary habitats have been mapped to a minimum mapping unit (MMU) of 25m², although where features of note of a smaller scale are present, these have also been recorded and mapped. Any habitats (e.g. traditional orchard) with no appropriate primary habitat label were assigned a secondary habitat code. Other secondary UKHab codes were recorded where relevant, although they are described qualitatively within this report for ease of reading. A non-exhaustive botanical species list was compiled, with plant names following Stace (2019).

Hedgerow species richness was defined in accordance with the Hedgerow Survey Handbook (Defra, 2007).

The survey was extended to highlight the potential presence of protected and notable species in accordance with CIEEM's Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017). This involved a search to identify the presence or potential presence of species such as breeding birds, bats, badger, dormouse, reptiles and amphibians. Target Notes (TNs) were used to record any features or habitats of ecological interest. Where access allowed, adjacent habitats were also considered in order to assess possible impacts of the proposal in a wider context.

A digital map was produced using QGIS (QGIS.org, 2024. *QGIS Geographic Information System*. QGIS Association. Available from: www.qgis.org). The habitat map is shown in **Figure 1**. Common names for flora and fauna are given in the body of the report with scientific names provided in **Appendix 4**.

2.3 Pilot Wintering Bird Survey

To assess whether the Site provided opportunities for wintering birds that would necessitate further surveys, a pilot wintering bird survey was conducted. The winter bird survey methodology was based on the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) High Tide Counts methodology as described in Gilbert *et al.* (1998). The survey used the 'look-see' methodology where the surveyor walked a transect stopping and scanning for birds at regular intervals to record numbers of all waterbird species (as defined by Wetlands International, Rose & Scott, 1997) for a predefined area. The aim of the survey was to record any birds on the Site and in surrounding fields. Other species present were also recorded. Species were recorded on to field maps using British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) standard species and

activity codes. Species nomenclature and Systematic list follow 'The British List' British Ornithologists Union (2022).

The pilot survey was undertaken in January 2025 by Harry Dyer BSc. Surveys were conducted in suitable weather conditions, with good visibility, avoiding strong winds above Beaufort Scale 4 and heavy rain. Optical equipment used included binoculars (with a minimum optical parameter of 8x32) and a spotting scope of at least x30 magnification when necessary.

2.4 Survey Limitations

Care has been taken to ensure that balanced advice is provided on the information available and collected during the study period (s), and within the resources available for the project. However, the possibility of important ecological features being missed due to survey timings, absence during surveys or the year of survey cannot be ruled out. In addition, the lack of evidence or records of protected species on Site does not preclude their presence from Site.

This Ecological Impact Assessment is reliant on the data collected to date. Detailed mitigation proposals will be supplemented by further survey effort where relevant.

3 Baseline Conditions

3.1 Designated Sites

A summary of designated sites within the search area is provided in **Table 1**.

There is one Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS): Cwm Gwrelych and Nant Llyn Fach Streams, 0.98km west from the Site boundary. This site is not designated for nature conservation interest and is therefore not considered further within this report.

Table 1: Designated sites records within 2km of Site boundary, 10km for European sites

Site Name	Proximity to Site	Description
<i>National Site Network</i>		
Coedydd Nedd a Mellt SAC	0.6km north	Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site: 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site: 9180 Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines
Blaen Cynon SAC	2.6km east	Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site: 1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly <i>Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia</i>
Cwm Cadlan SAC	4.1km northeast	Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site: 6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils 7230 Alkaline fens

Site Name	Proximity to Site	Description
<i>Statutory Designated Sites</i>		
Dyffrynoedd Nedd a Mellte a Moel Penderyn SSSI	0.6km north	The site is of special biological interest for its extensive and diverse semi-natural woodland, important populations of several flowering plants and supporting outstanding assemblages of mosses, liverworts and lichens. More than 600 species of plant have been recorded from the site, including a very large proportion of the bryophyte flora of mid and south Wales. It is the most southerly known locality in Britain for Marsh Hawk's-beard.
<i>Local Wildlife Sites</i>		
Coed Wernhir SINC	Within Site	Designated for semi-natural deciduous woodland, part of which is ancient woodland. Also includes extensive areas of purple moor-grass and rush pasture, potential marsh fritillary butterfly habitat and high potential as amphibian habitat.
NPT Watercourses	0.06km west	All watercourses within the Neath Port Talbot Council area are blanket designated and buffered under the SINC guidelines.

3.2 Habitats and Flora

The distribution of habitats is shown on **Figure 1** and full details with photographs are provided in **Appendix 3**.

The Site comprises a single field of priority habitat purple moor-grass and rush pasture (5.73ha) and lowland dry acid grassland (7.48ha), with an area of mire containing heath and moss species to the southeast of the Site. A central band in the middle of the Site receives light sheep grazing. Several wet ditches and flushes run from south to north throughout the Site, with a small unnamed watercourse running the length of the western boundary. Mature oak trees are present on the Site boundary to the south and west, with a single mature oak present in the centre of the Site. Tree lines run adjacent to the north and eastern boundaries and are associated with a permanent wet ditch. A permanent pond with emergent aquatic vegetation, fed by surface water drainage ditches and the watercourse is present adjacent to the western boundary. The northwest section of the Site is within the boundary of Coed Wernhir SINC. As the areas of purple moor-grass and rush pasture and lowland dry acid grassland qualify as priority habitat, these are considered to be of **County** importance. The trees, watercourses/wet ditches and pond are considered to be of **Local** importance.

