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Breeding bird survey report
Butterfly Solar Farm,
Bangor-on-Dee, Wrexham
March 2024

A report by

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Report details

Site name: Butterfly Solar Farm
Site address: Land between A483 and Bangor-on-Dee, Wrexham
Grid reference: SO 796 507
Report date: 28th March 2024
Report author: James Gilroy BSc (Hons), MSc
Report reviewer: Colin Hicks BSc (Hons), MCIEEM

Report no: WOR-4362

Declaration of compliance

BS 42020:2013

This study has been undertaken in accordance with British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity, Code of practice for planning and development.

Code of Professional Conduct

The information which we have prepared is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

Validity of survey data and report

The findings of this report are valid for 12 months from the date of survey. The full survey effort has not been fully completed and this purpose of this report is not to determine any likely impact. If work has not commenced within this period, an updated survey by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required.

Revisions

Date	Report no:	Approved by:	Comment
28/03/2024	WOR-4362	CDH	Original report

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1. Introduction

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete breeding bird surveys of an area of agricultural land close to the town of Wrexham . A solar farm, with an associated substation, security fencing, internal access roads and battery storage is proposed.

1.2. Survey aims

The key objective of the breeding bird surveys was to establish the breeding bird assemblages within the Site. This information is subsequently used to determine an accurate assessment of the impacts of the proposals on breeding birds and informing the design and scale of any mitigation measures that may be required.

1.3. Site location

The total site comprises three separate areas of agricultural land (Areas 1 – 3, detailed in Maps 1 & 2), all located immediately north of the B5426 highway and broadly situated between the A483 dual carriageway and the village of Bangor-on-Dee in Wrexham County Borough. The sites are located approximately 2.6km to the south of the town of Wrexham (at the closest point).

2. Survey methodology

2.1. Desktop survey

The desktop survey collated existing ornithological records for the Site and adjacent areas and identified any nature conservation sites that may be affected by the proposals. This comprises an important part of the assessment process, providing information on ecological issues that may not be apparent during the site survey.

Consultees for the data search included:

- COFNOD (North Wales Environmental Information Service) provided biological records for protected/notable bird species, and non-statutory sites within 1km of the centre of each of the sites.
- Natural Resource Wales - Statutory nature conservation sites with ornithological interest within 10km of the Site .

2.2. Field survey

Walk over surveys were completed adopting the 'look-see' methodology described by Gilbert *et al.* (1998). A transect route was walked around the site, stopping at intervals to scan for target species with binoculars, within the Site and surrounding land. All bird activity was recorded and mapped, including birds flying over. Surveys were undertaken during favourable weather conditions, avoiding periods of prolonged heavy rain and strong winds (detailed in Table 1).

The surveys were completed by James Gilroy and Adrian George, both professional ecologists with experience of a variety of ornithological surveys.

Table 1 – survey timings and weather conditions

Survey no.	Date	Time Started	Time finished	Weather
2022				
1	18/05/2022	07:00	08:30	Clear, warm and dry. 15-17°C, WF=0-1W and cloud cover = 40%
2	07/06/2022	05:15	09:35	Early fog (cleared), sunny spells and dry. 10-17°C, WF=0-1E, cloud cover = 50%
3	22/06/2022	04:50	06:50	Sunny, warm and clear. 12-14°C, WF=1NW, cloud cover = <10%
2023				
1	07/04/2023	06:20	07:25	Cold, dry and overcast. 3°C, WF=1SE and cloud cover = <10%
2	26/04/2023	05:45	10:00	Dry, cold and clear. 4°C, WF=1W and cloud cover = 100%
3	13/05/2023	05:25	10:10	Dry, calm and clear. 6°C, WF=0-1NW and cloud cover = 10-20%
4	27/05/2023	05:00	09:35	Dry, calm and cool. 9°C, WF=1S, cloud cover = <10%
5	11/06/2023	04:50	09:15	Dry, calm and cold. 4°C, WF=1SE, cloud cover = 40%
6	24/06/2023	04:50	09:00	Dry, clear and warm. 14°C, WF=1-2SSW, cloud cover = 20%

The survey methodology was based on the standard Common Bird Census (CBC) methodology (Bibby *et al.* 2000). CBC is a territory mapping approach used to estimate the quantity and distribution of the breeding territories of each species encountered within the

survey area – in this case, land inside the red line boundary and within a 50 m buffer area around it.

