

**EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY OF
SITE FOR NEW ACTIVITY CENTRE AT
SURF SNOWDONIA, DOLGARROG,
CONWY**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2018 by WCP Associates to undertake an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, of a parcel of land at Surf Snowdonia, Dolgarrog, Conwy. The site will be the subject of a planning application for the construction of an indoor activity building.
- 1.2 The site is situated east of Conway Road in the village of Dolgarrog in Conwy, North Wales (O.S. grid reference: SH 77072 67463 – see Figure 1). The site of the indoor activity building is to the west of the existing reception buildings and currently comprises an activity lagoon and a section of decking. The wider site is surrounded by farmland on the east and woodland on all other sides.
- 1.3 The aims of the survey were to:
 - Describe and map the habitats present on the site
 - Assess the potential for protected species to be present on the site or just outside the immediate site boundary
 - Identify where further survey may be necessary.

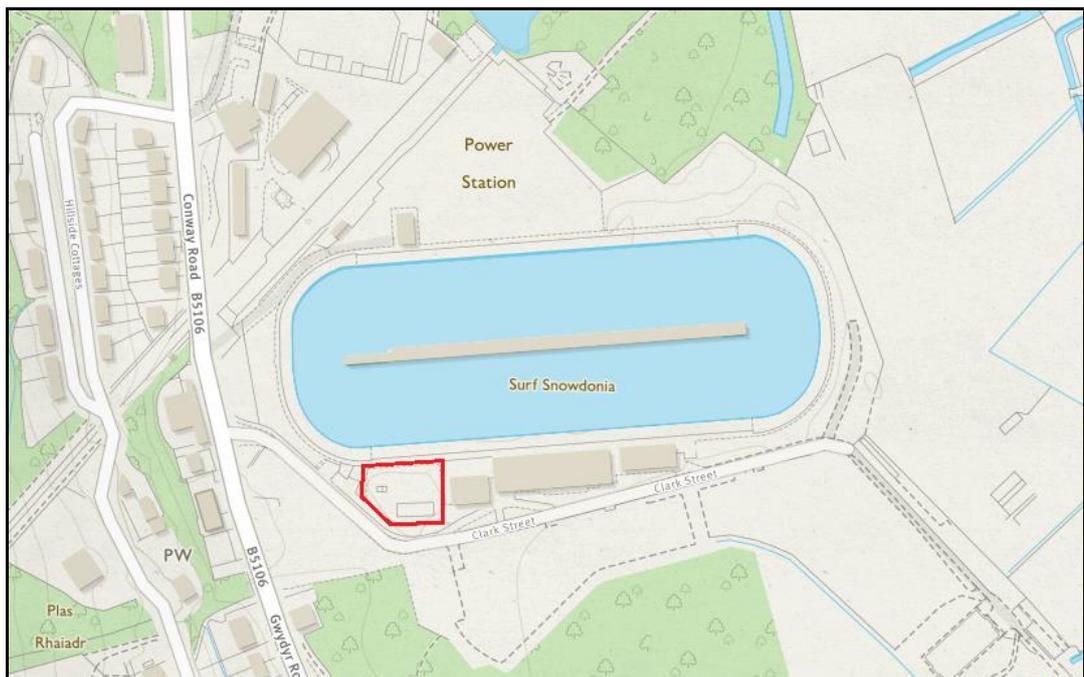


Figure 1 showing the location of the site within the red boundary

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 A Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken to JNCC standards (JNCC, 2010). The site was walked, and each habitat was assigned a Phase 1 habitat category. Species lists were taken at each habitat and the abundance of each species was noted. All botanical nomenclature follows Stace, 2010. A Phase 1 map was produced showing habitat boundaries.
- 2.2 During the Phase 1 survey, the habitats were assessed for their potential to support protected species. This included, looking for signs of Badger activity (e.g. setts, paths, latrines and hairs on fences), assessing any waterbodies on site or near the site for their potential to support Great Crested Newt and assessing the potential for any buildings or mature trees to be used by bats.
- 2.3 The site was also surveyed for invasive, non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.
- 2.4 Kate Reed and Rosie Fisher (Ecologists) undertook the survey on 3rd April 2018. The weather was bright with occasional showers. Both surveyors have over four years of experience of habitat and protected species surveys and are fully trained. April is an optimum time for botanical work and protected species assessments. The site was fully accessible and there were no constraints to the survey.

3.0 RESULTS

HABITATS

- 3.1 The Phase 1 Habitat Map can be found at the back of the report. The habitats present on site are described below.

Bare Ground and Ephemeral Vegetation

- 3.2 The site of the proposed activity building is dominated by area of bare ground in the form of decking, hardstanding and artificial grass (see Photographs 1 and 2).