Further detailed botanical National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey will be undertaken to fully assess the composition, quality and extents of the habitats present on Site. This will inform the mitigation methods and/or precautionary method statement, the potential impacts of which are addressed below.

3.3 Fauna

Table 2 lists the fauna considered as part of the assessment.

Table 2: Assessment of Fauna on Site

Species/ Group	Location & Rationale
Amphibians	SEWBrEC returned no records for great crested newt (GCN) within 2km of the Site. One record for common toad was returned, 1.4km north as well as one record for palmate newt, 1.4km north and four records for common frog, 1.4km north. The longer sward and tussocky nature of the purple moor-grass and rush pasture provides optimal habitat for amphibians during their terrestrial phase. In addition, one pond was identified on the western boundary of the Site, conjoining with the watercourse. A further two ponds were identified within 250m of the Site boundary using aerial imagery, one 0.05km north of the Site, separated by Rhigos Road, and one 0.04km south of the Site. The Site is connected to the southern pond via good quality terrestrial habitat. The Site and the surrounding local area provide terrestrial and aquatic opportunities for amphibians through habitats present within and adjacent to the Site. As such, this is considered to be of Local importance.
Badger	SEWBrEC returned nine records for badger within 2km of the Site boundary within the past ten years, with the closest being 0.5km east. The Site provides suitable foraging, commuting and sett building habitat in the form of tussocky pasture and ditches and is connected to suitable habitat in the surrounding landscape. No signs of badger activity, active or disused setts were recorded during the survey, however, given the proximity of existing historical records, it can be assumed that badgers are likely to be using the Site as part of a wider territory. Badgers are not listed as a species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in Wales and have therefore not been assigned a scale of importance in this case but will be considered further in this assessment in relation to their legal protection only.
Bats	SEWBrEC returned various records for commuting and foraging bats within 2km of the Site within the past ten years, including species Brandt's bat, brown long-eared, common pipistrelle, Daubenton's bat, greater horseshoe, lesser horseshoe, Myotis sp., Nathusius' pipistrelle, Natterer's bat, noctule, serotine, soprano pipistrelle, western barbastelle, whiskered bat. Of these, four records were returned for roosting bats, with two for lesser horseshoe (0.85km northwest), one for soprano pipistrelle (0.77km north west) and one record for an unidentified roost (0.77km north west). None of the trees present within the Site were found to support potential roost features (PRFs) for roosting bats and all trees are to be retained, buffered and protected from light spill as part of the development. No impacts to roosting bats are anticipated and thus a scale of importance has not been assigned, and they have been scoped out of further assessment. The ditches, pond, watercourse and pasture within the Site and treelines adjacent to the Site boundary provide suitable commuting and foraging habitats for a variety of bat species. These are well

Species/ Group	Location & Rationale
	connected to a network of suitable habitat (hedgerows, tree lines, watercourse and woodland) within the wider area. The Site is therefore considered to be of at least Local importance for commuting and foraging bats.
Birds	SEWBRc returned numerous records for notable and protected birds within 2km of the Site within the past ten years. This includes records for protected species within the Site boundary for song thrush (S42, BoCC Amber), house sparrow (Amber Wales, S42, BoCC Red), wren (BoCC Amber), dipper (BoCC Amber) and raven. Other species returned in the data search are likely to be present within the Site boundary. Tussocky pasture, tree lines and watercourse provide optimal habitat for a number of bird species. To assess the Site for its potential to support wintering birds, a pilot wintering bird survey was undertaken on the 22nd of January 2025 by Harry Dyer BSc. A single common snipe (BoCC Amber) was flushed from the grassland in the east of the Site, with a flock of c. 25 redwing (WCA, BoCC Amber) perched in the mature oak at the centre of the Site. As these results were not considered significant, further wintering bird surveys were scoped out. Due to the suitable habitats within the Site, although relatively common and widespread throughout the local area, the Site is considered to be of at least Local importance for birds.
Dormouse	SEWBRc returned one record for dormice within 2km of the Site boundary within the past ten years, 1.6km southwest. The treelines to the east and north of the Site, although not within the Site itself, provide some connectivity to the wider area. However, the Site itself is lacking in suitable habitat in the form of hedgerows and treelines with suitable understorey vegetation. For this reason, dormice are considered likely to be absent from the Site and have been scoped out of further assessment.
Hedgehog	SEWBRc returned six records for hedgehog within 2km of the Site within the past ten years, with the closest being 1.13km northwest. The tussocky pasture and pond provide suitable foraging habitat for hedgehogs, however, the lack of scrub and hedgerows within the Site offers little in the way of refugia. The Site is considered to be of up to Site importance for hedgehogs.
Invertebrates	SEWBRc returned numerous records for notable and protected invertebrates within 2km of the Site within the past ten years, including records for marsh fritillary in habitats adjacent to the Site boundary. While there are no records of invertebrates from within the Site itself, it is likely that it is being utilised by an assemblage of invertebrates included protected species, such as marsh fritillary. During the Site walkover, Devil's-bit scabious (the larval food plant for marsh fritillary butterfly) was identified in the northern section of the Site. The northern part of the Site also lies within Coed Wernhir SINC, highlighted for having the potential to support marsh fritillary butterfly. The tussocky pasture, pond, watercourse and ditches provide optimal habitat for a range of invertebrates. Due to suitability for supporting