All bird registrations were recorded on suitably scaled field maps using standard BTO species codes and behaviour notations (such as singing, carrying food, active nest). The approximate locations of bird territories within the Site were determined using standard territory mapping techniques to identify and isolate areas within which birds consistently displayed breeding behaviours (following Gilbert *et al.* 1998).

The territory mapping method is based on the observation that many species during the breeding season are territorial. This is most marked in passerines where territories are often determined by conspicuous song, display and territorial disputes with neighbouring conspecifics. The expected outcome of this technique is that mapped registrations fall into clusters, approximately coinciding with territories. Records of birds just visiting the Site (e.g. gulls feeding in fields) and birds flying over the Site were also made and the records of these summarised, however these have been discounted from further analysis, given they are not breeding within the Site and are therefore not considered relevant to the assessment.

For the purposes of the assessment, although the breeding territories for all species is provided, only the breeding territories of notable species are mapped given these are the most relevant species to this assessment. Notable species are determined based on the following criteria:

Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended) affords greater protection to certain breeding species and are as such listed as specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Act.

Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Wales 4

Commonly referred to as the Wales Red List for birds, this is the fourth review of the status of birds in Wales, and updates the last assessment in 2016. Using standardised criteria, 220 species with breeding, passage or wintering populations in Wales were assessed by experts from a range of bird NGOs and assigned to the Red, Amber or Green lists of conservation concern.

Red list species are those that are Globally Threatened according to IUCN criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery.

Amber list species are those with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe.

Species on the Green List fulfil none of the above criteria and are of least conservation concern.

Section 7, Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Species of bird are listed as Priority Species under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act.

2.4. Survey constraints

It is appreciated that factors such as the cropping regime will influence habitat use within the Site by birds and that this may change between years during the agricultural rotation, however, it is assumed that recorded bird activity associated with Site is broadly typical.

The CBC methodology typically recommends between five and ten survey visits for detailed territory mapping. The four visits undertaken, however, are considered sufficient effort to record adequate detail for the purposes of planning applications

The surveys undertaken in 2022 commenced in late May and therefore missed the early to mid-breeding season period. Access to the Western site wasn't possible during the 2nd visit in 2022 and as such, territory mapping hasn't been possible for this area. However, a complete survey effort was undertaken in 2023 which captured the whole breeding season period, and therefore this is not considered a constraint to the assessment.

The surveys undertaken allow for a robust assessment of breeding activity at this site and there are no other constraints to the surveys.

2.5. Study area

The survey area for the wintering bird surveys was the footprint of the proposed development, hereafter referred to as the 'Site', and its immediate surroundings. This is the area included within the line described as "Survey area" within the legend of Map 1.

3. Results

3.1. Desktop survey

The biological records search returned records of notable bird species within 1km of the Site. These are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Records for notable species within 1km

Species	No. of records			Conservation/legal status
	Western	Central	Eastern	
Barn Owl	1	4	4	WCA s1 ⁴ ; Amber ⁵
Bittern	1			WCA s1; Amber
Black-headed Gull	3			Red ⁶
Bullfinch	2	2		Red
Coal Tit	3	3	2	Amber
Common Sandpiper	1			Amber
Cormorant	3			Amber
Crossbill	1			WCA s1
Curlew	1	1	2	Red
Dipper	1			Amber
Duncock	6	4	3	Amber
Fieldfare	1	1	1	WCA s1; Amber
Garden Warbler	1			Amber
Goldcrest	3	2		Amber
Green Woodpecker	2	1		Amber
Greenfinch	4	2	2	Red
Grey Wagtail	2		1	Amber
Greylag Goose	1			Amber
Herring Gull	6	2		Red
Hobby	1	1	2	WCA s1; Amber
House Martin	3	2	1	Amber
House Sparrow	4	5	2	Amber
Iceland Gull	2			Amber
Kingfisher	1			WCA s1; Amber
Lapwing	2	3	1	Red
Lesser Black-backed Gull	4	1		Amber
Lesser Redpoll	1			Red
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	1			Red
Linnet	1	2	1	Red
Long-tailed Tit	7	5	3	Amber
Mallard	3	2		Amber
Marsh Tit	1	3		Red

