



Marlas Site,
North Cornelly

Enhanced Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Prepared by
CSA Environmental

on behalf of
WEPco

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This report may contain sensitive ecological information. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to determine if this should be made publicly available.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A new school development is proposed at Marlas Site, North Connelly, Bridgend, Wales, for which detailed planning permission will be sought.

CSA Environmental was instructed by WEPco to undertake an Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the Site to identify any ecological constraints to development, inform scheme design, highlight opportunities for ecological enhancement and determine the need for any additional investigation/survey. As part of this PEA, an updated desk study and field survey of the Site were undertaken in August 2023, including a UK Habitat Classification survey.

This report supersedes the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the Site undertaken by CSA Environmental (Reference: CSA/4834/01) in 2020.

The Site comprises an area of grassland and hardstanding set within a residential development; it lies in close proximity to a number of designated sites, including two Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). The potential impacts from the proposals to the designations are explored in detail through a separate Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report.

Habitats currently present within the Site are considered to be generally common and widespread and of low ecological interest. Opportunities to support protected species on-site are limited, due to the low ecological value of these habitats. As such, no further survey work for protected species is recommended.

Vegetation on-site has the potential to support nesting birds and any clearance of this should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive).

Recommendations have been provided for ecological enhancement measures that could be readily delivered as part of the proposed development. These include providing new opportunities for roosting bats and nesting birds.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by CSA Environmental on behalf WEPco. It sets out the findings of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of Land at Marlas Site, North Connolly (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). A new school development is proposed at the Site, for which detailed planning permission will be sought.
- 1.2 The scope of this appraisal has been determined with due consideration for best-practice guidance provided by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2017), and to the *Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development* (BS 42020:2013) published by the British Standards Institution (2013).
- 1.3 The Site occupies an area of c. 1.9ha and is located around central grid reference SS 821 818, to the south-west of Pyle. It consists of several small parcels of modified grassland and other neutral grassland with open areas of hardstanding (see Habitats Plan in Appendix A).
- 1.4 This PEA aims to:
 - Gather updated information on baseline ecological conditions of the Site and its wider context
 - Identify any ecological constraints to development of the Site
 - Inform scheme design
 - Identify the need for further ecological surveys
 - Highlight opportunities for ecological enhancement
- 1.5 To achieve these aims, an ecological desk study and field survey were undertaken of the Site, the findings of which are presented herein.
- 1.6 As set out in best practice guidelines (CIEEM, 2017) a PEA is typically only suitable for planning submission where there are no ecological constraints relating to the project. No ecological constraints to the development have been identified and therefore a separate EcIA report has not been produced.

2.0 LEGISLATION, PLANNING POLICY & STANDING ADVICE

Legislation

2.1 Legislation relating to wildlife and biodiversity of particular relevance to this PEA includes:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- The Environment Wales Act 2016
- Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

2.2 This above legislation has been addressed, as appropriate, in the production of this report. Further information on the above legislation is provided in Appendix B.

Planning Policy Wales

2.3 The Planning Policy Wales (PPW) 11 (Welsh Government, 2021) sets out the government planning policies for Wales and how they should be applied. Chapter 6: Distinctive and Natural Places, is of particular relevance to this report as it relates to ecology and biodiversity. Further details are provided in Appendix B.

2.4 Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009), which is referred to by the PPW, provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation and their effects within the planning system.

Local Planning Policy

2.5 A number of local planning policies relate to ecology, biodiversity and/or nature conservation. These are summarised in Table 1 of Appendix B. These policies have been addressed, as appropriate, in the production of this report.

Standing Advice

2.6 Natural Resources Wales Standing Advice (Natural Resources Wales, 2015) regarding bats and planning, aims to support local authorities and forms a material consideration in determining applications. Standing Advice has therefore been given due consideration, alongside other detailed guidance documents, in the production of this report.

3.0 METHODS

Desk Study

- 3.1 An ecological desk study was undertaken in August 2023 comprising a review of online resources and biological records centre data as detailed below.
- 3.2 The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online database was reviewed to identify nature conservation designations within the following search radii:
 - Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites within 10km of the Site (including possible/proposed sites)
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Local Nature Reserves (LNR) within 3km of the Site
 - Other relevant data e.g. Ancient Woodland Inventory within 1km of the Site
- 3.3 Local Nature Reserves for Wales within 3km of the Site are taken from the DataMapWales mapping and public data source for Wales.
- 3.4 A review was undertaken of the location of any such designations, their distance from and connectivity with the Site, and the reasons for their designation. This information was used to determine whether they may be within the proposed development's Zone of Influence (Zoi).
- 3.5 South-East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRC) was contacted for details of any non-statutory nature conservation designations and records of protected/notable habitats and species. This information was requested for an area encompassing the Site and adjacent land within c. 2km of its central grid reference. This search area was selected to include the likely zone of influence upon non-statutory designations and protected or notable habitats and species.
- 3.6 Further online resources were reviewed for information which may aid the identification of important ecological features. The Woodland Trust's online Ancient Tree Inventory was reviewed for known ancient or veteran trees within the Site and adjacent land. Interactive online mapping provided by the charity 'Buglife' was used to determine whether the Site falls within an Important Invertebrate Area.
- 3.7 As Natural Resources Wales does not have specific published guidelines for assessing great crested newt in Wales, Natural England's Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines (2001) were followed to include a desktop search was undertaken to identify ponds within 500m of the Site which may have potential to support breeding great crested newts

Triturus cristatus, using Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, the MAGIC database and aerial photography.

- 3.8 Where possible under the terms of the data provider, relevant desk study data are presented in Appendix C.

Field Survey

- 3.9 A UK Habitat Classification ('UKHab') survey was carried out in fine and dry weather conditions on 09 August 2023 by Rhiannon Taylor ACIEEM, FISC¹ Level 3, encompassing the Site and immediately adjacent habitats that could be viewed.

- 3.10 UKHab is a unified and comprehensive system for mapping and classifying habitats, designed to provide a simple and robust approach to surveying and monitoring, and replaces Phase 1 Habitat survey methods. The method allows for identification of important habitat types, including habitats of Principal Importance under Section 42) of the NERC Act (2006) and Habitats Directive Annex I habitats.

