

Appendix 6.2. Stakeholder Meeting Records

Caerphilly County Borough Council Meeting: Mynydd Maen Wind Farm

05 June 2023. 15:00-16:10

Present: Erica Dixon (CCBC), Chris Jackson (RES), James Garside (BSG)

A summary of key actions and discussion points is below. A summary of all of the work previously completed had been provided to CCBC by email on 02/06/2023 to inform the meeting.

Item	Details	Action
1	<p>Introductions</p> <p>JG gave a brief background / purpose of the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCBC, RES and BSG last met to discuss this project in May 2021. • There has been a lot of ornithological and ecological work completed at the site since then, and the project design has also moved forward. • We also met with Torfaen CBC at that time and have had a similar update meeting with them recently. • We couldn't secure a meeting with NRW despite repeated attempts. • BSG / RES did get some comment from NRW eventually via PEDW's response to the scoping report for the site. • RES are now starting to move towards EIA, so it seemed a logical time to revisit the project. <p>JG stated that what BSG / RES would like to get out of the meeting was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity that ED feels CCBC have been appropriately consulted and (ideally) are content with the scope of survey work. • A clear indication of anything CCBC are not content with, so that BSG / RES can act on it. 	
2	<p>Overview of Project</p> <p>CJ provided an update on the project and intended timelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-application consultation is planned for June / July 2023. • Application is planned for September / October 2023. • CJ displayed a plan showing the updated red line boundary, and described: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The positions of 13 turbines. ○ The likely layout of the access track. • Developing on common land means deregistering areas where infrastructure will be and adding in additional areas from around the fringes to compensate for the loss. • These areas will need to be looked at under a replacement land application. • RES were previously looking at Twmbarlwm, but are now looking at three alternative parcels adjacent to the common to the north and east. 	

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Summary of Ornithology

JG summarised the methods of the ornithology survey to date:

- Two years of survey (each with a breeding season and winter) have been completed to date, all in accordance with SNH et al (2017) guidance and raptor survey methods recommended by Hardey *et al.*
- 36 hours of VP survey has been conducted in each season, from three VP locations.
- Additional VP work was conducted in August - September 2022.
- In both breeding seasons, raptor survey on site and within 1-2 km of it (according to species / guidance) was conducted. This involved checks of quarries, cliffs, buildings and forest edge.
- Targeted goshawk survey was also conducted during late winter / early spring 2021.
- Breeding wader survey was conducted during 2020 (Year 1) and was scoped out ahead of 2021 (Year 2).
- Nightjar survey was conducted during both years.

And summarised the key findings:

- Kestrel. The most frequently recorded target species during the breeding season. Activity was highest in the NE part of the site. Juveniles were present from late summer in both years suggesting local breeding, but no nest site was located. Activity peaked in August / September 2022. Activity was lower in winter.
- Goshawk. Recorded occasionally from VPs. A nest site was located to the west – within approximately 1 km, and was likely to have been successful in 2021 (juveniles were recorded in mid-summer).
- Peregrine. A nest site was located within 1 km (to the N) in 2020 but was not present in 2021. Locally breeding birds appear to primarily forage away from the site.
- Hobby. Recorded occasionally from VPs in both breeding seasons and during August – September 2022 (4, 12 and 2 flights respectively). No evidence of local breeding was recorded during targeted raptor survey work.
- Red kite. Present frequently throughout the year. No evidence of local breeding was recorded during targeted raptor survey work.
- Long-eared owl nest fledged two young within 1 km of the site during 2020 (breeding season). Not present in 2021.
- Other species (each with 6 flights or fewer) were merlin, osprey, hen harrier, short-eared owl, marsh harrier, golden plover and kittiwake (the latter being a notable inland sighting).
- Nightjar. 13 territories were recorded in 2020, 14 in 2021, all in plantation and clearfell off Site. Territory locations were similar between years. Birds were recorded foraging low over the site.

ED confirmed that she was satisfied with the scope of the ornithology work.