⁴ Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 – Schedule 1 – protected against harm and disturbance

⁵ BTO Birds of Conservation Concern (England/Wales) - Amber

⁶ BTO Birds of Conservation Concern (England/Wales) - Red

Meadow Pipit		1	1	Amber
Mistle Thrush	4	3		Red
Moorhen	2	1	1	Amber
Mute Swan	1			Amber
Peregrine	1			WCA s1
Pied Flycatcher	1			Red
Pochard	1			Red
Red Kite	2			WCA s1; Amber
Redstart	1	1		Amber
Redwing	2	1	1	WCA s1; Amber
Reed Bunting	2			Amber
Rook	2	4	1	Amber
Skylark	1	2		Amber
Snipe	1			Amber
Song Thrush	7	3	2	Amber
Sparrowhawk	3			Amber
Spotted Flycatcher	1	2	2	Red
Starling	4	4	2	Red
Stock Dove	3	1	1	Amber
Swallow	4	5	3	Amber
Swift	3	1	1	Amber
Tawny Owl			2	Amber
Tree Sparrow	1			Red
Tufted Duck	1	1		Amber
Whitethroat	3	1	1	Amber
Willow Tit	1			Red
Willow Warbler	3	1		Red
Woodcock	1	1	1	Amber
Woodpigeon	8	5	3	Amber
Wren	6	5	3	Amber
Yellowhammer	4	1	1	Red

There is one statutory nature conservation site (with qualifying features relating to birds) located within 10km of the Site, and is detailed below.

Table 2. Statutory nature conservation sites with migratory, overwintering and/or wetland bird interest, within 10km of the Site.

Site name & designation	Description	Approximate distance from proposed development site (at the closest point)
Ruabon/Llantysilio Mountains and Minera SSSI	Ruabon/Llantysilio Mountains and Minera SSSI occupies a major upland block. The site is notified firstly on biological grounds, for its heather moor, limestone and neutral grassland habitats and for its species interest which includes a range of upland breeding birds such as merlin, short-eared owl, golden plover and ring ouzel.	5.2km to the west

3.2. Habitat Assessment

The Site is located within farmland under intensive agricultural rotation, comprising arable crops and pasture.

Grassland and arable crops will provide suitable vegetative structure for ground nesting species (such as skylark), particularly during the early breeding season when vegetation height and structure will be more suitable for nesting. Grassland habitats will likely experience frequent mowing activities which would constrain productivity for any species nesting here. Spring-sown cereals provide good breeding habitat for a variety of ground nesting farmland birds.

Hedgerows, ditch corridors and woodland edge located along field boundaries also provide optimal breeding habitat for a wide variety of farmland bird species.

3.3. Breeding bird survey

2022 results

The breeding bird survey results for 2022 are contained in Table 1, Appendix 1. The breeding bird assemblage recorded within the Site during the surveys is characteristic of rural habitats in this region, with a total of 51 species recorded.

A total of 20 notable species were recorded within the Site, consisting of 8 Amber list species and 12 Red list species. Of these, 10 are also listed as Section 7 Priority species.

Kingfisher was the only species recorded that is listed under Schedule 1 of the WCA (1981), however this was recorded beyond the Site boundary and was assessed only as a possible breeding species.

One notable species was confirmed to be breeding within the Site (rook), 6 notable species were assessed as probable breeders and 11 were possible breeders. 5 notable species were assessed as non-breeders due to occasional records, lack of suitable nesting habitat within the site or behaviour such as flocking or flying overhead.

Notable species were mostly associated with the hedgerow boundaries which enclose the field compartments, and woodland parcels adjacent the external boundaries. No skylark (or other notable ground nester) territories were recorded.

All species recorded along with breeding status and estimated number of territories are detailed within Table 1, Appendix 1. Notable Species are shaded. The indicative locations of the territories of Notable Species are provided in Map 1.

2023 results

The 2023 results are contained in Table 2, Appendix 1. A total of 67 species were recorded and generally reflected a similar assemblage to the previous year's survey.

A total of 29 notable species were present within the Site which included 17 Amber list species, 12 red listed species, 11 Priority species and 4 WCA schedule 1 species.