- 3.11 The following parameters were adopted for the UKHab survey undertaken for this PEA:

- UKHab Professional edition (Butcher *et al.*, 2020, commercial End User Licence Agreement (EULA))
- Minimum Mappable Unit (MMU):
 - 10m²/0.001ha (polygons)
 - 5m (linear)
- Primary Habitats recorded to a minimum of Level 2 (see below) with UKHab codes provided
- Mandatory secondary codes used
- Base-mapping comprising a combination of aerial imagery and topographic information

- 3.12 Primary Habitats are recorded to a minimum of Level 2. Where the survey is conducted at an appropriate time of year (e.g. May to July for grassland) habitats may be recorded to Level 3, 4 or 5, only if conditions and the experience of the surveyor allow.

- 3.13 Alongside the UKHab survey, additional field survey information was collected, comprising:

- Detailed floral species lists recorded for each identified habitat/parcel
- Evidence of, or potential for, European Protected Species (EPS) (including bats, great crested newt, dormouse and otter)
- Evidence of, or potential for, other protected species (including birds, reptiles, water vole, badger and certain invertebrates)

¹ Field Identification Skills Certificate, Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland

- Evidence of, or potential for, other notable species (including S42 Species of Principal Importance as well as notable, rare, protected or controlled plants and invertebrates)
- Any other survey information relevant to ecological matters

3.14 Results of the UKHab survey are presented on the Habitats Plan in Appendix A. Appendix D provides photographs of the habitats at the Site and Appendix E provides a list of floral species recorded in each habitat parcel. Nomenclature for higher plants within this report is consistent with the fourth edition of The New Flora of the British Isles (Stace, 2019).

Limitations

3.15 There were no specific limitations to the desk study or field survey, which was conducted at an optimum time of year and in good conditions.

Evaluation and Assessment

3.16 The evaluation and assessment of ecological features in accordance with the published CIEEM method (CIEEM, 2018) has been undertaken within this report due to the limited availability of ecological features on-site.

4.0 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Nature Conservation Designations

Statutory

- 4.1 There are no statutory designations covering any part of the Site.
- 4.2 Two international statutory designations were identified within 10km of the Site. These were the
 - Kenfig SAC (c. 1.2km west which supports a range of coastal habitats, including sand dunes and cliffs.
 - Cefn Cribwr Grasslands SAC (c. 1.9km east) which supports mesophile grassland and broadleaved woodland habitats.
- 4.3 Five national statutory designations were identified within 3km of the Site. Two of these relate to locations at Kenfig SAC, Kenfig SSSI (c. 0.8km west) and Kenfig Pool and Dunes NNR (c. 1.2km west). Penycastell, Cefn Cribwr SSSI is located c. 1.8km east of the Site and comprises a series of fields located at the south of Kenfig Hill. Wuan Cimla SSSI is located c. 2.5km north-west of the Site, and is an extensive area of wet lowland heath and grassland, influenced by a series of spring lines and overlying Coal Measures strata. The five national designated sites are not ecologically connected to the Site and the Site is highly unsuitable to support the habitats or species that they are designated for; as such, they are not considered to be a constraint to development.
- 4.4 Two local statutory designations were identified within 3km of the Site. These were Kenfig Pool and Dunes LNR (c. 1.2km west), the reasons for designation are consistent with that of the Kenfig Pool and Dunes NNR and Frog Pond Wood LNR, an area of woodland with a pond and wetland habitat, located c. 1.8km east.
- 4.5 These statutory designations are described in Table 1 below.

Non-Statutory

- 4.6 Three non-statutory designations are present within 3km of the Site. North-Eastern Dunes and St James' Church Wood are both located c. 0.4km north of the Site and Cornelly Quarry SINC c. is located c. 1km south. North-Eastern Dunes SINC supports semi-improved and marshy grassland, St James' Church Wood SINC comprises broadleaved semi-natural woodland and improved grassland. Cornelly Quarry SINC forms an area of limestone cliffs reclaimed by scrub with woodland.
- 4.7 Due to the nature of the proposals being a new school facility, the development of the Site is not likely to have an effect upon the non-statutory sites as the facility is not creating additional residential homes and therefore not increasing the local population. Furthermore, there is

no hydrological connectivity between the Site and the designations. As such, non-statutory designations are not considered further.

4.8 Non-statutory designations are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations within search radii

Site Name & Designation	Distance & Direction from Survey Area	Special Interests or Qualifying Features
International Designations within 10km		
Kenfig SAC	c. 1.2km west	This designation comprises a mosaic of coastal habitats including estuaries, cliffs and sand dunes.
Cefn Cribwr Grasslands SAC	c. 1.9km east	This SAC supports broadleaved woodland and mesophile grassland.
National Designations within 3km		
Kenfig SSSI	c. 0.8km west	This SSSI is designated for presence of extensive sand dune habitats and standing waters.
Kenfig Pool and Dunes NNR	c. 1.2km west	This NNR comprises dunes and broadleaved woodland
Penycastell, Cefn Cribwr SSSI.	c. 1.8km east	Designated for its marshy grassland and species-rich neutral grassland and for the association of these vegetation types with others including swamp, carr woodland and scrub.
Stormy Down SSSI	c. 2.3km south-east	Designated for geological interest
Waun Cimla SSSI	c. 2.5km north-west	Extensive area of wet lowland heath and grassland located to the east of Kenfig Hill.
Local Designations within 3km		
Kenfig Pool and Dunes LNR	c. 1.2km west	This reserve comprises sand dunes and other protected coastal habitats such as cliffs.
Frog Pond Wood LNR	c. 1.8km east	Area of woodland, ponds and wetland supporting a range of species.
Non-Statutory Designations within 1km		
North-eastern Dunes SINC	c. 0.4km north	Semi-improved neutral grassland and marsh/marshy grassland
St James' Church Wood SINC	c. 0.4km north	Broadleaved semi-natural woodland and improved grassland
Cornelly Quarry SINC	c. 1km south	Limestone cliffs/tiers reclaimed by scattered and dense continuous scrub with areas of broadleaved semi-natural woodland

Ancient Woodland

4.9 There is no ancient woodland, as shown on the ancient woodland inventory, covering any part of the Site or immediately adjacent land.