4	<p>Summary of Ecology</p> <p>JG summarised the methods and findings of all ecology survey work to date:</p> <p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <p>Initial Phase 1 of the site was conducted in July 2020, and updated in August 2022. The access route was surveyed in April 2022.</p> <p>Key findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unenclosed upland mostly comprises a series of SINCS. • Some Section 7 habitats (wet heath and acid flushes on open ground and sections of hedgerow along the access route) and some Annex 1 habitats are present. • Some loss of the heath habitats are unavoidable, but the flushes are around the fringes and are likely to be avoided. <p><u>Great Crested Newts</u></p> <p>JG presented a figure showing all pond locations, and summarised the work and findings to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following initial Habitat Suitability Index assessments of all ponds on site, eDNA surveys were completed of five on-site ponds in 2020. Negative results were returned for all ponds. As BSG were aware of recent records, surveys were repeated in 2021, with samples collected from 10 ponds. • Presence / absence survey of Ponds 1-3 were conducted during 2021, and found small populations of GCN in all three, along with eggs (indicating breeding). • Presence / absence at Pond 15 during 2022 found a moderate GCN population, and eggs. <p>In spring 2023 ponds 1-4 are being resurveyed, and HSI and eDNA of the others on site has been conducted, supplemented by torching and egg searching.</p> <p>ED noted the apparent discrepancy in the eDNA results from 2020, and stated approval of the 2023 repeat and supplementary torching and egg searching.</p> <p>ED Highlighted the acidity of the water as a possible reason for the apparent reduced reliability of the eDNA survey.</p> <p>JG also highlighted the possibility that water had been pumped into the pond by the farmer before the samples were taken in 2020, citing the presence of a pipe from the farm to ponds 2 and 3.</p> <p><u>Bats</u></p> <p>JG summarised the bat survey methods and key findings to date were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary roost assessment of the ruined building and trees on / adjacent to the Site and access track, during 2021 and 2022
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	<p>respectively. 14 trees within 250 m of proposed infrastructure / turbine locations were found to have moderate potential. Most are above Cwm Lickey (10) with the remainder along the access track (4).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An emergence survey of the building on site (which has low potential to support roosting bats), during June 2021. No evidence of roosting bats was recorded. • Activity data collection from the indicative locations of twelve turbines on 10 nights (from each location) in Spring, Summer and Autumn 2021 (in accordance with SNH (now Nature Scot) 2019 guidance), and the deployment of a weather station on site so that bat data can be linked to weather data. • Most activity involved pipistrelles and noctule. Other species (including greater and lesser horseshoe bats) were recorded less frequently. • Low activity was recorded close to sunset and sunrise, suggesting no / very little roosting locally. <p>Climbed inspections of the trees assessed as having moderate roost potential were conducted during April and May 2023. No roosting bats were recorded.</p> <p>ED noted historical records of barbastelle in a quarry above Cwmbran.</p> <p>JG stated that barbastelle were not recorded during the work on site.</p> <p><u>Otter and Water Vole</u></p> <p>Watercourses on site were surveyed in June and September 2021. During July 2022 watercourses adjacent to the access track were surveyed.</p> <p>No evidence of otter or water vole was recorded during any survey visit.</p> <p><u>Dormouse</u></p> <p>Survey of the main site was not conducted due to a lack of suitable habitat.</p> <p>Hedgerows along the access track were surveyed during 2022. 55 nest tubes were deployed. No dormouse or evidence of their presence was recorded.</p> <p>ED confirmed that she would not expect dormouse survey of the main site, considering the lack of suitable habitat.</p> <p><u>Badger</u></p> <p>No setts or evidence of presence were recorded during the Phase 1 survey. A pre-construction check for active badger setts will be conducted.</p> <p><u>Reptiles</u></p> <p>Common lizard were recorded incidentally on site. Nigel Hand completed an adder habitat assessment in 2022, which found that suitable habitat is present in the NE part of the site.</p> <p>ED stated that presence of common reptile species should be assumed (without the need for survey) and that sensitive working practices should be implemented during the construction phase.</p>	
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Silurian moth

Following the meeting in April 2021, Owain Gabb spoke to Martin Anthony (who has since passed away).

Martin provided the following information:

- Silurian Moth is only known from sites above 450 m asl. A Butterfly Conservation (BC) report of 2018 confirms range as 450-655 m asl (there is only a very small part of the site that exceeds 450 m altitude (the high point being 472 m asl)).
- It is found in areas where bilberry and heath bedstraw foodplants are growing up through tussocky grass and moss, which reduces apparently suitable habitat further.

Historical survey work commissioned by CCW did not record the species in the area (Waring – cited by Anthony).

A south-east Wales survey for Silurian moth (Tordoff & Williams, 2018) scoped the site out as unsuitable (based on modelling of parameters).

JG stated that BSG are working with BC to survey a site elsewhere for Silurian this year. George Tordoff has stated that the species may be contracting its range due to climate.

It follows that we have not completed survey for Silurian moth at MM.

ED asked whether marsh fritillary had been considered during the work.

JG stated that no targeted survey for this species had been conducted, but that no devil's-bit scabious had been recorded within marshy grassland on site.

ED proposed that if any marshy grassland fell within the infrastructure layout of the site (once frozen), it could be surveyed for devil's-bit scabious.

ED stated that she was satisfied with the scope of the ecology work and was pleased with the thorough approach to the work.

JG asked ED if CCBC currently have local biodiversity enhancement schemes for which funding could be offered, as there are limitations as to the level of on-site enhancement that can be implemented due to the common land use of the site.

ED listed:

- Plant a patch (wildflower planting scheme).
- Willow tit and swift nest box scheme.
- Enhancement work for curlew at a breeding site in the north of the county.

ED suggested pond creation to strengthen the GCN population on site, to create a stepping-stone between ponds 1-3 and the remainder of the site. This could help to avoid a local extinction of this population. This would constitute priority habitat creation.

	Given difficulties with management, ED stated she would like to see a robust monitoring programme (particularly for bat and bird fatalities).	
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Meeting Ends 16:10

Caerphilly County Borough Council Meeting: Mynydd Maen Wind Farm

13 May 2021. 11:00-12:30

Present: Erica Dixon (Caerphilly Council Ecologist), Owain Gabb, Rachel Taylor (BSG Ecology), Chris Jackson (RES Ltd). Apologies Margaret Iles (Caerphilly Council Principal Ecologist)

A summary of key actions and discussion points is below. An outline of all of the work previously completed had been provided to CCBC by email on 11/03/2021 to inform the meeting.