5 notable species were confirmed to be breeding within the Site, while 6 are assessed as probable breeders, 8 are possible breeders and 15 are non-breeders.

As with the previous year's results, notable species activity was mostly associated with field boundaries such as hedgerows and woodland. A single skylark territory was recorded, beyond the Site boundary, in adjacent fields. A grey partridge territory was recorded and it is likely that this is within the Site boundary.

All species recorded along with breeding status and estimated number of territories are detailed within Table 2 Appendix 1. Notable Species are shaded. The indicative locations of the territories of Notable Species are provided in Map 2.

References

BSI, 2013. *British Standard 42020: 2013. Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development*. British Standards Institution, London.

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Institute of Environmental Assessment (IEA), 1995. *Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment*, Institute of Environmental Assessment. E&FN Spon, aJn Imprint of Chapman and Hall. London.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 2010. *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a Technique for Environmental Audit*. Reprinted by JNCC, Peterborough

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Appendix 1:

Breeding bird survey results

Table 1 – 2022 breeding bird survey results

Species	Survey #1		Survey #2		Survey #3		Territories	Status
	total	peak	total	peak	total	peak		
B.	7	2	14	1	9	1	3	Prob
BC	7	1	9	1	6	1	5	Prob
BE	4	2	0	0	1	1	1	Prob
BT	17	4 (fam)	14	5 (fam)	11	5(fa m)	8	Confirmed
BZ	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	Poss
C.	11	7	5	1	36	36	0	Poss
CC	15	1	20	1	15	1	12	Prob
CD	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	Poss
CH	9	1	10	1	3	1	3	Prob
CT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Prob
D.	14	1	13	1	5	1	6	Prob
G.	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	Poss
GC	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	Poss
GO	10	3	12	3	10	1	4	Prob
GR	2	1	0	0	4	2	0	Poss
GS	3	1	7	1	4	1	1	Prob
GT	9	4 (fam)	7	4 (fam)	8	4(fa m)	3	Confirmed
GW	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	Poss
HG	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
HS	0	0	5	5	1	1	0	Poss
J.	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	Poss
JD	8	3	51	34	47	42	0	Poss
KF	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	Poss
L.	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
LB	0	0	0	0	22	21	0	Non-breeder
LI	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	Poss
LT	3	3	12	5(fam)	4	1	2	Prob
LW	1	1	1	1	3	1	0	Poss
M.	3	3	2	1	0	0	0	Poss
MA	2	2	2	2	6	5	0	Poss
MG	6	1	9	1	6	1	2	Prob
MH	0	0	5	5(fam)	2	2	1	Confirmed
NH	2	1	1	1	2	1	0	Poss
PH	2	2	3	1	2	1	0	Prob
PW	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	Poss
R.	15	1	19	1	7	1	8	Prob

RB	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Poss
RK	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
RO	15	12	0	0	32	18	2	Confirmed
SD	8	2	6	1	7	1	0	Poss
SH	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	Confirmed
SK	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	Poss
SG	5	5	7	7	0	0	0	Non-breeder
SL	8	3	2	2	7	4	0	Non-breeder
SI	6	1	3	1	3	1	2	Prob
TC	0	0	3	1	2	1	0	Poss
WH	6	1	5	1	3	1	4	Prob
WP	16	3	7	1	3	1	1	Prob
WR	22	1	25	1	29	1	19	Prob
WW	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	Poss
YL	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Poss

