

# Clwydian Ecology

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**ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT FOR**

**LAND AT CROWN STREET**

**GWALCHMAI, ANGLESEY**

**NORTH WALES**

**For AMP CONSTRUCTION**

**11<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

## Summary

- A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out for an area of land located off Crown Street, Gwalchmai, Anglesey, North Wales.
- The survey was required to assess the site in respect of a proposed planning application for a small housing development.
- The land is located near the centre of the village adjacent to an existing housing development.
- The proposed development area comprises semi-improved grassland with boundary hedgerows and a small shed/animal shelter.
- Based upon existing information there do not appear to be any protected species issues.
- No further survey work is thought to be required based upon the existing level of information.
- Mitigation will include the installation of bat and bird boxes, set back fencing to widen hedges and create a rough grass/scrub edge.

## **1. Introduction**

### Background

An ecological survey was undertaken on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022 in respect of an area of land located off Crown Street, Gwalchmai, Anglesey, North Wales. The brief was to carry out a walkover survey and assess the ecological value of the site. The current proposals are for the construction of a small residential housing development. Recommendations for mitigation, ecological enhancement and further surveys will be made as required.

### Ecological context

The site is located within the village adjacent to the main road with houses to the side and front. The grassland at the time of the survey was uncut and there was no grazing. It appears that the fields may have previously been grazed by horses because there is a small shed/shelter at the side with a dense growth of dock leaves around this area where the ground has been trampled. The hedgerows are generally tall, thick and uncut, the hedge along the south-west boundary has started to develop a light scrub edge.

### Personnel

The survey was carried out by David Bennett who has over 20 years experience of conservation work, ecological surveys and species licensing.

## **2. Methods**

### Background data search

A background data search was undertaken for designated sites and species records within 1 Km of the site (COFNOD North Wales Environmental Information Service).

### Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

A Phase 1 habitat survey was carried out following standard methodology. This involved walking over the site classifying areas of land into a habitat type. Target notes were made (where required) in respect of any habitats or features of interest and any sightings of protected or rare species.

The suitability of the habitat for protected species (or other species of ecological interest) were also assessed at the same time. Those additional species (site dependent) can include bats, badgers, great crested newt, otters and water voles.

This is generally undertaken by looking for field signs such as footprints, droppings, feeding remains, latrines, worn paths, vegetation structure, shelter availability, foraging resources etc.

### Constraints

There were no constraints, all areas of the land were accessible, the small shed/animal shelter was open fronted.

## **5. Results**

### General

The exact site size is unknown but the area where the new houses will be built is probably less than one hectare.

### Background data search

Data was obtained from COFNOD and there are no protected species records for the proposed development site. There are numerous records for hedgehog within the area.

Cors Bodwrog is located north of the site on the far side of the main road running through Gwalchmai, this is well away from the proposed development area so there would be no impact upon species or habitat.

Relevant protected and notable species records are shown in the attached document provided by COFNOD.

### Habitats

#### Improved/semi-improved grassland

Species noted include creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, chickweed *Stellaria media*, common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, curled dock *Rumex crispus*, broad leaved plantain *Plantago major*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, ragwort *Senecio jacobea*, perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, false oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, annual meadow grass *Poa annua*, soft brome *Bromus hordeaceus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, false oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, crested dogs tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, cocks foot *Dactylis glomerata*, red clover *Trifolium pratense*, broad leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, daisy *Bellis perennis*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium*. The edges have started to become more scrubby with bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, bramble *Rubus agg* and hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*.

## Hedgerows

Hedgerow species include hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, European gorse *Ulex europaeus*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and blackthorn *prunus spinosa*.

## **Faunal species**

### Badgers

No areas of badger digging, sett entrances, outliers or latrines were found anywhere within or near the area of the site affected by the proposal. There is one small hole at the base of the hedge on the rear boundary (shown in photos) but this was attributed to rabbits.

### Bats

The small shed/field shelter was inspected, no evidence of bats was found, it is not really suitable.

### Great crested newts and amphibians

There are no ponds or waterbodies on the site and there are no known issues in respect of great crested newts. Amphibians such as common frog and toad may be found in the area.

### Reptiles

There was no evidence of reptiles which could be seen during the walk-over survey and the habitat is not really suitable.