Item	Details	Action
1	<p>Purpose of the Meeting Following introductions RT gave an overview of the purpose of the meeting. This was to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a summary of work completed to date, and key issues identified. - Provide an overview of, and ideally agree the ecological scope of works for the site ahead of EIA. - Identify any concerns CCBC have with regard to ecology / ornithology at Mynydd Maen, and whether they would like to see any changes to the proposed scope of work. 	
2	<p>Project Introduction CJ provided an initial overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mynydd Maen is a proposed ~16 turbine Wind Farm on land within the County Boroughs of Torfaen and Caerphilly. - CJ shared a plan showing indicative turbine locations and constraints to the buildable area. - The turbines will be up to 149.9 m height, based on early landscape and visual feasibility studies. - Access arrangements are yet to be finalised. Working plan is to bring Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) in from the south west from junction 28 of the M4, up the A467 to Newbridge, then through the Panside Estate along Old Pant Road and up onto the site. - All cabling will be underground between the turbines and the substation, Western Power Distribution will then link up to the grid from the sub-station. - Targeting planning submission for wind farm is Q2/3 2022 - This is a development of national significance and is within a National Development Framework Pre Assessed Area for renewable energy. The application will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and determined by Welsh ministers. CCBC will be asked to provide a local impact report. Common land consent will be required. <p>ED indicated that she was familiar with the area and had no questions.</p>	
3	<p>Ecological Consultation RT explained that requests for consultation had been carried out with Torfaen County Borough Council in April and requests had been made to Natural Resources Wales but that no dates had been secured at this point.</p>	

<p>4</p>	<p>Desk Study RT provided an overview of sources of desk-based data sources identified and secured. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEWBRc data - NBN data - Gwent bird reports / the Gwent Avifauna - The UK Government’s Magic website <p>RT mentioned that Steve Williams (Torfaen County Borough Council) had suggested getting in touch with Gwent Ornithological Society, specifically Steve Roberts and Jerry Lewis. BSG have contact details for both.</p> <p>RT asked if there were other sources of information that CCBC were aware of that could be used to inform the scope of works. ED agreed with Steve Williams and was happy with the scope of the desk study.</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>Ornithology OG noted that the breeding season report for 2020 had been provided.</p> <p>This would now be updated to be a Year 1 report (including the winter results), which would be provided when complete.</p> <p>OG stated that work completed in 2020 had been closely based on SNH (2017) guidance and comprised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breeding season VP work. 36 hours of survey was completed at each of 3 VPs overlooking the site between April and July inclusive. - Winter VP survey, using the same three locations between October 2020 and March 2021. - Raptor survey of an area extending 1-2 km around the turbines. The distances vary by species, with GI and HY to 1 km and other Schedule 1 raptors (as relevant) to 2 km in accordance with SNH guidance. Quarries, cliffs, building, forest edge and mature stands - Wader survey of moorland within approximately 800 m of indicative turbine locations. Based on Brown & Shepherd method. Adjusted to 4 visits in line with SNH (2017). - Nightjar reccy followed by walked transect with stopping points on 2 dates in both June and July. <p>VP Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 22 red kite flights over the breeding season. A good proportion around the slopes on the edges of the site. Mainly singletons and twos. Relatively even spread over May-July - Goshawk activity mainly west of the site. April, June and July. - Peregrine activity throughout the season. 28 minutes of flight activity recorded including apparent adults and a juvenile bird. A lot of this over the northern edge of the site. - Almost 3 hours of kestrel activity at collision risk height - Periodic hobby flights. April, May, July. <p>Raptor Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No evidence to suggest any raptors nested within the site boundary - Peregrine nest recorded approximately 500 m to north of site. - Active kestrel nest not located. One disused nest site found in a quarry approx. 550 m east of site. - Short-eared owl seen twice in May, but no indication of breeding. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breeding long-eared owl towards the edge of the plantation to the west. <p>Wader Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 snipe recorded in April were the only records of waders on site. Likely to have been spring passage birds. <p>Nightjar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appears abundant in suitable plantation habitats (clearfell and pre-thicket growth). Churring males recorded in 13 discrete locations. - Some use of site noted – a NJ was seen sitting on a track. It is likely that they forage over the moorland in suitable weather conditions. <p>Non focal species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Red grouse (mainly in north) - Raven (breeds locally – Mynydd Henllys quarry) - Most common breeding birds skylark and meadow pipit. Other species include stonechat, wheatear, whinchat, and (likely) cuckoo <p>Overview of Winter 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kestrel and red kite activity continued, albeit at lower levels. - Hen harrier seen in October / November (low level flights involving a minimum of two birds – an adult male and a 1st winter) - Goshawk territory identified from work in February and March in plantation to the south-west of the site <p>Main issues are likely to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collision of kestrel - Collision of peregrine (this could vary considerably depending on layout as many flights are peripheral to the development area) <p>During 2021/22 we will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repeat the breeding and winter VP work. - Repeat the raptor survey work and incorporate some early season goshawk display survey (this latter is now done) - Not repeat the wader work - Extend the NJ work to 3 nights on 2 occasions <p>ED asked whether impacts on ground nesting birds (such as skylark and meadow pipit) would be considered. OG confirmed that we would review the available research, but that some displacement during construction of tracks / turbine bases and occasional collision may occur. There is no collision risk model for passerines.</p> <p>ED noted that there had been 3 osprey passes recorded in Rudry (10.5 km south west of the site) in late April / early May. No osprey passes have been recorded during VP work at Mynydd Maen.</p> <p>ED indicated that she was happy with the scope of the bird work, including the decision not to repeat wader survey in 2021.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Phase 1</p> <p>RT stated that the Phase 1 survey of the site had been completed in July 2020. The survey included the attribution of habitats to NVC categories in the field by an experienced botanist.</p> <p>The Site is an area of unenclosed upland and is almost entirely covered by a series of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (a non-statutory designation). Much of the level ground within the site supports dry heath (an Annex 1 priority habitat).</p>	