Species/ Group	Location & Rationale
	marsh fritillary, as well as an assemblage of other invertebrates, the Site is considered to be of at least Local importance for invertebrates.
Reptiles	SEWBrEC returned two records for reptiles within 2km of the Site within the past ten years. This includes one record for slow worm, 1.3km north, and one record for common lizard, c. 1km north of the Site. The tussocky pasture, wet ditches and watercourse provide optimal habitat suitable to support common reptile species. However, due to the abundance of similar habitat within the local area, the Site is considered to be of no more than Local importance for reptiles.
Other notable species	SEWBrEC returned 42 records for otter within 2km of the Site within the past ten years, with the closest being 0.52km northwest. The watercourse on Site provides limited suitability for otters, owing to its shallow depth and lack of suitable features for holts. No signs of otter presence were recorded within the Site. While it is unlikely otters are present within the Site, precautionary measures will be adopted during construction and operation to avoid potential impacts on otter should they be present.

4 Potential Further Survey Work (Where Relevant)

4.1 Habitats and Flora

Due to the presence of priority habitat purple moor-grass and rush pasture and lowland dry acid grassland within the Site, as well as area of mire to the southeast, it is considered necessary to undertake a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) Botanical Survey to provide additional context on the botanical communities present. This will be undertaken in 2025.

4.2 Amphibians

As the site and local surrounding area provides both suitable terrestrial and aquatic habitat in the form of tussocky grassland, wet ditches and ponds (both on and off Site), it is considered that further survey effort is necessary to inform the final mitigation/precautionary methods to be implemented. The impacts anticipated are set out above.

4.3 Bats

Owing to suitable habitat features and presence of species from historical records, it is considered necessary to undertake automated detector surveys for commuting and foraging bats. These will be conducted in accordance with best practice guidelines (Collins, 2023). These surveys are conducted to achieve a greater level of survey efficiency than is possible with walked transects as well as providing quantitative data and a better overall picture of the species using the site.

This further survey effort will inform the final mitigation/precautionary methods to be implemented. The impacts anticipated are set out above.

4.4 Birds

As suitable habitat is present within the Site in the form of tussocky pasture, tree lines and watercourses, as well as presence of notable and protected bird species records from within the Site and the wider landscape, it is considered necessary to undertake breeding bird surveys. This will inform the final mitigation/precautionary methods to be implemented. The impacts anticipated are set out above.

4.5 Invertebrates

Due to the northern section of the Site being within a SINC designated for potential marsh fritillary presence, as well as surrounding habitat being either designated or suitable for marsh fritillary, it is considered necessary to undertake further surveys for marsh fritillary to inform the final mitigation/precautionary methods to be implemented. The impacts anticipated are set out above.

4.6 Reptiles

As the presence of habitat on Site creates suitable opportunities for reptiles, it is considered necessary to undertake a reptile survey to ascertain whether reptile populations are present within the Site and, if found, their significance within the local area. This survey will inform the final mitigation/precautionary methods to be implemented. The impacts anticipated are set out above.

5 Impacts And Mitigation

5.1 Designated Sites

5.1.1 Statutory Designations

Blaen Cynon SAC is located c.2.6km east of the Site at its nearest point and the primary reason for designation relates to the population of marsh fritillary butterfly supported. The food plant of marsh fritillary butterfly has been recorded in discreet areas in the north of the Site and so further consideration is required to ascertain whether the Site could provide supporting habitat (functional link) for marsh fritillary populations associated with the SAC.

However, given the small scale of the proposals (in the context of the wider area and the site itself) and limited impacts in terms of land take, it is considered that impacts to marsh fritillary (if present) can be readily mitigated. Indeed, given that it will be possible to manage habitats within the wider unimpacted site specifically for marsh fritillary butterfly there is likely to be a net benefit for the species as a result of the proposals in the medium to long term. Inherent mitigation as part of the proposals will seek to avoid areas of higher value for the species and surrounding retained areas will be brought under favourable management. On this basis it is considered that the proposals will not result in an adverse effect on the integrity of Blaen Cynon SAC. A sHRA report specifically in relation to Blaencynon SAC will be produced following the marsh fritillary surveys scheduled to be undertaken in 2025.

Given their distance from the Site, the confined and relatively small scale of the proposed development and the nature of the development itself, no impacts are predicted to affect other statutory designated sites within the wider landscape, and they are not considered further in this report.

5.1.2 Non-Statutory Designations

Part of Coed Wernhir SINC, a large mosaic of habitats, lies within the Site boundary and is primarily designated for semi-natural deciduous and ancient woodland and marshy grassland. These areas represent good habitat for breeding birds, such as pied flycatcher, lesser horseshoe bats, marsh fritillary

butterfly and amphibians. The northwestern corner of the Site containing SINC designated habitat pertains to marshy grassland, which is considered to be widespread in the locality.

The proposed development is situated in the southwest corner of the Site and as such, no loss of habitat will occur within the SINC. To prevent the development from impacting on the SINC during the construction phase standard airborne and water pollution prevention measures, in line with the Pollution Prevention for Businesses (2024) guidance, will be followed to avoid negative impacts through pollution and run-off.

The Neath Port Talbot Watercourses SINC, a blanket designation covering all watercourses and adjacent surrounding habitat within the county borough, lies 0.06km to the west of the Site. It is important to note that additional detail on what constitutes the 'surrounds' of a watercourse is not available within the site designation information; online resources show the majority of county borough of Neath Port Talbot under this one SINC designation. Therefore, to inform the impact assessment process below, it has been assumed that 'surrounds' constitutes the riparian habitats adjacent to the watercourses than run through the county borough.