4.10 No trees on or adjacent to Site are listed on the Ancient Tree Inventory.

Habitats and Flora

- 4.11 Habitats recorded on-site are illustrated in Appendix A with detailed species lists provided in Appendix E. Relevant UKHab codes are provided within parentheses for each habitat type recorded [e.g. Other Neutral Grassland (g3c)]. The habitat descriptions should be read in conjunction with the Photographs provided in Appendix D.

Notable Flora Records

- 4.12 The SEWBRC provided 324 of notable plant species from within the search area. Those closest to the Site include three invasive non-native species; white stonecrop *Sedum album*, monbretia *Crocrosmia crocosmiiflora* and cotoneaster *Cotoneaster* sp. which are located c. 0.1km east of the Site.
- 4.13 No protected or notable species were recorded on-site during the field survey, including the above species which were not seen to be present. Species recorded on-site are typical of the common and widespread habitats found to be present.

Modified Grassland (g4)

- 4.14 The largest proportion of the Site is modified grassland (g4), comprising several small parcels, as shown in the Habitats Plan and in Photo 1 (see Appendix D). The parcels of modified grassland are currently in use as an amenity area, and frequently managed as such with a short sward height with a regular mowing regime. Species recorded are typical of this habitat and common and widespread, with low diversity.
- 4.15 Perennial rye *Lolium perenne* dominates the sward with abundant white clover *Trifolium repens*. Other herbs present include dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., daisy *Bellis perennis*, dock *Rumex* sp., common ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* and silverweed *Potentilla anserina*.

Other Neutral Grassland (g3c) with Tall Herb (16)

- 4.16 This grassland offers more ecological interest with a greater variety of species and reduced management regime. Species present include: perennial rye grass, false oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*, dandelion, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, bird's-foot trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, bristly ox-tongue *Helminthotheca echioides*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, red clover *Trifolium pratense*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, sedge *Carex* sp., tufted vetch *Vicia cracca*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, ribbed melilot *Melilotus altissima* and common field speedwell *Veronica persica*.
- 4.17 A small amount of bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. scrub has encroached the southern grassland parcel from the adjacent outgrown scrub.

- 4.18 Areas of bare ground previously recorded in 2020 have now colonised with vegetation typical of other neutral grassland, with species composition similar to the surrounding areas of habitat as above.

Hedgerows (h2) and Trees

- 4.19 A single hedgerow (Photo 2) is present on-site and separates the open space area in the north from the bare ground, scrub and semi-improved grassland area in the south. This was recorded in the 2020 survey as a hedgerow, however it is evident that there has been no recent management since and it is now developing into an area of dense, bramble-dominant scrub with no clear hedgerow features identifiable. For ease of reference, it is referred to as a hedgerow in the report in line with the 2020 site visit results.
- 4.20 The feature is unmanaged and outgrown measuring c. 3m tall x 2m wide and c. 30m in length. Species recorded include rose *Rosa* sp., bramble and willow *Salix* sp.
- 4.21 A single dead tree, previously recorded as sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* is located towards the south of the site (Photo 3).

Developed Land, Sealed Surface (u1b)

- 4.22 The north-east of the Site comprises developed land, sealed surface (u1b) with large blocks of hardstanding forming a courtyard, basketball court, footpaths, car parking and roads.
- 4.23 The building recorded in the previous PEA has since been demolished and is now comprises vacant/ derelict bare ground (Photo 4).
- 4.24 Planters with ornamental shrubs (UKHab category introduced shrub (1160)) are present along the eastern boundary adjacent to the car park at the centre of the Site within the hardstanding open space area (photo 5). Species of ornamental shrub recorded within the open space area include pampas grass, lavender *Lavandula* sp., box *Buxus sempervirens*, *Hypericum* sp. and dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*.

Fauna

Bats

- 4.25 A total of 63 bat records were identified within the search area, dating from 1982 to 2021. Nine species were returned in the search including common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, *Myotis* sp. and Nathusius pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*. Generally, records returned are for areas outside of the North Connelly, with the nearest for a brown long-eared located c. 0.8km west and dating from 2014. Records returned generally refer to field records or small roosts of common species over 1km from the Site.

- 4.26 The habitats currently present on-site to support foraging and dispersing bats are very limited. Furthermore, the area is lit with streetlamps at night and surrounded by residential development, inevitably reducing foraging for bats within vicinity of the Site as light increases the vulnerability to predation.
- 4.27 The single dead tree on site, has no features with potential for roosting bat. The former building had been assessed as being of negligible potential to support roosting bats due to being of entirely metal construction and is no longer present (demolition having been completed prior to 2023 site survey).

Badger

- 4.28 The SEWRC have provided 23 records of badger *Meles meles* from within the search area, dating from 1974 to 2023. The closest record is c. 1.1km south-east of the Site along the M4 Motorway corridor.
- 4.29 Although the on-site hedgerow may provide some limited sett-building habitat for badger, the extent of scrub is small and habitats are isolated due to the surrounding residential development. No setts or other field signs of badger were observed during the survey.

Dormouse

- 4.30 The data centre returned four records of dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* within the search area. The closest record to Site is of dormouse feeding signs within woodland c. 1.7km to the north-east.
- 4.31 Habitats on-site are isolated from areas of woodland and typical suitable habitat opportunities for this species. Hedgerow on-site is present on small patches with no connectivity to off-site habitat.

Riparian Mammals

- 4.32 Two records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* were recorded within the search area, from 1983 and 1997.
- 4.33 A total of 14 records of otter *Lutra lutra* were provided from within the search area, dating from 2023 to 2021. All records are from over 700m from the Site and predominantly associated with Kenfig SAC.
- 4.34 Riparian mammals require aquatic habitat for foraging and dispersal. No suitable habitat for riparian mammals is present on or adjacent to the Site and therefore water vole and otter are highly unlikely to limit development.

Other Mammals

Brown Hare

- 4.35 Thirteen records of brown hare *Lepus europaeus*, many of which are historic records from 1980s and are located over 1 km from Site. The most

recent record is from 2016, of a brown hare c. 0.8km east of the Site within farmland.

- 4.36 Opportunities for the species on-site are non-existent due to its isolated nature being surrounded by residential development, this species is not considered further.

Harvest Mouse

- 4.37 Two records of harvest mouse *Micromys minutus* were returned in the data search from over c. 1.5km from Site. Opportunities for this species are limited due to the isolated nature of habitat on-site and presence of well managed or man-made habitats, and are therefore discounted as a constraint to the proposals.