### Birds

Birds will use the boundary hedgerows for nesting and general shelter as well as any areas of scrub in and around the field edge.

### Hedgehogs

The COFNOD data shows hedgehog records in and around the local area so presence should be assumed.

## **6. Evaluation and Legislation**

All of the plants recorded during this survey are widespread at both national and county scales. The list of plant species is not definitive and only represents those recorded while walking around the site.

The presence of a species protected under European or UK legislation is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal which, if carried out would be likely to result in disturbance or harm to the species or its habitat. Section 74 (2) of the CroW Act 2000 (now updated by Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 requires the publication of lists of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biological diversity. The list is regularly changed and updated and many bat species appear on it. NERC consolidates the requirements of the CROW Act in placing duties upon government agencies, including local authorities, to ensure the conservation of Biodiversity.

### **Habitats**

The main ecological interest for the site is the hedgerows, the rank grassland (due to grazing having been removed) provides some habitat for insects and it will also attract small mammals such as voles.

### **Invasive species**

At the time of the survey no invasive plant species were observed anywhere in or around the site.

### **Badgers**

Badgers are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Under this Act it is illegal to destroy, damage or obstruct access to a sett or disturb a badger while it is using the sett. A sett is defined by the Act as any structure or place showing signs of current or recent occupation by a badger. Under the current interpretation of the Act a license is required for the following operations:

- a. Use of hand tools within 10 metres of a badger sett
- b. Use of light machinery within 20 metres of a badger sett
- c. Use of heavy machinery within 30 metres of a badger sett

**Based upon the results of the site visit there do not appear to be any issues in respect of badgers or their setts at the present time. Because they are a mobile species the situation could change during the period of any extant planning permission.**

## **Bats**

Bats and their roosts are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994. The Habitats Directive has recently been superseded by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 which came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. This makes it unlawful to harm, disturb, or destroy either bats or their roosts. Any work which may potentially disturb a roost (whether bats are present or not) may require a license.

To summarise it is illegal not only to intentionally kill, injure or take any bat but also too recklessly or intentionally damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection, or to disturb a bat while it is occupying such a place. A roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time. The reason for this is that bats have a tendency to remain loyal to certain roost sites, often over a long period of time.

**There are no known issues in respect of bats, no hedgerows appear to require removal as part of the proposal.**

## **Great crested newts**

The great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* is listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended), and is afforded full protection under the terms of Section 9. This makes it an offence if any person:

9(1) “... *intentionally kills, injures or takes* [a great crested newt]”;

9(2) “... *has in his possession or control any live or dead* [great crested newt] *or any part of, or anything derived from such an animal*”; 9(4) “... *intentionally or recklessly (a) damages or destroys, or obstructs access to, any structure or place which* [a great crested newt] *uses for shelter or protection; or (b) disturbs any such animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose*”;

9(5) “... (a) sells, offers or exposes for sale, or has in his possession or transports for the purpose of sale, any live or dead [great crested newt], or any part of, or anything derived from, such an animal; or (b) publishes or causes to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying that he buys or sells, or intends to buy or sell, any of those things”.

Great crested newts are also afforded additional protection through inclusion on Schedule 2 (“European protected species”) of **The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)**, which transpose into British law the European Community’s **Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)**. The Habitats Directive has recently been superseded by “**The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010**”, this came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010.

**There are no known issues in respect of great crested newts and no further work is required in this respect.**

### **Reptiles**

All species of British reptile are protected against intentional killing, injury or sale under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The Sand Lizard and the Smooth Snake are afforded a higher degree of protection under Regulation 41 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 making it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, take or injure these species of reptile.
- Damage, destroy or obstruct a place a these species use for breeding, resting, shelter or protection or to disturb these species in such a place.
- Possess or control these species alive or dead, or any part of them, or anything derived from them.
- Sell, offer for sale, advertise for sale or offer to these species, or a part of them or anything derived from them.
- Deliberately disturb or deliberately take or destroy the eggs of these species.

The distribution of Smooth Snakes and Sand Lizards is limited to heathland habitats in Surrey, Dorset, Hampshire and Sussex. The Sand Lizard is also known to occur on sand dune habitats in Merseyside and has recently been introduced to some areas of North Wales.