While the watercourse on Site is outside of the SINC, it is covered by the SINC 0.06km upstream. Therefore, to prevent any unforeseen impacts to the SINC, the watercourse will be buffered by 15m using Heras fencing (or similar) and will be subject to regular checks throughout construction to ensure they are still intact. In addition to protecting the watercourses, this buffer will also serve to protect the riparian habitats surrounding the watercourses. Furthermore, standard airborne and water pollution prevention measures, in line with the Pollution Prevention for Businesses (2024) guidance, will be followed to avoid negative impacts through pollution and run-off during construction.

5.2 Habitats and Flora

The proposed layout includes the use of existing tracks and field gates wherever possible and thus will not require any losses to boundary vegetation. An underground cable is proposed in the east of the Site and a horizontal directional drill method will be utilised to avoid RPAs of the existing tree line. Planting up of gaps in existing hedgerows and treelines and the reinstatement of hedgerows to field margins will act as an enhancement to the boundary vegetation.

The proposals will result in the loss of c. 2.9ha of lowland dry acid grassland and c. 60m of wet ditch in the southwest corner of the Site. Following the 40-year period of operation, the habitat is to be restored to its previous condition. As the development is sited away from the purple moor-grass and rush pasture within the Site, this habitat is to be retained in its entirety. To offset the loss of grassland as a result of the development, retained habitats will be enhanced through sensitive management, and important features such as watercourses and ponds are to be buffered from the development footprint. A trench will be dug to lay a new cable running from the eastern boundary to the development in the west. This is anticipated to cause temporary damage to the grassland whereby the excavation works occur, which is expected to naturally regenerate following completion of works.

Should any Devil's-bit scabious, of notable interest to marsh fritillary butterfly, be identified in the area set for development, these should be translocated to suitable areas outside of the development footprint. A comprehensive strategy for the translocation of devil's-bit scabious should be created and approved by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the County Ecologist. The strategy should outline appropriate locations for relocating individual plugs, as well as their long-term monitoring and management to ensure successful establishment.

The implementation of standard pollution prevention, runoff control measures and dust suppression measures in accordance with current good practice, will ensure potential indirect effects on designated Sites are avoided. Working areas will be clearly defined and buffers to sensitive boundary vegetation

created. All hedgerows and trees will be protected during construction in accordance with BS 5837:2012 protection measures.

All existing and newly created habitats will be managed to maximise biodiversity. To ensure effective and adequate long-term management of retained and newly created habitats for the legally required 30-year period, a Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) will be prepared and agreed with the LPA prior to commencement of development.

5.3 Fauna

5.3.1 *Amphibians and Reptiles*

In the absence of mitigation, there is a risk of habitat loss and/ or fragmentation, potentially causing a significant negative impact on amphibians and reptiles, if present, within the Site. This is primarily as a result of the proposals causing loss of tussocky grassland in the southwest of the Site, encroachment on wet ditches and pollution in the form of run-off during construction activities entering the on-site pond. To partially mitigate for this, all boundary vegetation, ditches and watercourse will be retained and protected with a 15m buffer as part of the development. The buffers will be clearly marked through Heras fencing (or similar) and will be subject to regular checks throughout construction to ensure they are still intact.

To protect reptiles and amphibians from harm, the following method statement will be followed during Site preparation and construction:

- 👉 Initially, the vegetation removal will be cut to approximately 150mm, (starting from the centre of each field and working towards retained and buffered boundary vegetation) with the arisings removed and habitats left for a minimum of 48 hours in suitable weather conditions i.e. no rain or high winds;
- 👉 A further cut will then be made to 50mm, in the same direction as outlined above, to encourage any remaining reptiles/ amphibians towards the retained and buffered areas of suitable habitat.
- 👉 Once complete, the vegetation will be maintained at a low-level (<50mm) until the start of development works.

With the proposed mitigation and compensation measures no significant impacts are anticipated for reptiles or amphibians.

5.3.2 *Badger and Hedgehog*

To protect any badgers that may be utilising the Site for commuting and foraging, the following precautionary measures will be followed during construction:

- 👉 Trenches will be covered at the end of each working day and any temporarily exposed pipes will be capped to prevent badger gaining access during the night;
- 👉 Any trenches or deep pits which must be left open overnight will be provided with a means of escape should a badger enter. This would simply be in the form of a roughened plank of wood placed in the trench as a ramp to the surface;
- 👉 Any trenches/pits will be inspected each morning to ensure no badgers have become trapped overnight. Should a badger become trapped in a trench it may attempt to dig itself into the side of a trench and form a temporary sett. Should a trapped badger be encountered, the advice of an ecologist must be sought immediately. If necessary, the ecologist will contact the RSPCA or a vet who will move the badger to safety or provide treatment if required;
- 👉 The storage of topsoil or other 'soft' building material within the construction site will be given careful consideration. Badgers may readily adopt such mounds as setts. To avoid this, mounds will be kept to a minimum and any essential mounds will be subject to daily inspections;

- 🦡 Food and litter are not to be left within the working area overnight to minimise the potential for any roaming badgers to be attracted to the construction site; and
- 🦡 The storage of any chemical within the construction site will be contained in such a way that they cannot be consumed or knocked over by any wildlife.