Hedgehog

- 4.38 The data search returned 42 records hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* within the search area, dating from 2004 to 2022, including a record 0.1km north-east of the Site.
- 4.39 The grassland and hedgerow base on-site may provide foraging and dispersal habitat for this species, which is likely to be utilising surrounding gardens as habitat. A notable population of hedgehog is not anticipated, and this species is not foreseen as being significantly impacted by the development.

Eurasian Water Shrew

- 4.40 There are five records of Eurasian water shrew *Neomys fodiens* from within the search area, all of which are from Kenfig NNR. As there is no connectivity of the Site with the NNR, and no suitable habitats on-site to support the species, Eurasian water shrews are not considered further.

Birds

- 4.41 The SEWBRC returned 1244 records of 138 bird species within the search area, dating from 1925 to 2023. A large proportion of the records relate to those for specialist species recorded within designated wildlife sites, such as waders and other waterbirds within Kenfig SAC. Of those outside of designated sites and with relevance to the Site, the nearest is a record of swift *Apus apus* flying c. 50m from Site. Other nearby species (< 200m from the Site) include house martin *Delichon urbicum*, swallow *Hirundo rustica*, coal tit *Periparus ater*, starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and house sparrow *Passer domesticus*.
- 4.42 Incidental bird sightings from the Site walkover include: starling, herring gull *Larus argentatus*, blackbird *Turdus merula* and jackdaw *Corvus monedula*.
- 4.43 The grassland may offer a foraging resource with the scrub and hedgerow providing potential nesting habitat. Habitats on-site are

common and widespread and therefore likely to support generalist bird species. The Site is unlikely to support an important assemblage of notable bird species and therefore this group is not considered to pose a constraint to development.

Reptiles

- 4.44 A total of 43 records of four reptile species were identified within the search area including slow worm *Anguis fragilis*, grass snake *Natrix natrix* (syn. *N. helvetica*), adder *Vipera berus* and common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*. The majority of records are located within designated sites, with the nearest at Cornelly Quarry SINC, c. 1.6km south.
- 4.45 The nearest record dates from 2022, of a slow worm on recreation ground c. 0.45km west of the Site.
- 4.46 Habitats on-site are mostly well managed and provide limited opportunities for reptiles. The area of tall grassland and scrub on-site is isolated by surrounding hardstanding, combined with the location of the Site within a built-up residential area and low suitability of habitats, reptiles are unlikely to persist on-site.

Amphibians

- 4.47 A total of 50 records of five amphibian species were identified within the search area, including common frog *Rana temporaria*, common toad *Bufo bufo*, great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*, smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* and palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus*. Almost all records relate to areas outside of North Cornelly within Kenfig SAC.

Great Crested Newt

- 4.48 There are 15 records of great crested newt, with the closest being from a location c.1km to the south of the Site from 1980. The remaining great crested newt records are all from over 1.5km away from the Site.
- 4.49 Despite spending much of their annual lifecycle within the terrestrial environment, great crested newts are dependent upon the presence of suitable aquatic breeding habitat to allow a population to persist. No potential breeding ponds were identified on-site during the site survey, with none identified within a dispersible range of the Site, based on OS mapping.
- 4.50 The small area of tall grassland and scrub may provide opportunities for great crested newt and other amphibians, it is isolated being surrounded by hardstanding and short grassland. On balance of the absence of breeding ponds and unsuitability of habitats present on-site, great crested newts are not considered further within this assessment.

Invertebrates

- 4.51 A total of 594 records of 218 invertebrate species were identified within the search area from 1980 to 2023. Similarly to other species groups, the majority of records relate to data collected during specific surveys at designated sites such as Kenfig SAC. Of records returned within the local area, the nearest comprise records for *Sitona macularius* and *Cidnopus aeruginosus* located within a 1km grid square c. 0.1km north.
- 4.52 The Site is situated within an Important Invertebrate Area (IIA), South Wales Coast IIA. No further information is given on this IIA at present, however it likely relates to the specialist coastal habitats.
- 4.53 Habitats on-site are common and widespread and as such are likely to support generalist invertebrate species. The Site is not anticipated to support a notable assemblage of invertebrates and therefore they are not taken to represent a constraint to proposals.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nature Conservation Designations

Statutory

International Designations

- 5.1 The Site lies in close proximity to two internationally designated sites, Kenfig SAC and Cefn Cribwr Grasslands SAC.
- 5.2 The proposals are for the construction of a new school, rather than residential dwellings, meaning that the development will not increase the number of local residents, hence there is unlikely to be a negative impact upon the integrity of the qualifying features within the SAC and as such unlikely to represent a significant constraint to the development. In addition, no hydrological connectivity between the Site and either Kenfig SAC or Cefn Cribwr Grasslands SAC has been identified.
- 5.3 Although it is considered that the proposed school development at the Site will not cause any detrimental impacts to the integrity of the SACs, with reference and acknowledgement to Strategic Policy SP4 of the Bridgend Local Development Plan, a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening report will be completed in order to be robust.

National, Local and Non-Statutory Designations

- 5.4 Several national, local and non-statutory designated sites are located within 3km of the Site and are accessible by Public Rights of Way. The Site is proposed for a new educational facility, and therefore the number of daily visitors to the nearby designations are unlikely to increase as a result of the build and occupation of school, in contrast to what would be typically expected by residential development. As such, no increase in recreational pressure to the designated sites is anticipated as result.

Habitats and Flora

- 5.5 Emerging legislation within Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 and existing policy supports the provision of gains in biodiversity through development.
- 5.6 The Site is dominated by habitats of limited ecological interest. The development of the Site as a school would present opportunities to deliver measurable ecological enhancement through habitat restoration or creation alongside proposals, i.e. as part of the Site's green infrastructure provision. Subject to scheme design, it is considered that such measures are likely to be capable of delivering a gain in biodiversity on-site.

Hedgerow

- 5.7 The Site supports a short stretch of outgrown hedgerow now dominated by bramble scrub. Although hedgerows are a Section 7 Habitat of Principal Importance within the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and represent important foraging, refuge and dispersal habitat for a range of fauna, this feature is considered to have been degraded by scrub encroachment through lack of management and as such is considered to be important at the less than Local level.
- 5.8 The current masterplan shows the removal of the bramble-dominated feature as part of proposals, however new, native hedgerow planting is proposed across the Site and shown in the masterplan, which will further enhance the ecological value of the Site and connectivity through the wider landscape. An area of woodland is proposed at the south-west of the Site which will create a new habitat type on-site.