	<p>There are also several Section 7 (Environment Wales Act, 2016) priority habitats present including wet heath and acid flushes (although the latter is located on steeply sloping ground at the fringes of the site and unlikely to be within the buildable area). These are potential groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTEs).</p> <p>Other habitats include acid grassland, marshy grassland, poor semi-improved grassland, improved grassland, plantation woodland, bracken, dry stream beds and ponds.</p> <p>No further habitat survey was proposed.</p> <p>Habitats on and around the Site have potential to support a range of protected species including bats, ground nesting birds, badger, great crested newt (GCN) and dormouse.</p> <p>ED agreed with the scope and findings of the Phase 1 habitat survey.</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>Great Crested Newt</p> <p>GCN eDNA surveys were completed on five ponds in 2020 (seven ponds additional that appear on OS maps were dry at the time of survey). Negative results were returned for all ponds. As the desk study returned records for GCN in one of the ponds (Pond 3) from 2019, we are repeating survey in 2021.</p> <p>Survey has included eDNA survey of ten ponds which held water on 15 April and presence / absence survey of Pond 1, 2 and 3 which are all connected by drainage channels. Following the meeting the eDNA results came back positive for two of the ponds (Pond 1 and 3), and GCN have been recorded during standard surveys at Ponds 1, 2 and 3.</p> <p>ED indicated that she was happy that presence / absence surveys were being completed, as eDNA of upland ponds can be unreliable in her experience.</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Bats</p> <p>RT confirmed that bat data collection will be complete in 2021 in line with current guidance (SNH <i>et al</i>, 2019).</p> <p>This will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data collection from the indicative locations of twelve turbines. 10 nights of data will be collected from each location in each of, Spring, Summer and Autumn 2021. - The deployment of a weather station on site so that bat data can be linked to weather data. - Roost survey (emergence / re-entry surveys) of buildings and trees on site within 250 m of potential turbine locations. There is a derelict building which has low potential for roosting bats. <p>RT noted that there were concerns on potential theft of equipment, and that locations around the site had been selected with this in mind. She also noted that given the number of detectors deployed, characterisation of bat activity across the site should still be possible if there are some losses.</p> <p>ED agreed with the scope of the bat work. She noted that there is a greater horseshoe bat roost at Navigation Colliery (3 km to west), records of lesser horseshoe bat, long-eared bat sp., soprano and common pipistrelle at a housing development application in Hafodryns (1.5 km to north west), and</p>	

	<p>a barbastelle roost in a quarry in Torfaen (from Tirpentwys Quarry 2.5 km to north). Serotine and Nathusius' pipistrelle have also been recorded locally.</p> <p>ED asked if there were any open mine workings on site, CJ confirmed that there are no open mine entries or mine workings on site.</p> <p>ED asked that the use of acoustic deterrents are considered within impact analysis.</p>	RT
9	<p>Other Protected Species <i>Otter and Water Vole</i></p> <p>RT stated that there was an intention to survey for otter and water vole in habitats within 200 m of wind farm infrastructure. Most of these habitats are sub-optimal but are connected to watercourses in the wider area used by otter. Checks for water vole will be completed at the same time, however the upper reaches of the water courses are considered unsuitable.</p> <p><i>Dormouse</i></p> <p>Habitats on Site are unlikely to support dormouse and no further survey is currently planned. Impacts on any suitable habitats around the access route will be considered once this is confirmed.</p> <p><i>Badger</i></p> <p>No setts or other evidence of badger were identified during the Phase 1 survey, although woodland at the edge of the site are suitable for sett building. A pre-development check is recommended.</p> <p><i>Reptiles</i></p> <p>The Site provides suitable habitat for common species of reptile. No further survey is planned, as impacts on reptiles can be limited through the use of a working method statement.</p> <p>ED agreed with the conclusions and approach, and consider water vole and dormouse presence to be unlikely – albeit appreciated the need to confirm if potential impacts are predicted (along the access route for example).</p> <p>ED welcomed the suggestion by Steve Williams to contact Martin Anthoney for most up to date records and information on specific habitat preferences (which are likely to include heath bedstraw and bilberry as larval food plants) of Silurian moth.</p>	
10	<p>Closing Comments</p> <p>Much of the Site has good potential for habitat enhancement, including an increased extent and improved condition of priority habitats. This could be delivered through the implementation of a long-term habitat management plan.</p> <p>RT noted that BSG / RES intend to speak to Alvin Nicholas (South East Wales Resilient Uplands Manager) with regard to work that has already been completed in the area and the potential for further management.</p> <p>RT asked if ED had any thoughts on potential habitat enhancements.</p> <p>ED would like to see appropriate mitigation and enhancement for a range of the species / habitats that are present on site (rather than concentration on EPS species only). She would welcome well thought out long term monitoring that can feed into the local knowledge base.</p>	

	<p>All agreed that the meeting had been useful, and that a follow up meeting in Spring 2022 should be arranged. In advance of this, RT / OG will forward updated reports (the updated year 1 bird report in a month or so, and other reports at the end of the year). ED suggested that one meeting that includes Caerphilly and Torfaen would be the most useful – All agree.</p>	<p>RT/OG</p>
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Meeting Ends: 12:30

Torfaen County Borough Council Meeting: Mynydd Maen Wind Farm

28 April 2021. 09:30-11:00

Present: Steve Williams (Torfaen Council Team Leader for Ecology), Rachel Edwards (Torfaen Council Ecologist), Owain Gabb, Rachel Taylor (BSG Ecology), Chris Jackson (RES Ltd)

A summary of key actions and discussion points is below. An outline of all of the work previously completed had been provided to TCBC by email on 14/04/2021 to inform the meeting.