The mitigation measures outlined above will also serve to protect hedgehogs and other mammals from harm. In addition, any features with potential to support hedgehog will be removed sensitively either by a check prior to removal, or by sensitive removal to ground level to allow a visual check for hedgehog. If a hedgehog is found at any point during construction works, then works must stop immediately and an ecologist contacted in the first instance.

With the proposed mitigation and compensation measures no significant impacts are anticipated for badger or hedgehog.

5.3.3 Bats

Without appropriate mitigation, the fragmentation of wet ditches and tussocky pasture have the potential to negatively impact commuting and foraging bats within the Site.

To minimise the impacts on commuting and foraging bats, all boundary vegetation will be retained and protected with a 15m buffer as part of the development. Reinstated hedgerows will increase opportunities available to commuting bats.

During the construction phase, the following mitigation measures will be implemented:

- 🦡 All works will be undertaken during daylight hours, with works commencing no earlier than 30 minutes prior to sunrise and finishing no later than 30 minutes after sunset. No artificial lighting will be left on outside of normal working hours; and
- 🦡 Where security lighting is required, it is recommended that these are motion activated with hooded luminaires, and these must be directed away from boundary vegetation and bat and bird boxes.

No additional permanent lighting will be installed as part of the operational phase and as such no impacts on commuting and foraging bats are anticipated.

5.3.4 Birds

In the absence of mitigation, there is a risk that the loss /fragmentation of tussocky pasture, wet ditch and riparian habitat, all of which provide optimal breeding bird habitat, will lead to a significant negative impact on the breeding bird population within the Site. In addition, if construction takes place during the breeding bird season, increased disturbance caused by construction noise, dust and vibration is likely to affect the ability of birds to hold territory and breed successfully within habitats adjacent to the works area. To partially mitigate for this, all boundary vegetation, ditches and riparian habitats will be retained and protected with a 15m buffer as part of the development. The buffers will be clearly marked through Heras fencing (or similar) and will be subject to regular checks throughout construction to ensure they are still intact.

Given the protection afforded to all breeding birds, their nests, eggs and young, any vegetation clearance, including the future management of habitats, should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive). If this is not practicable, then works should be preceded by a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist within 48 hours of the commencement of works. If evidence of nesting is recorded, works within that particular area should not proceed until the chicks have fledged, with a buffer zone around the active nest of 10m minimum.

With the proposed mitigation and compensation measures no significant impacts are anticipated for breeding birds.

5.3.5 Invertebrates

Without appropriate mitigation, the loss and/or fragmentation of purple moor grass and/or rush pasture and wet ditches has the potential to negatively impact any invertebrate assemblage that is present within the Site. In relation to marsh fritillary and as noted above in relation to Blaen Cynon SAC, given the modest scale of the proposals (in the context of the wider area and the Site itself) and limited impacts in terms of land take, it is considered that impacts to marsh fritillary can be readily mitigated. Given that it will be possible to manage habitats within the wider unimpacted Site specifically for marsh fritillary butterfly there is likely to be a net benefit for the species as a result of the proposals in the medium to long term. Inherent mitigation as part of the proposals will seek to avoid areas of higher value for the species and surrounding retained areas will be brought under favourable management. Where Devil's-bit scabious is to be impacted by the development, these plants are to be translocated as detailed above in **Section 5.2**. Favourable management of retained grassland areas will also act to mitigate impacts to other invertebrate species using the Site through increased quality of habitat.

5.3.6 Otter

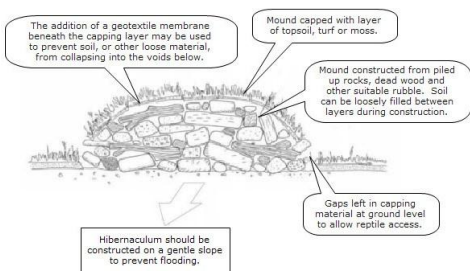
Although no records of evidence of otter were recorded within or adjacent to the Site, there is the potential for otter to be negatively impacted through pollution and run-off into the watercourses during construction, should they be present. Therefore, to mitigate for this, the standard Pollution Prevention for Businesses (2024) guidance will be followed throughout construction to prevent pollution and run-off into the watercourses. With the proposed mitigation measures, no significant impacts on otter are anticipated.

6 Enhancements

In addition, the enhancements detailed in **Table 3** are recommended in line with national guidance and local planning policy. Locations are shown in **Figure 2**.

Table 3: Enhancement Features

Quantity & Type	Illustrations	Description & Installation
5.no tree-mounted bird nest boxes	 Vivara Pro Seville nest box.	- Use woodstone/ woodcrete boxes that are more durable than wooden boxes e.g. the Vivaro Pro Seville nest box available from www.nhbs.com or www.wildcare.co.uk. - Boxes can have different size entrance holes for different bird species e.g. 32mm and 28mm. - Erect singly on trees, out of direct sun and the prevailing weather and away from perches where birds are at risk from predators. - Position boxes at a minimum of 3m above the ground. - Attach securely to an open section of trunk that is not obscured by vegetation.
5no. tree mounted bat box	 Schwegler 2F bat box  Low Profile WoodStone Bat Box	- To be externally mounted on trees at a height of at least 3m above ground level. - Fix securely to an open section of tree trunk. - Boxes are to be made of a durable material such as woodstone or woodcrete. - Suitable models include the Schwegler 2F bat box, Low Profile WoodStone Bat Box or similar approved. Suppliers include www.nhbs.com and www.wildcare.co.uk. - Locate where there is a clear, unlit flight path for bats to linear vegetation (e.g. hedgerows) and away from windows. - Install away from any lighting.