Fauna

Nesting birds

- 5.9 All wild birds are protected from killing and injury, and their nests and eggs are protected from damage and destruction, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Therefore, any clearance of nesting habitat or features required to facilitate the development should avoid the period between March and August (inclusive) when nesting birds are most likely to be present. If this is not possible, habitat will need to be checked for nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to clearance with works only proceeding if no nesting evidence or behaviour are observed.

Landscape Illustrative Masterplan

- 5.10 The Landscape Illustrative Master Plan (Ares Landscape Architects, Drawing Number BR0301-ALA-00-ZZ-RR-L-00001) has been reviewed to provide initial feedback on ecology and any potential for mitigation measures which could be incorporated into the design.
- 5.11 The Masterplan proposes a new school with associated infrastructure including a football pitch, two Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs), carparking and soft landscaping.
- 5.12 Where possible, the development design has sought to deliver new high quality planting to provide a betterment to what is currently present. New planting includes native species hedgerows, woodland planting and delivery of new grassland areas. Planting at the periphery of the Site will strengthen boundaries and provide intact, vegetated features that can be used by a range of dispersing wildlife. New tree planting is present throughout the areas of open space.

Summary of Recommendations

- 5.13 Based on the ecological constraints identified above, Table 2 summarises recommendations for further work necessary to determine the need for, and scope of, any avoidance, mitigation and/or compensation measures to address potential adverse effects of development. As a bramble dominated former-hedgerow comprises the only important ecological feature identified on-site, mitigation for loss of this feature to accommodate the development has been set out within this PEA, comprising new native species planting.
- 5.14 Due the lack of other important ecological features present, a full EcIA has been considered to be disproportionate to impacts from the scheme.

Table 2. Recommendations for further investigation/survey

Ecological Feature	Further Work	Applicable Timescales
Internationally statutory designated sites	HRA Assessment	Pre-planning

Opportunities for Ecological Enhancement

- 5.15 To promote adherence to the emerging Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 and Bridgend Local Development Plan 2006-2021 the following potential opportunities for ecological enhancement have been identified:
- Incorporation of native plants of wildlife importance into the landscaping scheme to provide foraging opportunities for birds, invertebrates and bats
 - Provision of new bat roosting opportunities within the fabric of the new building
 - Provision of bird nesting opportunities within the fabric of the new building
 - Provision of a hedgehog house within newly planted woodland on-site.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The dominant habitats on-site comprise hardstanding and modified grassland, and are considered to have low ecological value. A short stretch of outgrown hedgerow has not been managed and is now dominated by bramble scrub.
- 6.2 Due to the presence of man-made and well-managed habitats, opportunities for protected and notable species are generally absent from the Site, and as such no further survey work has been prescribed. Recommendations for precautionary pre-commencement working methods relating to nesting birds have been provided.
- 6.3 The proposed development of a new school with associated landscaping offers an opportunity to deliver a betterment to what is currently present. Provision of new green infrastructure such as the proposed woodland planting and delivery of new hedgerow features will provide new opportunities for protected species, and contribute towards a net gain in biodiversity.
- 6.4 Recommendations for ecological enhancement measures that could be delivered as part of development at the Site have been provided here-in, which will aid accordance with the Bridgend Local Plan 2006-2021.
- 6.5 No overriding constraints to development have been identified subject to the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures in respect of confirmed ecological constraints, and further recommended survey work.

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Appendix A

Habitats Plan



- Site boundary
- Other neutral grassland (g3c)
- Modified grassland (g4)
- Dense scrub (h3)
- Bramble scrub (h3d)
- Developed land, sealed surface (u1b)
- Vacant or derelict land (82)
- Hedgerows (h2a)
- Built linear feature (u1e)
- Fence (612)
- Target note
TN1 - Standing deadwood



Project	Marlas Site, Bridgend	Date	September 2023	Drawing No.	CSA/4834/101
Drawing Title	Habitats Plan	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	B
Client	WEPCo	Drawn	RC	Checked	AP

Appendix B

Legislation and Planning Policy

The **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017** transposes Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, and aspects of Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds, into UK domestic law. The Regulations make prescriptions for the designation and protection of Sites of Community Importance ('European sites', e.g. Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) and European Protected Species (EPS).

The **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** (as amended, principally by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) forms the basis for protection of statutory designated sites of national importance (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest; SSSIs) and native species that are rare and vulnerable in a national context. Additionally, badgers are protected under the **Protection of Badgers Act 1992**.

The **Environment (Wales) Act 2016** sets out the required for the 'sustainable management of natural resources' together with new ways of working to achieve this. Section 6 under Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the S6 duty) for public authorities in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales. The S6 duty requires that public authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and promote the resilience of ecosystems. Section 7 of Part 1 replaces the duty in Section 42 of the NERC Act 2006, to publish and revise lists of living organisms and types of habitat in Wales of key significance, to sustain and improve biodiversity.

The UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (2011-2020) lists the UK's most threatened species and habitats and sets out targets and objectives for their management and recovery. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) process is delivered nationally, regionally and locally and should be used as a guide for decision-makers to have regards for the targets set by the framework and the goals they aim to achieve. The UK BAP has now been replaced by the UK Post-210 Biodiversity Framework, however, it contains useful information on how to characterise important species assemblages and habitats which is still relevant.

The **Nature Recovery Action Plan (NRAP) 2020** for Wales was originally published in December 2015 at the Nature Recovery Plan. It is the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Wales under Aichi target 17 of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) strategic Plan for Biodiversity. It sets out the commitment to reversing the loss of biodiversity in Wales and objectives for action.

The **Planning Policy Wales 11 (Welsh Government, 2021)** sets out the government planning policies for Wales and how they should be applied. With regards to ecology and biodiversity, Chapter 6: Distinctive

and Natural Places, states that development plan strategies, policies and development proposals should be formulated to look at the long term protection and enhancement of special characteristics and intrinsic qualities of places, be these of natural, historic and built environments, ensuring their longevity in the face of change. This means both protecting and enhancing landscapes, habitats, biodiversity, geodiversity and the historic environment in their own right, as well as other components of the natural world, such as water resources or air quality. Biodiversity loss should be reversed, pollution reduced, environmental risks addressed and overall resilience of ecosystems improved.