Licenses can be issued in order to allow activities that would constitute an offence under the legislation. Licenses can be issued for specific purposes including scientific study, photography, conservation management and development.

In England and Wales a development license must be obtained from Natural England or the Welsh Government before undertaking any works that will affect Sand Lizards or Smooth Snakes or their habitat. A license is not required to carry out surveys or mitigation for other reptile species.

**Based upon the site survey and the COFNOD data it seems unlikely that there are any issues in respect of reptile species for this site.**



### **Nesting birds**

All breeding birds are protected under Section 1(1) and 1(2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. This makes it an offence to damage, disturb, or obstruct access to nests during the bird breeding season (generally March to August).

**Birds will nest in the hedgerows/scrub edge and there are numerous nests within the field shelter. Any removal of hedgerow (none appears to be required) would need to be carried out between September and February inclusive to avoid any potential disturbance to nesting birds, the same date applies to any removal or disturbance of the shed/field shelter and the band of light scrub along the edge.**

### **Hedgehogs**

Hedgehogs are protected by law under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it illegal to kill or capture them using certain methods.

**It is likely that hedgehogs will be present within the hedgerows and surrounding habitat. Care will need to be taken to ensure that they are not disturbed during any ground/excavation works. Any open footings/excavations should have a rough plank of wood (or multiple planks if there are a number of open footings) left in them to allow hedgehogs to escape.**

## **7. Recommendations**

### **Habitats**

There should be minimal disturbance to habitats other than the removal of top-soil to facilitate the groundworks. Efforts should be made to fence out the majority of the east section of the site to prevent it being used for tipping and general storage of materials during the construction process. The remaining hedgerows (which will be behind the houses) should be fenced off during construction to prevent any damage.

### **Protected species**

There do not appear to be any issues with protected species based upon the results of the site visit and the available COFNOD data.

## **Ecological enhancement**

Current planning policy requires that development projects minimise ecological damage, they should also include ecological enhancement. Bat and bird boxes will be included within the structure of each house. A total of 36 Schwegler Type 24 swift bricks (32 mm hole) will be installed within the new walls on the north or east elevation walls at least 3-4 metres above ground to avoid disturbance (split between each property as the elevations permit). These boxes are multi-purpose and can be used by house sparrows, blue tits etc as well as swifts and other species.

Each building will have a Vivara Pro Build-in WoodStone Bat Box installed into the wall on the south or west facing elevation. Each box will be installed high up and out of reach either below a ridge or just below the eaves as the design/elevations permit – eighteen should be installed in total.

The hedgerow on the southern and eastern boundary (and just outside the development area) will be fenced back fenced about 3 metres back into the field. This will allow the hedgerow to grow wider and thicker which will in turn benefit wildlife, especially nesting birds, this will also provide some uncut rough grassland edges.

## **Biodiversity offsetting**

In some cases, biodiversity offsetting may be required as part of the consenting process. This is a last resort option that should only be used if there are impacts which cannot be avoided, mitigated or compensated for. In this case that should not be required.

## **8. Relevant literature**

Institute for Ecology & Environmental Management (2012) *Guidelines for Ecological Appraisal* IEEM Winchester

Rose, F. (1989) *Grasses, Sedges and Ferns* Viking Press

Stace, C. (2005) *New Flora of the British Isles* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

## Appendix 1 – Species list

<b>Trees and shrubs</b>	
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus agg</i>
Dog Rose	<i>Rosa Canina</i>
European gorse	<i>Ulex europeus</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Cratagus monogyna</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>

<b>Herbs</b>	
Annual meadow grass	<i>Poa annua</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus agg</i>
Broad leaved plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>
Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Cocksfoot	<i>Dactylus glomerata</i>
Common bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>
Common nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Common sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>
Creeping bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>
Creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Crested dogs tail	<i>Cynosaurus cristatus</i>
Curled dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>
False oat grass	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius,</i>
Hogweed	<i>Hieracleum sphondylium</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Male fern	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>
Perrenial rye grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobea</i>
Red campio	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Red clover	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>
Red fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>
Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Silverweed	<i>Potentilla anserina</i>
Soft brome	<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>
Spear thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>