Quantity & Type	Illustrations	Description & Installation
2no. hibernaculum/ habitat piles	 Example hibernaculum design	- Provide hibernacula/ resting places for fauna such as reptiles, mammals and invertebrates. - Constructed from dead wood and rubble, topped with loose soil and turf. Dimensions to be a minimum of 2m length x 1m width x 1m height. - Located in suitable locations such as within the eastern boundary treeline and riparian corridor to the west of the Site.

7 Conclusions

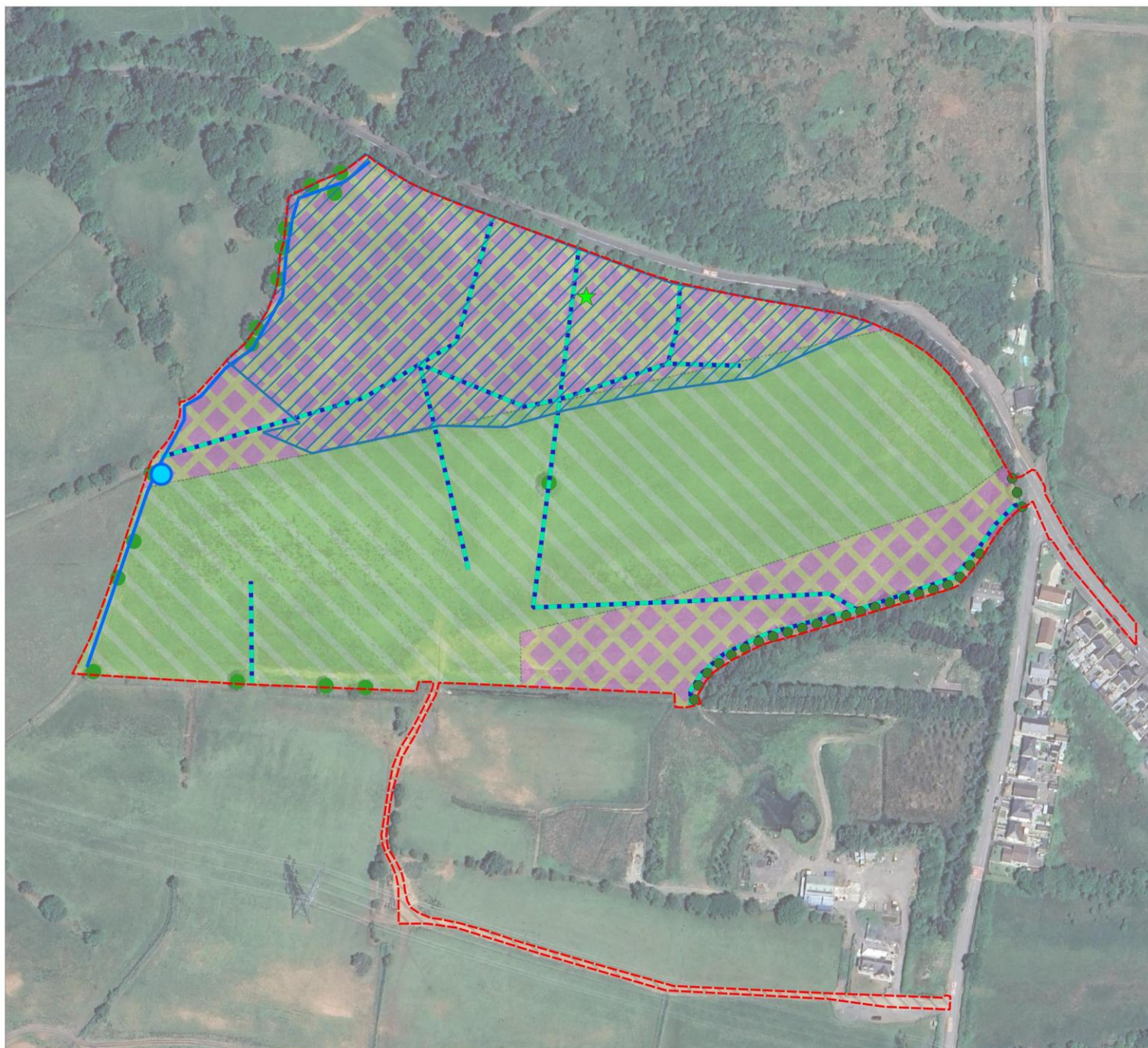
In summary the Site was considered to be of relatively high ecological interest. Avoidance measures and careful timing of works have been incorporated into the design to minimise impacts to protected and notable species and designated sites. The siting of the development in the southwest corner of the Site, ensures that the entirety of the purple moor-grass and rush pasture are to be retained and impacts to Coed Wernhir SINC are avoided.

Provided the avoidance and mitigation measures are carried out, the proposal is considered unlikely to have significant adverse effects on ecological features.

Enhancement features have been described with the aim of providing an increase in wildlife opportunities on Site post-development, contributing to the aims of Planning Policy Wales and local policy.