The PPW recognises the planning system has a key role to play in helping to reverse the decline in biodiversity and increase the resilience of ecosystems. Paragraph 6.4.3 sets out the principles that local planning authorities should apply when determining planning applications:

- Support the conservation of biodiversity, in particular the conservation of wildlife and habitats; and must provide a net gain in biodiversity
- Ensure action in Wales contributes to meeting international responsibilities and obligations for biodiversity and habitats;
- Ensure statutorily and non-statutorily designated sites are properly protected and managed;
- Safeguard protected and priority species and existing biodiversity assets from impacts which directly affect their nature conservation interests and compromise the resilience of ecological networks and the components which underpin them, such as water and soil, including peat; and
- Secure enhancement of and improvements to ecosystem resilience, by ensuring any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimised, mitigated and as a last resort compensated for, and by improving diversity, condition, extent and connectivity of ecological networks.

Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009), which is referred to by the PPW, provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation and their effects within the planning system and is a material planning consideration.

Local planning policies of relevance to ecology, biodiversity and/or nature conservation within the Bridgend County Borough Council Local Development Plan 2006 - 2011 have been set out in Table B.1 below. The Replacement Local Development Plan is currently going through consultation.

1.1. Local planning policies of relevance to ecology, biodiversity and/or nature conservation have been set out in Table 1 below.

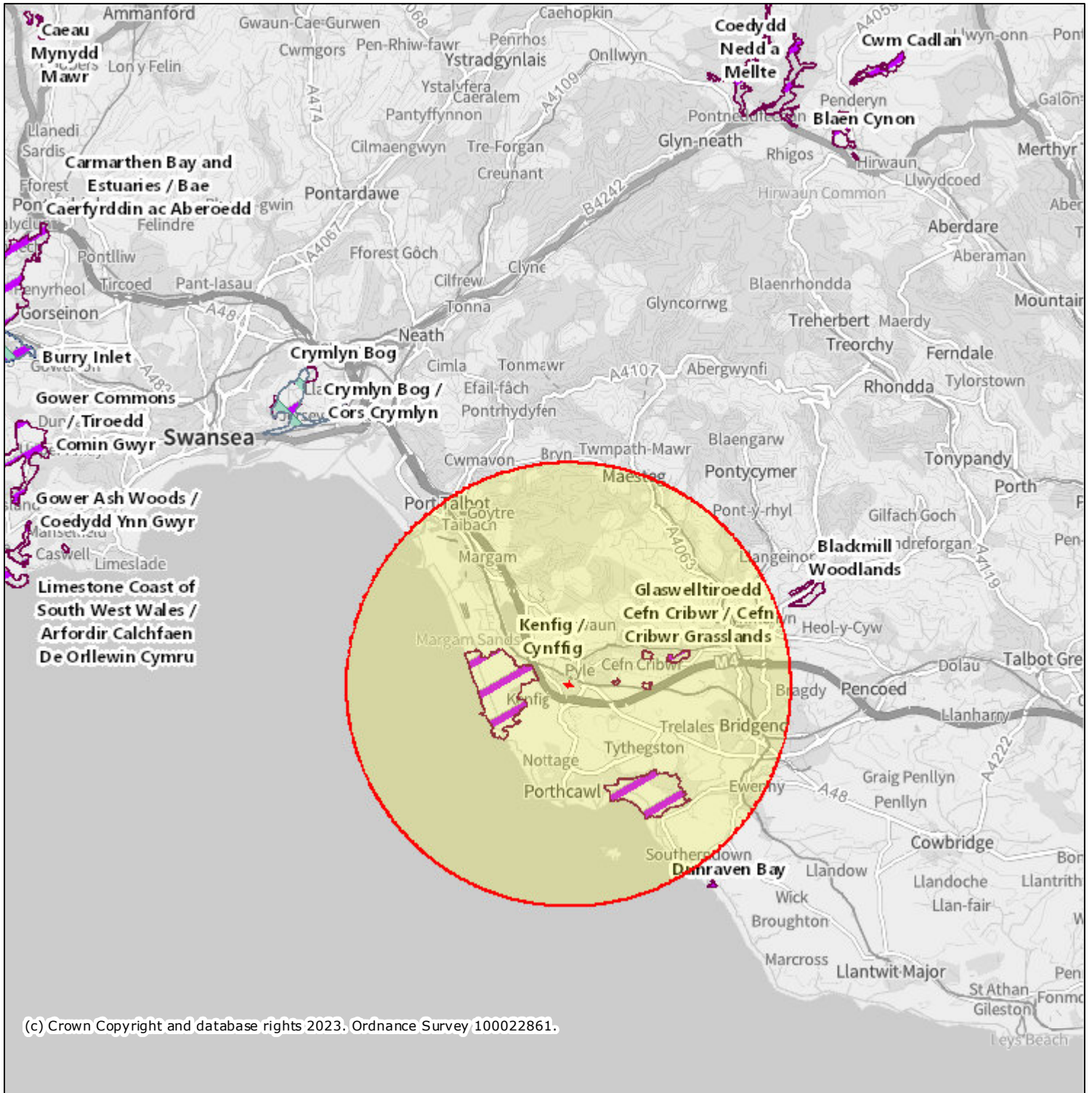
Table 1. Summary of regional and local planning policy relating to ecology

Policy	Summary
Bridgend Local Development Plan 2006-2021 (adopted 2013)	
Policy ENV4: Local/Regional Conservation Sites	<p>Development within or adjacent to a:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local Nature Reserve 2. Site of Importance for Nature Conservation or; 3. Regionally Important Geodiversity Site; <p>should be compatible with the nature conservation of scientific interest of the area, whilst promoting their educational role. Developments which would have an adverse impact on these sites will not be permitted unless the benefits associated with the development can be demonstrated to outweigh the harm and/or the harm can be reduced or removed by appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures.</p>
Policy ENV5: Green Infrastructure	<p>Green infrastructure will be provided through the protection and enhancement of existing natural assets and the creation of new multi-functional areas of green space. Green infrastructure corridors will connect locations of natural heritage, green space, biodiversity or other environmental interest, They will be safeguarded through:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not permitting development that compromises their integrity and therefore that of overall green infrastructure framework; 2. Using developer contributions to facilitate improvements to their quality and robustness; 3. Investing in appropriate management, enhancement and restoration, and the creation of new resources.
Policy ENV6: Nature Conservation	<p>Proposals for development or redevelopment will be required to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In the first instance, retain, conserve, restore and enhance wherever possible existing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland; • Trees; • Hedgerows; • Wetlands; • Watercourses; • Ponds; • Green Lanes/Wildlife Corridors; • Geological Features; • Other Natural Features or Habitats. 2. Where this is demonstrated not to be possible, suitable mitigation or compensatory measures will be required to secure biodiversity including future management programmes.