Item	Details	Action
1	<p>Purpose of the Meeting Following introductions RT gave an overview of the purpose of the meeting. This was to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a summary of work completed to date, and key issues identified. - Provide an overview of, and ideally agree the ecological scope of works for the site ahead of EIA. - Identify any concerns TCC have with regard to ecology / ornithology at Mynydd Maen, and whether they would like to see any changes to the proposed scope of work. 	
2	<p>Project Introduction CJ provided an initial overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mynydd Maen is a proposed ~16 turbine Wind Farm on land within the County Boroughs of Torfaen and Caerphilly. - CJ shared a plan showing indicative turbine locations and constraints to the buildable area. - The turbines will be up to 149.9 m height, based on early landscape and visual feasibility studies. - Access arrangements are yet to be finalised. Working plan is to bring Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) in from the south west from the M4, up the A467 to Newbridge, then through the Panside Estate along Old Pant Road and up onto the ridge. - All cabling will be underground as far as the onsite substation, Western Power Distribution will then link up to the grid from the substation. - Target of planning submission for wind farm is Q2/3 2022 - This is a development of national significance and is within the National Development Framework Priority Area for renewable energy. The application will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and determined by Welsh ministers. TCC will be asked to provide a local impact report. <p>SW and RE indicated they were both familiar with the area proposed for the wind farm.</p>	
3	<p>Ecological Consultation RT explained that requests for consultation had been made to Caerphilly County Council and Natural Resources Wales but that no dates had been secured at this point.</p>	

<p>4</p>	<p>Desk Study RT provided an overview of sources of desk-based data sources identified and secured. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEWBRReC data - NBN data - Gwent bird reports / the Gwent Avifauna - The UK Government's Magic website <p>RT asked if there were other sources of information that TCC were aware of that could be used to inform the scope of works.</p> <p>SW suggested getting in touch with Gwent Ornithological Society, specifically Steve Roberts and Jerry Lewis. BSG have contact details for both.</p>	<p>RT/OG</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Ornithology OG noted that the breeding season report for 2020 had been provided.</p> <p>This would now be updated to be a Year 1 report (including the winter results), which would be provided when complete.</p> <p>OG stated that work completed in 2020 had been closely based on SNH (2017) guidance and comprised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breeding season VP work. 36 hours of survey was completed at each of 3 VPs overlooking the site between April and July inclusive. - Winter VP survey, using the same three locations between October 2020 and March 2021. - Raptor survey of an area extending 1-2 km around the turbines. The distances vary by species, with GI and HY to 1 km and other Schedule 1 raptors (as relevant) to 2 km in accordance with SNH guidance. Quarries, cliffs, building, forest edge and mature stands - Wader survey of moorland within approximately 800 m of indicative turbine locations. Based on Brown & Shepherd method. Adjusted to 4 visits in line with SNH (2017). - Nightjar reccy followed by walked transect with stopping points on 2 dates in both June and July. <p>VP Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 22 red kite flights over the breeding season. A good proportion around the slopes on the edges of the site. Mainly singletons and twos. Relatively even spread over May-July - Goshawk activity mainly west of the site. April, June and July. - Peregrine activity throughout the season. 28 minutes of flight activity recorded including apparent adults and a juvenile bird. A lot of this over the northern edge of the site. - Almost 3 hours of kestrel activity at collision risk height - Periodic hobby flights. April, May, July. <p>Raptor Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No evidence to suggest any raptors nested within the site boundary - Peregrine nest recorded approximately 500 m to north of site. - Active kestrel nest not located. One disused nest site found in a quarry approx. 550 m east of site. - Short-eared owl seen twice in May, but no indication of breeding. - Breeding long-eared owl towards the edge of the plantation to the west. 	

	<p>Wader Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 snipe recorded in April were the only records of waders on site. Likely to have been spring passage birds. <p>Nightjar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appears abundant in suitable plantation habitats (clearfell and pre-thicket growth). Churring males recorded in 13 discrete locations. - Some use of site noted – a NJ was seen sitting on a track. It is likely that they forage over the moorland in suitable weather conditions. <p>Non focal species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Red grouse (mainly in north) - Raven (breeds locally – Mynydd Henllys quarry) - Most common breeding birds skylark and meadow pipit. Other species include stonechat, wheatear, whinchat, and (likely) cuckoo <p>Overview of Winter 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kestrel and red kite activity continued, albeit at lower levels. - Hen harrier seen in October / November (low level flights involving a minimum of two birds – an adult male and a 1st winter) - Goshawk territory identified from work in February and March in plantation to the south-west of the site <p>Main issues are likely to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collision of kestrel - Collision of peregrine (this could vary considerably depending on layout as many flights are peripheral to the development area) <p>During 2021/22 we will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repeat the breeding and winter VP work. - Repeat the raptor survey work and incorporate some early season goshawk display survey (this latter is now done) - Not repeat the wader work - Extend the NJ work to 3 nights on 2 occasions <p>SW indicated that results were largely as expected.</p> <p>SW asked if red kite had been recorded breeding as a result of the work, as local birdwatchers suspect a nest site in the general area. OG indicated a nest / core territory had not been recorded in 2020.</p> <p>SW noted that long-eared owl has been recorded in similar habitat at Blaenavon and is under recorded due to the difficulties involved in surveying for the species. SB also noted that the short eared owl population varies annually.</p> <p>SW asked if nocturnal audio recording of passage birds had been considered, as local recorders had picked up a lot of wader / wildfowl passage using the technique in late winter / early spring. OG stated that there is no guidance on the commercial use of nocturnal audio recording at present, and no nocturnal recording had been completed to date. OG confirmed that the method would be further considered, and we would do some research into whether it could be applied to the scheme / would add value to the impact assessments and respond on the point to SW.</p>	<p>OG</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Phase 1</p>	