Photograph 1 showing the decking



Photograph 2 showing the hardstanding at the edges of the lagoon

Open Water

- 3.3 An activity lagoon takes up a large part of the activity building site (see Photograph 3). This is man-made, with large inflatables, fountains, concrete sides with no aquatic vegetation.



Photograph 3 showing the open water with inflatables

Other Habitats

- 3.4 The boundary of the activity building site comprises a combination of wooden and wire fencing. Two wooden sheds occur on the site. These are in good condition and in use (see Photograph 4).



Photograph 4 showing camping pods

INVASIVE SPECIES

- 3.5 No invasive, non-native species, listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), are present on either parcel of land.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Badger

- 3.6 Badgers *Meles meles* are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This Act, for example, makes it illegal to disturb a Badger whilst it is in a sett, to kill, injure or take a badger and to obstruct the entrance to a Badger sett.

- 3.7 No evidence of Badger activity, such as latrines or hair, was found on the site. No Badger setts were located on site or immediately adjacent to the site. No habitats suitable for Badger foraging are present.

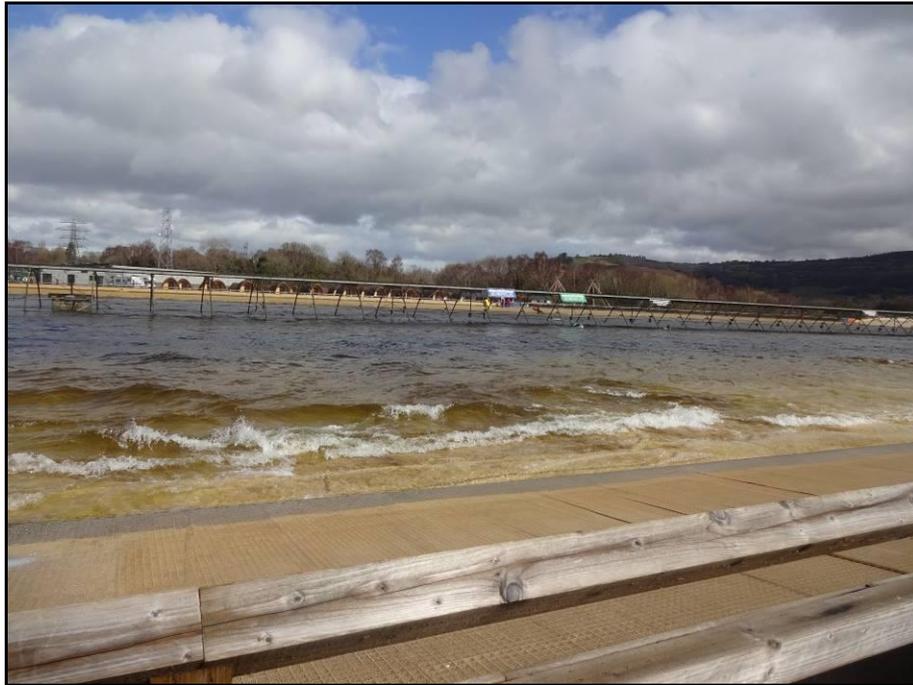
Bats

- 3.8 All bat species are European Protected Species under the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994. This is implemented in the UK through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006). It is illegal to disturb or damage a bat roost.

- 3.9 The sheds provide no bat access and are unsuitable to be used as a bat roost due to their poor thermal qualities (see Photograph 8). One shed has a flat roof, the other has a slightly pitched roof both are in good condition with no access points for bats to use. No roof voids or suitable bat roosting cavities exist within the structures on site.
- 3.10 Bats use linear landscape features to commute and forage along. No linear landscape features, such as hedgerows, occur on either part of the site. It is unlikely that bats forage over the bare ground and amenity lagoon.
- 3.11 A Lesser Horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros* roost exists within a bunker to the north-east approximately 400m away. This will not be directly affected by the proposals.

Great Crested Newt

- 3.12 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is a European Protected Species (EPS). It is listed under Annex IV of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora. This is implemented in the UK through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the species is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.13 No ponds exist within 250 metres of the site. The activity centre lagoon and the adjacent surfing lagoon were fully assessed for their suitability to support Great Crested Newt (GCN). The activity lagoon is man-made and approximately 900 metre² (see Photograph 3 above). It is deep, steep-sided and in frequent use for water sports. No aquatic vegetation is present, and fountains occur around the edges. It is concluded to have poor suitability for GCN. The surfing lagoon is 5 metres away (see Photograph 5). This has the same composition as the lagoon on site but is approximately 2.7 hectares in size and has a mechanism in the centre for creating waves. This is also concluded to have poor suitability for GCN.