BoCC Wales Amber
BoCC Wales Red
Section 7 Priority Species
WCA s1



Table 2 – 2023 breeding bird survey results

Species	#1		#2		#3		#4		#5		#6		Territories	Status
	total	peak	total	peak	total	peak	total	peak	total	peak	total	peak		
B.	12	3	14	4(fam)	14	1	23	1	21	2(pair)	20	4(fam)	21	Confirmed
BC	2	1	11	1	12	1	16	1	8	1	5	1	12	Confirmed
BF	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	4	2(pair)	0	0	2	Prob
BT	8	1	7	1	8	1	26	4(fam)	12	6(fam)	38	5(fam)	18	Confirmed
BZ	11	2	4	2	7	2	5	1	3	1	4	1	2	Confirmed
C.	32	8	16	8	8	1	35	6	21	4	30	4	5	Confirmed
CC	33	1	23	1	18	2	18	1	12	1	19	1	22	Prob
CD	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Poss
CG	6	4	4	2	1	1	23	23	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
CH	5	2	12	2	11	0	7	2	6	1	4	1	9	Prob
CT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	Poss
D.	6	1	8	1	8	2	8	1	5	1	12	4(fam)	10	Confirmed
FF	68	48	31	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
G.	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	Poss
GC	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Poss
GH	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Poss
GL	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Poss
GO	7	2	6	2	2	2	6	2	2	1	14	8	2	Confirmed
GS	4	1	4	1	3	1	6	1	4	2(pair)	5	1	3	Confirmed
GT	6	1	8	1	8	1	8	4(fam)	8	5(fam)	15	4(fam)	8	Confirmed
GW	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Poss
H.	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
HG	0	0	8	7	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
HS	3	1	0	0	10	8	8	5	0	0	2	1	2	Confirmed
J.	4	1	4	3(fam)	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	Confirmed
JD	64	21	29	12	27	8	33	6	56	24	24	15	3	Confirmed
KT	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
L.	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
LB	0	0	4	4	0	0	9	9	1	1	0	0	0	Non-breeder
LI	9	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Poss
LT	2	2	4	2	3	2	4	6(fam)	5	5(fam)	21	5(fam)	7	Confirmed
LW	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
M.	0	0	1	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	8	8	1	Confirmed
MA	1	1	4	3	4	2	2	2	1	1	10	6	1	Confirmed
MG	5	1	10	1	11	2	7	3(fam)	14	6(fam)	18	3(fam)	5	Confirmed
MP	5	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
MH	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	Confirmed
MN	0	0	0	0	11	11(fam)	2	2(pair)	4	4(fam)	5	5(fam)	1	Confirmed
NH	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	Prob
OC	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
P.	0	0	0	0	2	2(pair)	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	Prob
PE	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder

PH	4	1	10	8	1	1	5	1	3	1	4	1	0	Prob
PW	2	2	4	2	1	1	3	1	0	0	1	1	0	Poss
R.	13	1	10	1	7	3(fam)	20	1	12	3(fam)	8	4(fam)	14	Confirmed
RB	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
RE	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
RN	1	1	7	4	5	4	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	Poss
RO	57	38	29	16	88	70	2	2	72	71	31	31	2	Confirmed
RT	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
S.	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	Prob
SD	16	6	28	14	19	8	12	2	11	2	9	1	1	Confirmed
SG	6	2	10	3	31	18	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	Poss
SH	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	Poss
SL	5	2	8	6	17	9	3	1	1	1	3	1	0	Non-breeder
ST	9	2	12	1	8	1	13	1	8	8	12	1	14	Prob
SW	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	Poss
T.	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
TC	0	0	3	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	Poss
TO	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	Poss
W.	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
WC	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
WH	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	Prob
WM	0	0	8	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-breeder
WP	50	8	78	32	70	21	57	8	53	14	72	42	6	Confirmed
WR	16	1	11	1	8	1	32	1	25	1	27	1	28	Confirmed
WW	1	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Poss

BoCC Wales Amber
BoCC Wales Red
Section 7 Priority Species
WCA s1



Appendix 2:

Indicative breeding territories of notable bird species



Legend

Red line boundary

Notable species territories - 2022

BoCC Wales Amber

BoCC Wales Red



Title: Map 1. Breeding territories of
Notable Species in 2022

Project: Legacy Farm Solar Project

Checked by: CDH Version: 01
Date: 27th March 2024




western
ECOLOGY

1 Geffery Close
Landrake
Saltash
Cornwall
PL12 5HA


Tel: 0800 622 6828
email: office@westernecology.co.uk

Legend

 Red line boundary

Notable species territories - 2022

 BoCC Wales Amber

 BoCC Wales Red

0 100 200 m

Map data: Google Earth, Digital Globe

Title: Map 1. Breeding territories of
Notable Species in 2022

Project: Legacy Farm Solar Project

Checked by: CDH Version: 01
Date: 27th March 2024




western
ECOLOGY


1 Geffery Close
Landrake
Saltash
Cornwall
PL12 5HA

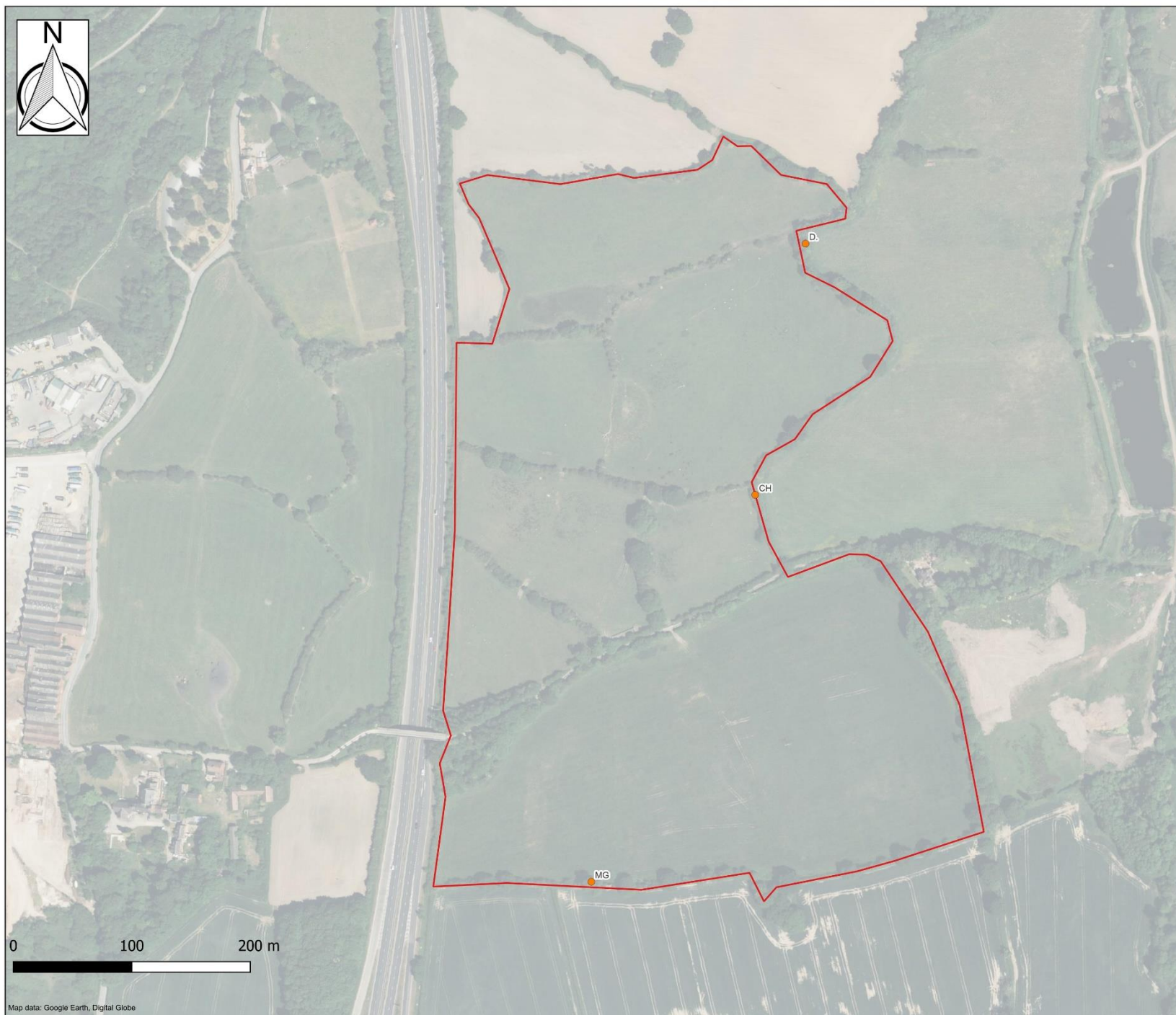
Tel: 0800 622 6828
email: office@westernecology.co.uk

Legend

 Red line boundary

Notable species territories - 2023

 BoCC Wales - Amber



Title: Map 2. Breeding territories of
Notable Species in 2023

Project: Legacy Farm Solar Project

Checked by: CDH Version: 01
Date: 27th March 2024



western
ECOLOGY

1 Geffery Close
Landrake
Saltash
Cornwall
PL12 5HA

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