	<p>RT stated that the Phase 1 survey of the site had been completed in July 2020. The survey included the attribution of habitats to NVC categories in the field by an experienced botanist.</p> <p>The Site is an area of unenclosed upland and is almost entirely covered by a series of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (a non-statutory designation). Much of the level ground within the site supports dry heath (an Annex 1 priority habitat).</p> <p>There are also several Section 7 (Environment Wales Act, 2016) priority habitats present including wet heath and acid flushes (although the latter is located on steeply sloping ground at the fringes of the site and unlikely to be within the buildable area). These are potential groundwater dependent terrestrial ecosystems (GWDTEs).</p> <p>Other habitats include acid grassland, marshy grassland, poor semi-improved grassland, improved grassland, plantation woodland, bracken, dry stream beds and ponds.</p> <p>No further habitat survey was proposed.</p> <p>Habitats on and around the Site have potential to support a range of protected species including bats, ground nesting birds, badger, great crested newt (GCN) and dormouse.</p> <p>SW / RE agreed that habitats were as expected for the area.</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>Great Crested Newt</p> <p>GCN eDNA surveys were completed on five ponds in 2020 (seven ponds additional that appear on OS maps were dry at the time of survey). Negative results were returned for all ponds. As the desk study returned records for GCN in one of the ponds (Pond 3) from 2019, we are repeating survey in 2021.</p> <p>Survey has included eDNA survey of ten ponds which held water on 15 April and presence / absence survey of Pond 1, 2 and 3 which are all connected by drainage channels. We are expecting the results of the survey this week. No GCN have been recorded during standard surveys.</p> <p>RE and SW have previously found great crested newts under refugia around Pond 3, so are aware that there has been use of the pond by GCN in the past. RT asked if any information available (i.e. date of visit / number of GCN) could be forwarded, as the record has not been supplied by SEWBRc as part of the desk study.</p>	<p>SW/RE</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Bats</p> <p>RT confirmed that bat data collection will be complete in 2021 in line with current guidance (SNH <i>et al</i>, 2019).</p> <p>This will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data collection from the indicative locations of twelve turbines. 10 nights of data will be collected from each location in each of, Spring, Summer and Autumn 2021. - The deployment of a weather station on site so that bat data can be linked to weather data. 	

	<p>- Roost survey (emergence / re-entry surveys) of buildings and trees on site within 250 m of potential turbine locations. There is a derelict building which has low potential for roosting bats.</p> <p>RE / SW agreed that the building was likely to be of low potential for roosting bats given it's location.</p> <p>RT noted that there were concerns on potential theft of equipment, and that locations around the site had been selected with this in mind. She also noted that given the number of detectors deployed, characterisation of activity across the site should still be possible if there are some losses. SW / RE agreed.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Other Protected Species <i>Otter and Water Vole</i></p> <p>RT stated that there was an intention to survey for otter and water vole in habitats within 200 m of wind farm infrastructure. Most of these habitats are sub-optimal but are connected to watercourses in the wider area used by otter. Checks for water vole will be completed at the same time, however the upper reaches of the water courses are considered unsuitable.</p> <p><i>Dormouse</i></p> <p>Habitats on Site are unlikely to support dormouse and no further survey is currently planned. Impacts on any suitable habitats around the access route will be considered once this is confirmed.</p> <p><i>Badger</i></p> <p>No setts or other evidence of badger were identified during the Phase 1 survey, although woodland at the edge of the site are suitable for sett building. A pre-development check is recommended.</p> <p><i>Reptiles</i></p> <p>The Site provides suitable habitat for common species of reptile. No further survey is planned, as impacts on reptiles can be limited through the use of a working method statement.</p> <p>RE and SW agreed with the conclusions and approach and consider water vole and dormouse presence to be very unlikely – albeit they appreciated the need to confirm if potential impacts are predicted (along the access route for example).</p> <p>SW asked if any other Section 7 species would be considered and made specific reference to Silurian moth. OG noted that no records for the species had been returned during the desk study. SW suggested getting in touch with Martin Anthoney for most up to date records and information on specific habitat preferences (which are likely to include heath bedstraw and bilberry as larval food plants). He also noted that as surveys are specialised, it is possible the species is under recorded.</p>	<p>RT/OG</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Closing Comments</p> <p>Much of the Site has good potential for habitat enhancement, including an increased extent and improved condition of priority habitats. This could be delivered through the implementation of a long-term habitat management plan. RT asked if TCC had any thoughts on potential habitat enhancements.</p>	