Policy	Summary
	<p>3. Avoid or overcome harm to nature conservation assets and/or species of wildlife which may either be resident, in-situ or which can be demonstrated within the site on a migratory basis.</p>
<p>Bridgend Replacement Local Development Plan (2018-2033)</p>	
<p>Although no updated saved or new policies are yet available for the above plan, online notes from a recent hearing session highlight potential changes to existing policies. Such changes are likely to strengthen policies by ensuring that the LDP policies adhere with Future Wales Policy, such as the resilience of ecosystems and green infrastructure assets must be demonstrated as part of development through innovative, nature-based approaches to site planning and the design of the built environment.</p> <p>The LDP Strategy will see to maintain and enhance biodiversity to provide a net benefit for biodiversity through a proactive and resilient approach.</p>	

Appendix C

Desk Study Information



Legend

-  Ramsar Sites (Wales)
-  Special Areas of Conservation (Wales)
-  Special Protection Areas (Wales)



Projection = OSGB36
 xmin = 230200
 ymin = 160600
 xmax = 331800
 ymax = 215300

Map produced by MAGiC on 10 September, 2023.
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Site Check Report Report generated on Sun Sep 10 2023

You selected the location: Centroid Grid Ref: SS82098184

The following features have been found in your search area:

National Nature Reserves (Wales)

NNR Code

00033

Name

MERTHYR MAWR WARREN

Cartesian Area (Ha)

324.233345

NNR Code

00046

Name

KENFIG POOL AND DUNES

Cartesian Area (Ha)

513.721057

Special Areas of Conservation (Wales)

Name

Kenfig / Cynffig

Reference

UK0012566

Marine

p

Date Notified

13/12/2004

Cartesian Area (Ha)

1190.898167

Name

Glaswelltiroedd Cefn Cribwr / Cefn Cribwr Grasslands

Reference

UK0030113

Marine

n

Date Notified

13/12/2004

Cartesian Area (Ha)

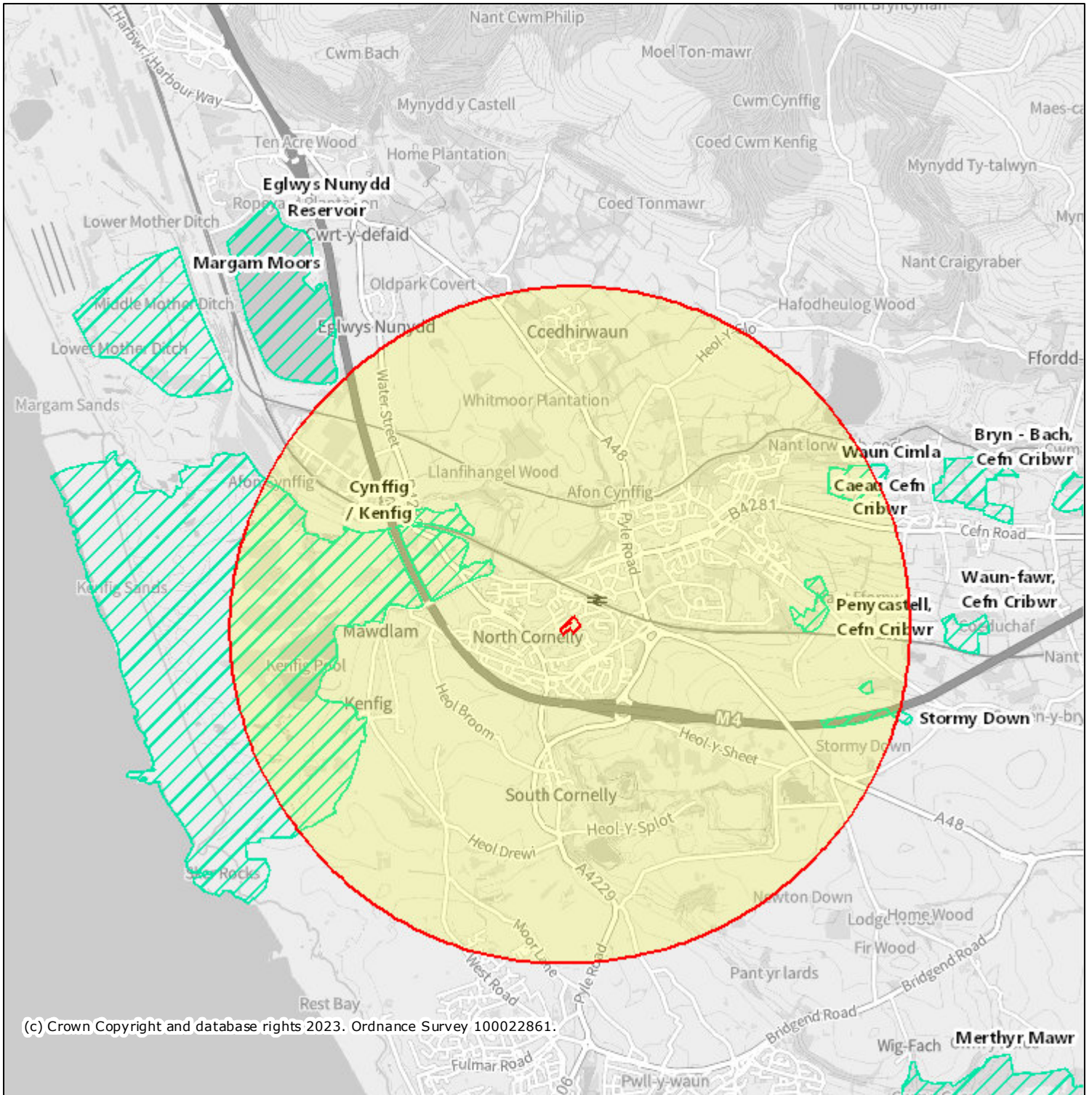
58.19722

Ramsar Sites (Wales)


No Features found

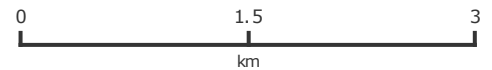
Special Protection Areas (Wales)

No Features found



Legend

 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Wales)



Projection = OSGB36

xmin = 271700

ymin = 177100

xmax = 292000

ymax = 188000

Map produced by MAGiC on 10 September, 2023. Copyright resides with the data suppliers and the map must not be reproduced without their permission. Some information in MAGiC is a snapshot of the information that is being maintained or continually updated by the originating organisation. Please refer to the metadata for details as information may be illustrative or representative rather than definitive at this stage.