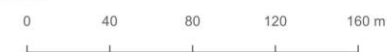
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Key:

- Site Boundary
- SINC
- 73 - Bare ground
- f2b - Purple moorgrass and rush pastures
- g3a - Lowland dry acid grassland
- u1b - Developed land, sealed surface
- Line of Trees
- Wet Ditch
- Watercourses
- Pond
- Rural Tree (Broadleaved)
- Devil's Bit Scabious



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Figure 1:
UK Habitat Classification Survey and Protected Species Findings

Project:
Cefn Farm BESS, Cefn Rhigos

Client:
Lighthouse Development Consulting

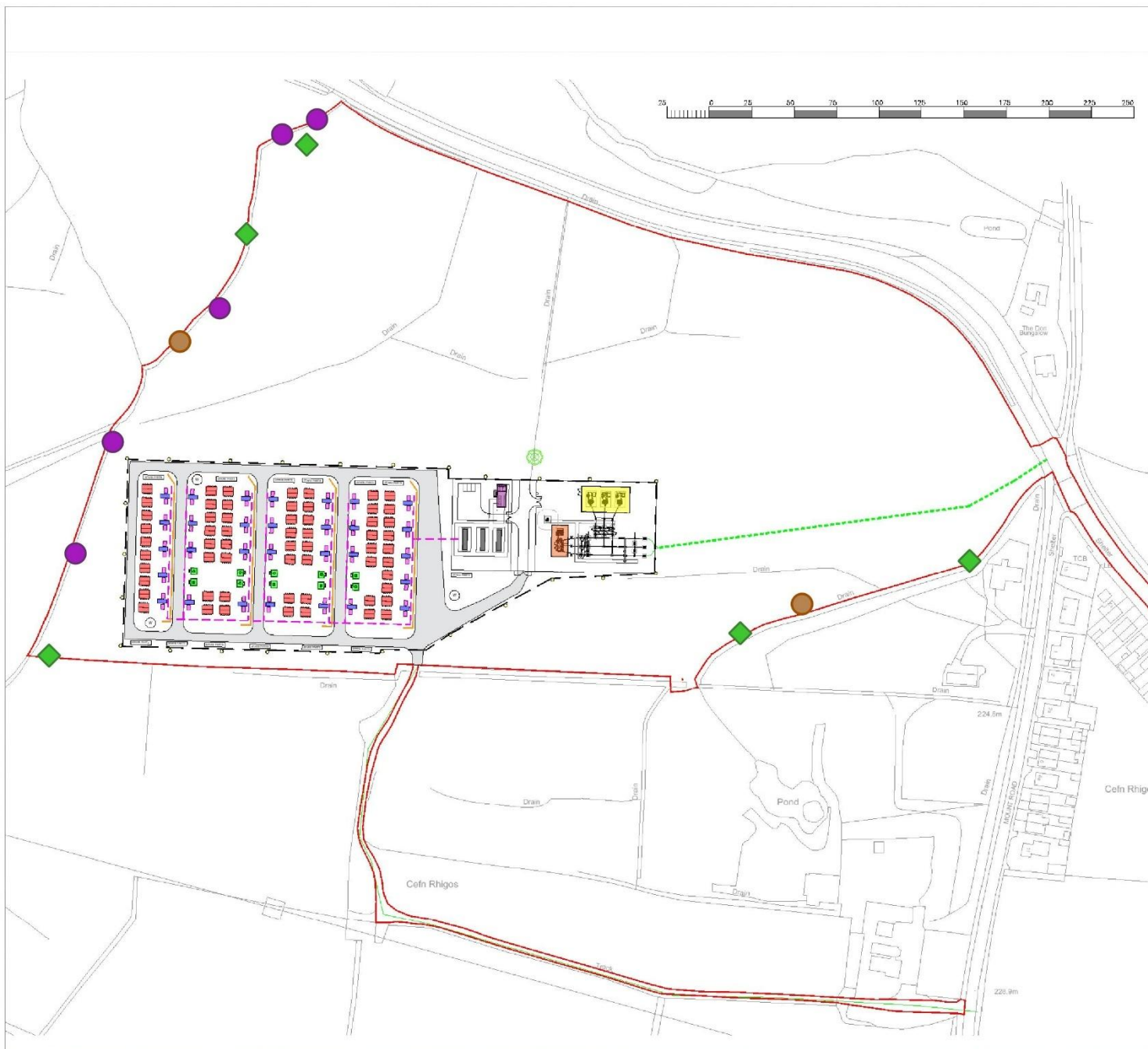
Date:
26/2/2025

Ref:
2652-EclA-F1

Drawn:
HK

Revision:
-





Key:

- Habitat Piles
- Tree Mounted Bat Box
- Tree Mounted Bird Box

BESS LAYOUT- KEY, ref: WIN-BES-CEFN-DR-02

Figure 2:
Enhancements and Mitigation

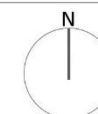
Project:
Cefn Farm BESS, Cefn Rhigos

Client:
Lighthouse Development Consulting

Date:
11/2/2025

Ref:
2652-EclA-F2

Drawn:
HK
Revision:
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Appendix 1 – General Glossary of Terms

Annex I	Threatened bird listed on Annex I of the EC Birds Directive/ Habitats listed on Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive
Annex II	Species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of SACs
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BMCL	Bat Mitigation Class Licence
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
BoCC	Bird of Conservation Concern
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CWS	County Wildlife Site
DBW	Daytime Bat Walkover
EPS	European Protected Species
GLTA	Ground Level Tree Assessment
HPI	Habitat of Principal Importance required under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006
HSI	Habitat Suitability Index
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone
GCN	Great crested newt
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LEMP	Landscape and Ecology Management Plan
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
NBW	Night-time Bat Walkover
NE	Natural England
NERC Act	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
NVA	Night Vision Aid
NVC	National Vegetation Classification Survey
OSWI	Other Site of Wildlife Interest
pCWS	Potential County Wildlife Site

