



TATA STEEL

MCO GAS HOLDER

Peregrine and Badger Report

2487822

MAY 2025

RSK
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EXPERTS IN ECOLOGY

RSK GENERAL NOTES

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of ecological surveys undertaken around the area of the MCO Gas Holder at Tata Steel Works in Port Talbot between March 2025 and May 2025 inclusive. These surveys were carried out to inform an assessment of any signs of badger activity and nesting birds (particularly peregrine falcon) in relation to the proposed demolition of this structure.

No signs of nesting bird activity were noted on any of the surveys that were carried out. Signs of badger were very limited but did include footprints along the main track that runs adjacent to the gas holder. However, no badger setts were identified within 100m of the gas holder. Therefore neither badgers nor nesting peregrines (or any other nesting birds) are considered likely to be impacted by demolition of the gas holder, provided works are undertaken before the next main nesting bird season (March to August inclusive). Should demolition be delayed beyond March 2026 then at least one nesting bird survey may need to be repeated to confirm nesting birds continue not to be a constraint to demolition.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1.1 Tata Steel are planning to demolish the MCO gas holder (hereby referred to as 'the gas holder') at Port Talbot Steel Works. Specific timescales for the proposed works are currently unknown.
- 1.1.2 RSK Biocensus was appointed by Tata Steel to complete surveys around the gas holder to confirm the presence/absence of nesting birds, particularly peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) as peregrine have historically nested on the gas holder. A check for badger activity of the area surrounding the gas holder was also requested, as a previous survey in 2024¹ identified a badger sett approximately 200m from the facility.
- 1.1.3 It is understood that the gas holder will be demolished by cutting and controlled use of explosives (a single explosion not anticipated to be repeated). The nearest structures which could potentially be used by roosting bats were buildings over 200m north-west of the gas holder. Due to distance, the noise and vibration from a single explosion was not considered likely to disturb roosting bats therefore no further surveys for bats was considered necessary.
- 1.1.4 This report presents the results of the surveys that were undertaken between March and May 2025 inclusive. The badger survey covered an area of at least 100m radius around the gas holder, where access allowed, and involved checking for signs of activity and if any new setts had been created within the vicinity.

1.2 Legislation

- 1.2.1 Table 1 provides a summary of the legislation relevant to breeding birds and badgers birds in Wales.

Table 1 Legislation relevant to breeding birds and badgers in Wales.

Legislation	Protection/duties
The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) ²	Affords protection to all wild birds, their nests and eggs.

¹ RSK Biocensus (October 2024), 2487033 - P & C EAF - Badger Survey Report REV00. RSK

² Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). London: HMSO.

Legislation	Protection/duties
Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (as amended) ³	Places a duty on public bodies to maintain and enhance species of principal importance when exercising their duties, e.g. when giving permissions or consents.
The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 ⁴	Affords protection to badgers and their setts.

³ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). [Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents> - accessed February 2025].

⁴ The Protection of Badgers Act 1992. London: HMSO. [Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents> - accessed February 2025].

2.0 METHODS

2.1 Nesting Peregrine surveys

- 2.1.1 The surveys for nesting peregrines, and other bird species, were undertaken from March to May 2025 inclusive and comprised three survey visits, during which a suitably experienced RSK Biocensus ornithologist observed any signs of breeding activity from nesting peregrines, and other bird species, on and around the gas holder. Data from all bird species encountered (either visually or through their vocalisations) was inputted onto ArcGIS Field Maps software using standard BTO species codes and behaviour notation⁵. The behaviours birds were exhibiting during the visit were recorded, such as feeding (including foraging behaviour), singing, calling, perching, roosting, and loafing (displaying relaxed behaviour not related to foraging, breeding, or predator evasion).
- 2.1.2 Surveys were undertaken in suitable weather conditions, avoiding extreme temperatures, or wind, mist/fog during which bird activity may be atypical and/or surveying may be impractical. The dates, timings, and weather conditions for the three survey visits are indicated in Table 2.

2.2 Badger survey

- 2.2.1 During the first survey visit for nesting peregrines, a second surveyor (experienced senior ecologist) also undertook a survey of all areas within a 100m buffer of the gas holder to check for any signs of badger activity, including footprints, tunnels, foraging signs and droppings. All data was inputted onto ArcGIS Field Maps. Timing and weather conditions for the badger visit are in Table 2.

Table 2 Survey dates and weather conditions

Survey visit	Date	Surveys undertaken	Timing	Temperature (°C)	Weather conditions
1	31/03/2025	Peregrine and badger	10:40-13:10	12-14	Cloud 2/8 (very high), dry, light breeze, excellent visibility
2	23/04/2025	Peregrine	10:30-13:00	13-14	Cloud 6/8, dry, light air, excellent visibility
3	15/05/2025	Peregrine	10:00 - 12:30	15-17	Cloud 1/8, dry, breeze, excellent visibility

⁵ Marchant, J.H. (1983) *BTO Common Birds Census instructions*. BTO, Tring
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Survey visit	Date	Surveys undertaken	Timing	Temperature (°C)	Weather conditions

2.3 Limitations

- 2.3.1 The surveys were undertaken at the appropriate time of year to record the species potentially present on Site. All survey visits were undertaken at appropriate times of day.
- 2.3.2 It should be noted that nesting birds are transient and badgers are highly mobile, and that the distributions of species may be subject to change. It is anticipated that works would be carried out before the next nesting bird season. However, if works are planned to be carried out during the nesting bird season, further survey would be required. Vigilance for any new badger activity should also be maintained prior to and during works or if works are significantly delayed then a check for any new badger setts would be recommended.

2.4 Quality assurance

The survey data collection and reporting were undertaken by RSK Biocensus ornithologists who are experienced in conducting ornithology work in relevant habitats. These ornithologists are CIEEM members at the appropriate level and follow their code of professional conduct when undertaking ecological work.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Nesting bird surveys

- 3.1.1 No peregrines or any other nesting birds were identified on or near the gas holder on either of the three visits. Although, it was noted that other bird species regularly use the gas holder as a perching post. These species are listed on the table below.

Table 3 Summary of species recorded during the 2024/25 surveys

Common Name	Scientific Name	Peak Count	Behaviour and Distribution
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	2	Up to two birds present around the site, either perching on the gas holder or hunting in the vicinity. No nesting activity recorded.
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	2	Recorded carrying nesting material up to a perch on visit 1. Seen perching again on visit 2 but no nests identified. No records from visit 3.
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	2	Bird seen perching on tower on visit 1, and two seen perching on same area in visit 3.
Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	2	Recorded singing in the vegetation within 30m to the west of the proposed demolition.

- 3.1.2 None of the above species were recorded nesting so nesting birds are not currently a constraint to the demolition of the gas holder. Should demolition be delayed beyond March 2026 then breeding bird surveys may need to be repeated to confirm nesting birds continue not to be a constraint to demolition.

3.2 Badger surveys

- 3.2.1 The only sign of activity noted during the visit were two trails of footprints along the track that runs 50m north of the facility. However no badger setts were identified within 100m of the gas holder. Therefore, badgers are not considered a constraint to the demolition of the gas holder

Figures

Figure 1 Site Location Plan and 100m buffer survey area



Legend:

- MCO gas holder
- 100m buffer for badger survey



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TITLE: Figure 1:
Site Location Plan - Gas Holder

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Metres

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