Site Check Report Report generated on Sun Sep 10 2023
You selected the location: Centroid Grid Ref: SS82078185
 The following features have been found in your search area:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (Wales)

Name Cynffig / Kenfig
Eastings 279100.35431
Northings 181700.645382
First Notified 01/01/1953
Last Notified 28/03/2003
Confirmation Date 12/12/2003
Cartesian Area (Ha) 776.689996

Name Cynffig / Kenfig
Eastings 279100.35431
Northings 181700.645382
First Notified 01/01/1953
Last Notified 28/03/2003
Confirmation Date 12/12/2003
Cartesian Area (Ha) 776.689996

Name Cynffig / Kenfig
Eastings 279100.35431
Northings 181700.645382
First Notified 01/01/1953
Last Notified 28/03/2003
Confirmation Date 12/12/2003
Cartesian Area (Ha) 776.689996

Name Stormy Down
Eastings 284775.026008
Northings 181043.227579
First Notified 27/02/1986
Last Notified Null
Confirmation Date Null
Cartesian Area (Ha) 6.400079

Name Stormy Down
Eastings 284775.026008
Northings 181043.227579
First Notified 27/02/1986
Last Notified Null
Confirmation Date Null
Cartesian Area (Ha) 6.400079

Name Penycastell, Cefn Cribwr
Eastings 284288.177821
Northings 182016.400381
First Notified 04/12/2000
Last Notified Null
Confirmation Date 29/08/2001
Cartesian Area (Ha) 7.815113

Name Penycastell, Cefn Cribwr
Eastings 284288.177821
Northings 182016.400381
First Notified 04/12/2000
Last Notified Null
Confirmation Date 29/08/2001
Cartesian Area (Ha) 7.815113

Name Waun Cimla
Eastings 284699.308083
Northings 183144.945082
First Notified 24/03/1992
Last Notified Null
Confirmation Date 09/12/1992
Cartesian Area (Ha) 15.388443

Appendix D

Photographs



Photograph 1. Modified grassland at the north of the Site, looking west.



Photograph 2. Hardstanding with ornamental planting.



Photograph 3. Hedgerow on-site.



Photograph 4. Site of former building.



Photograph 5. Standing deadwood



Photograph 6. Turning circle at the south-west of the Site.

Appendix E

Habitats and Flora Species List

Table 1. Habitat Polygons

Site Name	Marlas Site, North Cornelly				
Survey Date and Surveyor(s)	09/08/2023 Rhiannon Taylor				
Scientific Name	Common Name	Habitat Parcel Number/Habitat Type			
		Modified grassland	Other neutral grassland	Hedgerow	Ornamental planting
Herb Species					
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy	x			
<i>Cerastium</i> sp.	Common mouse-ear		x		
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear thistle	x	x		
<i>Epilobium</i> sp.	Willowherb				x
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	Cut-leaved crane's-bill		x		
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	Lavender				x
<i>Oenothera biennis</i>	Evening primrose				x
<i>Plantago media</i>	Hoary plantain	x	x		
<i>Potentilla anserina</i>	Silverweed	x			
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup		x		
<i>Rumex</i> sp.	Dock	x	x		
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common ragwort	x	x		
<i>Sonchus asper</i>	Prickly sowthistle		x		
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.	Dandelion	x	x		
<i>Trifolium dubium</i>	Lesser trefoil		x		
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red clover		x		
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover	x	x		
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>	Scentless mayweed		x		
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander speedwell		x		
<i>Vicia cracca</i>	Tufted vetch		x		
Grasses					
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Common bent				
<i>Agrostis</i> sp.	Bent grass				
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping bent				
<i>Alopecurus myosuroides</i>	Black-grass				
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Meadow foxtail				
<i>Anisantha sterilis</i>	Barren brome				
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet vernal-grass				
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False oat-grass		x		
<i>Avena fatua</i>	Wild-oat				
<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>	False brome				
<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>	Soft-brome				
<i>Carex pendula</i>	Pendulous sedge				
<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	Crested dog's-tail				
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot				
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	Tufted hair-grass				
<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	Wavy hair-grass				
<i>Elytrigia repens</i>	Common couch				
<i>Festuca ovina</i>	Sheep's-fescue				
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red fescue				
<i>Festuca</i> sp.	Fescue				
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog		x		
<i>Hordeum murinum</i>	Wall barley	x			
<i>Hordeum secalinum</i>	Meadow barley				
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial rye-grass	x	x		
<i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i>	Chinese fountain grass				
<i>Phleum pratense</i>	Timothy				
<i>Pleioblasus</i> sp.	Bamboo				
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual meadow-grass				
<i>Poa infirma</i>	Early meadow-grass				
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Smooth meadow-grass				
<i>Poa</i> sp.	Meadow-grass				
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough meadow-grass				
<i>Schedonorus arundinaceus</i>	Tall fescue				
<i>Schedonorus giganteus</i>	Giant fescue				
<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>	Yellow oat-grass				
Broadleaved					
<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>	Box				x
<i>Cornus</i> sp.	Dogwood			x	

Scientific Name	Common Name	Habitat Parcel Number/Habitat Type			
		Modified grassland	Other neutral grassland	Hedgerow	Ornamental planting
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy			x	
<i>Lavandula</i> sp.	Lavender				x
<i>Rosa</i> sp.	Dog-rose			x	
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble		x	x	
<i>Salix</i> sp.	Willow			x	



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