	<p>SW suggested that we speak to Alvin Nicholas (South East Wales Resilient Uplands Manager) with regard to work that has already been completed in the area and the potential for further management. SW has subsequently forwarded Alvin's contact details.</p> <p>With regard to site access tracks, SW asked whether there was potential for increased use of the areas by off road motorbikes be considered, as there is already activity in the area. CJ noted that CCTV could potentially be incorporated on infrastructure. RT noted that there was an existed track through the area which although heavily rutted, was suitable for off road motorbikes. This will be considered further as the design progresses.</p> <p>SW asked if meetings with any other disciplines had been arranged. CJ confirmed none to date, but that landscape and visual consultation was likely once formal scoping was issued (in a month or so). CJ asked whether this was appropriate or if it would be worth opening communication sooner. SW suggested that CJ get in touch with Norman Jones (Development Control Team Leader) and copy in Richard Lewis (Head of Planning) to make them aware of the project. He also mentioned that Henrietta Lucas (Landscape Architect) was likely to be a key contact.</p> <p>All agreed that the meeting had been useful, and that a follow up meeting in Spring 2022 should be arranged. In advance of this, RT / OG will forward updated reports (the updated year 1 bird report in a month or so, and other reports at the end of the year).</p>	<p>RT/OG</p>
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Meeting Ends: 11:00

Torfaen County Borough Council Meeting: Mynydd Maen Wind Farm

04 April 2021. 14:00-14:55

Present: Steve Williams (TCBC), Chris Jackson (RES), Owain Gabb (BSG), James Garside (BSG)

A summary of key actions and discussion points is below. A summary of all of the work previously completed had been provided to TCBC by email on 04/04/2023 to inform the meeting.

Item	Details	Action
1	<p>Introductions</p> <p>OG gave a brief background / purpose of the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCBC, RES and BSG last met to discuss this project in April 2021. • There has been a lot of ornithological and ecological work completed at the site since then, and the project design has also moved forward. • After the previous meeting, we also met with Caerphilly CBC, but couldn't secure a meeting with NRW despite repeated attempts. • BSG / RES did get some comment from NRW eventually via PEDW's response to the scoping report for the site. • RES are now starting to move towards EIA, so it seemed a logical time to revisit the project. <p>OG stated that what BSG / RES would like to get out of the meeting was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity that SW feels TCBC have been appropriately consulted and (ideally) are content with the scope of survey work. • A clear indication of anything TCBC are not content with, so that BSG / RES can act on it. 	
2	<p>Overview of Project</p> <p>CJ provided an update on the project and intended timelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-application consultation is planned for June / July 2023. • Application is planned for September 2023. • CJ provided a plan indicating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The positions of 13 turbines. ○ The likely layout of the access track (the positioning of sections passing over a high pressure gas main are yet to be confirmed). • Developing on common land means deregistering areas where infrastructure will be and adding in additional areas from around the fringes to compensate for the loss. Approximately 14 hectares of 'land swop' will be required. • These areas will need to be looked at under a replacement land application. • Site investigation has been conducted to confirm that turbine locations are suitable and no shallow mine workings are present. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 and Phase 2 peat surveys have been carried out. RES are waiting for results of the Phase 2 survey. The findings are unlikely to significantly affect the layout. 	
<p>3</p>	<p>Summary of Ornithology</p> <p>JG summarised the methods of the ornithology survey to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two years of survey (each with a breeding season and winter) have been completed to date, all in accordance with SNH et al (2017) guidance and raptor survey methods recommended by Hardey <i>et al</i>. 36 hours of VP survey has been conducted in each season, from three VP locations. Additional VP work was conducted in August - September 2022. In both breeding seasons, raptor survey on site and within 1-2 km of it (according to species / guidance) was conducted. This involved checks of quarries, cliffs, buildings and forest edge. Targeted goshawk survey was also conducted during late winter / early spring 2021. Breeding wader survey was conducted during 2020 (Year 1), and was scoped out ahead of 2021 (Year 2). Nightjar survey was conducted during both years. <p>And summarised the key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kestrel. The most frequently recorded target species during the breeding season. Activity was highest in the NE part of the site. Juveniles were present from late summer in both years suggesting local breeding, but no nest site was located. Activity peaked in August / September 2022. Activity was lower in winter. Goshawk. Recorded occasionally from VPs. A nest site was located to the west – within approximately 1 km, and was likely to have been successful in 2021 (juveniles were recorded in mid-summer). Peregrine. A nest site was located within 1 km (to the N) in 2020 but was not present in 2021. During both years activity over the site was infrequent. Locally breeding birds appear to primarily forage away from the site. Hobby. Recorded occasionally from VPs in both breeding seasons and during August – September 2022 (4, 12 and 2 flights respectively). No evidence of local breeding was recorded during targeted raptor survey work. Red kite. Present frequently throughout the year. No evidence of local breeding was recorded during targeted raptor survey work. Long-eared owl nest fledged two young within 1 km of the site during 2020 (breeding season). Not present in 2021. Other species (each with 6 flights or fewer) were merlin, osprey, hen harrier, short-eared owl, marsh harrier, golden plover and kittiwake (the latter being a notable inland sighting). 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nightjar. 13 territories were recorded in 2020, 14 in 2021, all in plantation and clearfell off Site. Territory locations were similar between years. Birds were recorded foraging low over the site. <p>SW confirmed that based on the evidence provided the ornithology work appeared to be comprehensive and that he was satisfied with the scope.</p> <p>All agreed that collision impact on kestrel and, to a lesser extent red kite, were the principal issues.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Summary of Ecology</p> <p>JG summarised the methods and findings of all ecology survey work to date:</p> <p><u>Phase 1</u></p> <p>Initial Phase 1 of the site was conducted in July 2020, and updated in August 2022. The access route was surveyed in April 2022.</p> <p>Key findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The unenclosed upland mostly comprises a series of SINCs. Some Section 7 habitats (wet heath and acid flushes on open ground and sections of hedgerow along the access route) and some Annex 1 habitats are present. Some loss of the heath habitats is unavoidable, but the flushes are around the fringes and are likely to be avoided. <p><u>Great Crested Newts</u></p> <p>JG presented a figure showing all pond locations, and summarised the work and findings to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following initial Habitat Suitability Index assessments of all ponds on site, eDNA surveys were completed of five on-site ponds in 2020. Negative results were returned for all ponds. As BSG were aware of recent records, surveys were repeated in 2021, with samples collected from 10 ponds. Presence / absence survey of Ponds 1-3 were conducted during 2021, and found small populations of GCN in all three, along with eggs (indicating breeding). Presence / absence at Pond 15 during 2022 found a moderate GCN population, and eggs. <p>In spring 2023 ponds 1-3 will be resurveyed, and HSI and eDNA of the others on site will be conducted, supplemented by torching and egg searching.</p> <p><u>Bats</u></p> <p>JG summarised the bat survey methods and key findings to date were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary roost assessment of the ruined building and trees on / adjacent to the Site and access track, during 2021 and 2022 respectively. 14 trees within 250 m of proposed infrastructure / turbine 	