PPW	Planning Policy Wales
PRA	Preliminary Roost Assessment
PRF	Potential Roost Feature
Ramsar	A wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention
S42	Species of Principal Importance (Wales) required under Section 42 of the NERC Act 2006
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPI	Species of Principal Importance required under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
UWS	Unconfirmed Wildlife Site
WCA	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(as amended)
ZOI	Zone of Influence

Appendix 2 – Planning Policy and Legislation

Habitat and Species Legislation

Species and habitats receive legal protection in the UK under various legislation, including:

-  The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended);
-  The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
-  The Countryside Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000;
-  The Hedgerows Regulations 1997;
-  The Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and
-  The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Where relevant, this report takes into account the legislative protection afforded to specific habitats and species.

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Part 1 – Section 6 of The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets out requirements and duties for the Welsh Government and other public authorities to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems. The duty places biodiversity as a natural and integral part of policy and decision making within public authorities.

The Policies are designed to:

-  Maintain and enhance the natural environment through managing land appropriately to create healthy functioning ecosystems;
-  Increase awareness of the importance of a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems;
-  Support ecological resilience, making the environment healthier for wildlife and people; and
-  Be adaptive to a changing environment where there is a need to use resources efficiently.

Planning Policy Wales

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters, which together with PPW provide the national planning policy framework for Wales. The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation and resultant duties.

Noteworthy policies relating to ecology and biodiversity are as follows:

-  Green Infrastructure – an emphasis is placed on taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure including cross-boundary considerations;
-  Net Benefit for Biodiversity and the Step-wise Approach - a strong focus is placed on securing a net benefit for biodiversity through the application of the step-wise approach utilising the DECCA framework, including the acknowledgement of off-site compensation measures as a last resort, and the need to consider enhancement and long-term management at each step;
-  Non-statutory designations - Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, and Regionally Importance Geodiversity Sites make a vital contribution to delivering an ecological network for biodiversity and resilient ecosystems, and they should be given protection in development plans and the development management process; and

- Protected species- The presence of a species protected under European or UK legislation, or under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 is a material consideration in the planning process and it is considered best practice that screening to determine the presence of protected species should be carried out by a competent ecologist on the basis of data provided by the relevant Local Environmental Record Centre.

Regional/ Local Planning Policy

The Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Local Development Plan (2006 – 2021) was adopted in March 2011. It sets out the vision for the county borough up to 2021 and contains following relevant policies:

- AW 8 – Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment

UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was succeeded in 2012 by the ‘UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework’ which demonstrates a whole-environment strategy on how the UK contributes to achieving the Convention on Biological Diversity’s (CBD) 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In England, ‘Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services’ (Defra, 2011) sets out the strategic direction for biodiversity policy in the future. The former UK BAP was used to draw up lists of species and habitats of ‘principal importance’ which continue to be regarded as priorities under the Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework and are identified under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; these species have been considered throughout this report.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The Rhondda Cynon Taf Action for Nature Plan demonstrates how the Council will fulfil their legal duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and do their part to help nature in Rhondda Cynon Taf recover. It is intended to act as a driver behind conservation activities throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf, with specific habitat and species action plans aiming to improve ecosystem resilience.

Appendix 3 – Site Photographs

Description	Photograph
Purple moor-grass and rush pasture with heather species towards the southeastern corner of the Site.	
Area of wetter mire with heather and sphagnum moss communities, bordering the southern boundary.	
Lowland dry acid grassland running east to west along the central section of the Site, with occasional sheep grazing.	

Description	Photograph
Area of standing water adjacent to watercourse on western boundary.	
Watercourse running the length of the western boundary, lined by occasional mature oak trees.	
Northern section of the Site comprising wet ditches and purple moor-grass and rush pasture.	

Description	Photograph
Devil's-bit scabious, the larval food plant for marsh fritillary butterfly, identified in the northern area of the site, adjacent to priority habitat designated for marsh fritillary.	 A photograph showing a single, vibrant purple flower of Devil's-bit scabious (Ficaria verna) in bloom. The flower is a dense, rounded cluster of small blossoms. It is surrounded by tall, thin, dry grasses that are mostly yellowish-brown, with some green blades visible at the base. The background is slightly out of focus, showing more of the grassy field.

Appendix 4 – List of Flora and Fauna Mentioned in Text

Flora

Common name	Scientific name	Recorded on Site?
Devil's-bit Scabious	<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	✓
Purple Moor-grass	<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	✓
Sphagnum Moss	<i>Sphagnum sp.</i>	✓

Fauna

Common name	Scientific name	Recorded on Site?
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	
Barbastelle	<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	
Brandt's bat	<i>Myotis brandtii</i>	
Brown long-eared bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	
Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	
Common toad	<i>Bufo Bufo</i>	
Daubenton's bat	<i>Myotis daubntonii</i>	
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	✓
Dormouse	<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>	
Great crested newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	
Greater horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>	
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓
Lesser horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	
Marsh fritillary	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	
Myotis bat species	<i>Myotis sp.</i>	
Nathusius' pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	
Natterer's bat	<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	
Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	
Palmate newt	<i>Lissotriton helveticus</i>	
Pied flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	✓
Serotine	<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	
Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓
Soprano pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	
Whiskered bat	<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓

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