## Photos

Site entrance with small field shelter on the right



Looking east from the entrance



**Front boundary wall facing the road**



**Looking south-east**



**Looking north from the rear of the site**



**Looking north-east towards Llain Rallt**





**Small rabbit hole at the base of the hedge**



**Looking east far corner of the field**



**Looking north-west from rear boundary**



**Nest in the field shelter**

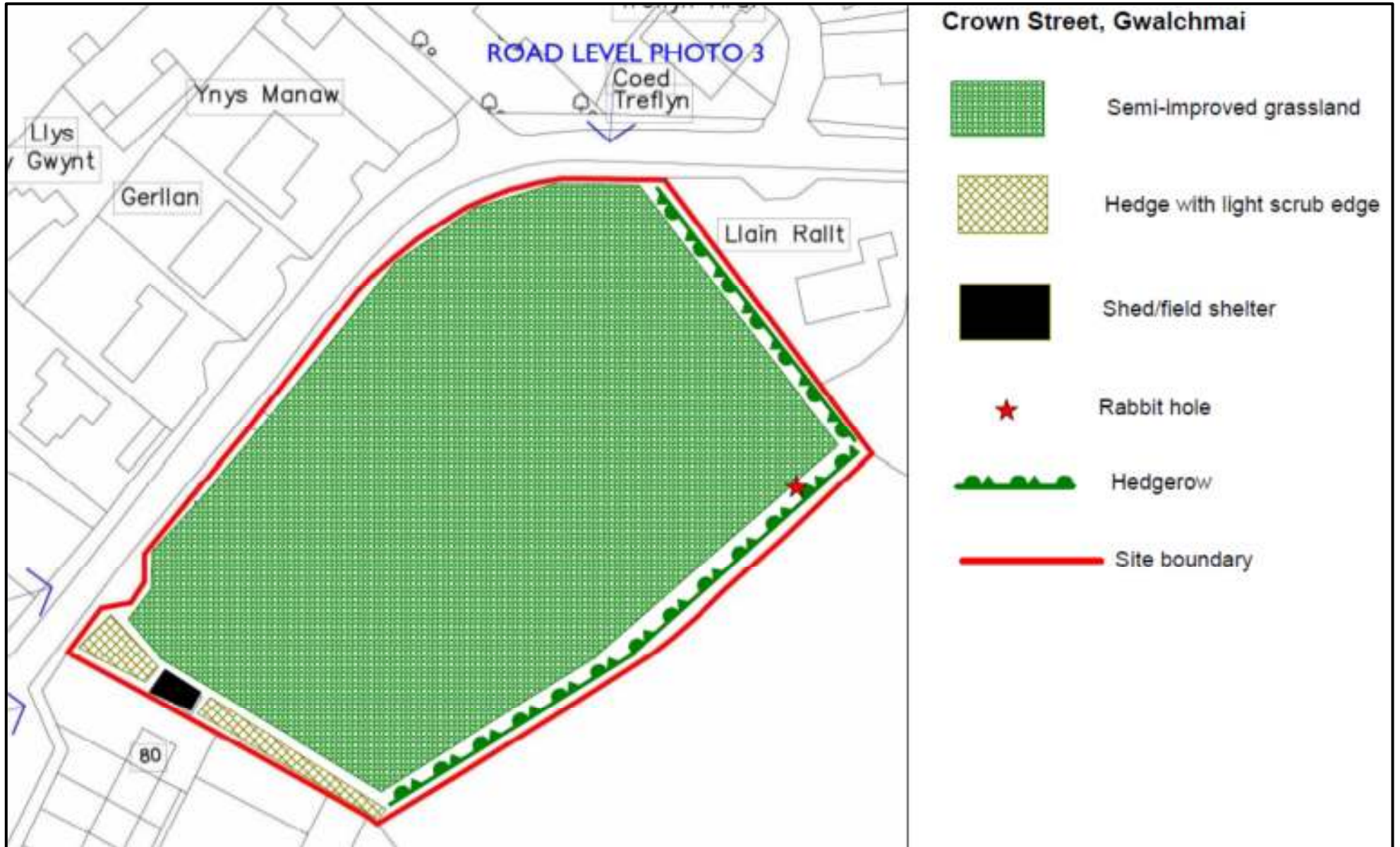




**One of several nests in the field shelter**



**Appendix 2 – Site plan**





# E-mapper COFNOD plan – Public version