	<p>locations were found to have moderate potential. Most are above Cwm Lickey (10) with the remainder along the access track (4).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An emergence survey of the building on site (which has low potential to support roosting bats), during June 2021. No evidence of roosting bats was recorded. • Activity data collection from the indicative locations of twelve turbines on 10 nights (from each location) in Spring, Summer and Autumn 2021 (in accordance with SNH (now Nature Scot) 2019 guidance), and the deployment of a weather station on site so that bat data can be linked to weather data. • Most activity involved pipistrelles and noctule. Other species recorded included greater horseshoe bat, lesser horseshoe bat and Nathusius' pipistrelle (activity for the latter three was less than 0.1 passes per hour). • Activity was highest in autumn and lowest in spring. Low activity was recorded close to sunset and sunrise, suggesting no / very little roosting locally. • Pairing the activity data with the weather data, supported observations that bats avoid high winds and wet weather. <p>Climbed inspections of the trees assessed as having moderate roost potential are planned in April and May 2023.</p> <p><u>Otter and Water Vole</u></p> <p>Watercourses on site were surveyed in June and September 2021. During July 2022 watercourses adjacent to the access track were surveyed.</p> <p>No evidence of otter or water vole was recorded during any survey visit.</p> <p><u>Dormouse</u></p> <p>During the previous meeting it was agreed that there was no requirement for dormouse survey of the main site.</p> <p>Hedgerows along the access track were surveyed during 2022. 55 nest tubes were deployed. No dormouse or evidence of their presence was recorded.</p> <p><u>Badger</u></p> <p>No setts or evidence of presence were recorded during the Phase 1 survey.</p> <p><u>Reptiles</u></p> <p>Common lizard were recorded incidentally on site. Nigel Hand completed an adder habitat assessment in 2022, which found that suitable habitat is present in the NE part of the site.</p> <p><u>Silurian moth</u></p> <p>Following the meeting in April 2021, OG spoke to Martin Anthony (who has since passed away).</p> <p>Martin provided the following information:</p>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silurian Moth is only known from sites above 450 m asl. A Butterfly Conservation (BC) report of 2018 confirms range as 450-655 m asl (there is only a very small part of the site that exceeds 450 m altitude (the high point being 472 m asl)). • It is found in areas where bilberry and heath bedstraw foodplants are growing up through tussocky grass and moss, which reduces apparently suitable habitat further. <p>Historical survey work commissioned by CCW did not record the species in the area (Waring – cited by Anthoney).</p> <p>A south-east Wales survey for silurian moth (Tordoff & Williams, 2018) scoped the site out as unsuitable (based on modelling of parameters).</p> <p>OG stated that BSG are working with BC to survey a site elsewhere for Silurian this year. George Tordoff has stated that the species may be contracting its range due to climate.</p> <p>It follows that we have not completed survey for Silurian moth at MM.</p> <p>SW stated that the scope of the ecology work covered everything he would expect, and that he was pleased from an ecological perspective that great crested newt had been picked up (as he has recorded them in Pond 2 or 3 previously). He stated that he was a bit concerned that the eDNA didn't pick them up, and expressed a lack of confidence in that method.</p> <p>SW stated that overall he was pleased with the scope of work.</p> <p>SW asked whether hedgerows and individual trees were to be affected along the access track, and whether a hedgerow assessment had been conducted. JG confirmed that hedgerow assessment had been completed as part of the Phase 1 survey. CJ noted that to avoid tree and hedgerow loss the intention was to punch a hole through at the western end of the narrow point of the access and to return through at the eastern end. SW agreed this was a good idea in principle if this was species poor SI or I grassland, and noted that as much of the scrub / hedgerow and trees should be retained as possible. SW asked whether the access track would be reinstated after construction. CJ indicated that they could reinstate if that was preferred.</p> <p>SW stated that in his view birds and great crested newt were the greatest issues, and that the project team need to show that the turbine (and other infrastructure) locations were informed by the work.</p> <p>SW stated that overall he was satisfied with the approach to the work.</p>	
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Meeting Ends 14:55