Photograph 5 showing the surfing lagoon

- 3.14 No suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN occurs on the site.

Reptiles

- 3.15 Adder *Vipera berus*, Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis* and Grass Snake *Natrix natrix* are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), against intentional injuring and killing.
- 3.16 Reptile surveys and mitigation have previously been undertaken at the Surf Snowdonia site. In 2012, Slow Worm, Grass Snake and Common Lizard were recorded (Tyler Grange). In 2013, a reptile translocation scheme was implemented, using reptile fencing. All reptiles encountered were translocated to the north-eastern block of woodland. Reptile fencing was erected to prevent reptiles from re-entering the main construction site. The reptile fencing can still be seen.
- 3.17 This is over 400m away from the proposed activity centre development. The site itself does not support suitable reptile habitat. No vegetation exists that could offer cover. No hibernation sites exist. The bare ground is heavily disturbed and does not offer suitable cover, or foraging, for reptiles.

Nesting Birds

- 3.18 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.19 No suitable bird nesting habitat exists on the site.

PROTECTED SITES

3.20 No statutory or non-statutory designated sites fall on, or immediately adjacent to, the development site. Six statutory designated sites lie within 2km of the site. These are:

- Morfa Uchaf, Dyffryn Conwy SSSI lies 150 metres north of the site, across an area of woodland.
- Coed Dolgarrog SSSI and National Nature Reserves (NNR) is a woodland that lies 200 metres west of the site, across Conway Road.
- Ceunant Dulyn Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is woodland that lies 1.3km north, separated from the site by farmland and infrastructure.
- Plas Maenan SSSI is a woodland that lies 1.4km east, across farmland, the River Conwy and infrastructure.
- Eryri/ Snowdonia SSSI and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lies 1.4km west of the site, separated from the site by woodland and pasture.
- Mwyngloddiau a Chreigiau Gwydyr SSSI is woodland that lies 2km south, separated from the site by infrastructure and woodland.

3.21 Three non-statutory designated sites lie within 2km of the site. These are:

- Ceunant Porth Llywd Conwy Wildlife Site (CWS) which lies 250 metres to the north-west.
- Pont Dalgarrog Marsh CWS which lies 280 metres to the south-east.
- Coed Tal-y-Bont CWS which lies 500 metres to the north-west.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

HABITATS

- 4.1 The Phase 1 Habitats present on the two parcels of land are common throughout the UK. No nationally rare or locally rare plant species were located during the extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey.
- 4.2 The site supports bare ground and an amenity lagoon. The site is considered to be of limited ecological value.

Development Context

- 4.3 The proposed development includes the loss of bare ground and a water sports lagoon. Given the habitats to be lost are of low ecological value, no specific habitat mitigation is required.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Badger

- 4.4 No evidence of Badger activity is present on site. Badger is not considered to be a constraint on development at this time.

Bats

- 4.5 None of the buildings or structures on site provide internal access or cavities that could be used by roosting bats. No trees with bat roosting potential, or strong linear features for bat foraging were found on site. No further bat survey work, such as dusk and dawn surveys, is considered necessary and bats are not considered to be a constraint on development at this time.
- 4.6 A Lesser Horseshoe bat roost exists over 400m to the east. This is a legally protected site. There will be no direct impact during development on this roost site.

Great Crested Newt

- 4.7 The proposed development will not involve the loss of any GCN terrestrial habitat. Only bare ground is to be lost which is unsuitable habitat for newt dispersal. The waterbody on site and waterbody adjacent to the site are both unsuitable breeding habitats for GCN due to the lack of vegetation and man-made construction. Previous GCN surveys have failed to record any GCN on site. Great Crested Newt is not considered to be a constraint on development at this time.

Reptiles

- 4.8 A reptile translocation programme was implemented in 2013 and all reptiles translocated to the north-eastern block of woodland 400m away from the proposed development. The reptile fencing is still evident. Whilst it is possible that parts of the fencing have lost their integrity since 2013, the site does not support suitable reptile habitat and are heavily disturbed.

Nesting Birds

- 4.9 The site does not support suitable nesting habitat for birds. No further work is considered necessary.

PROTECTED SITES

- 4.10 No statutory or non-statutory protected sites exist on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. Six statutory protected sites occur within 2km of the site and three non-statutory protected sites exist within 2km. The protected sites are all separated from the proposed development site by adequate buffer zones and habitats, such as roads, rivers and railway lines. Because of this, it is not considered that there will be any detrimental impact on the protected sites from the development.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Further Survey

- 5.1 Protected species are a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a planning application. The presence of protected species, the effect of the proposed development and suitable mitigation, if required, must be established before planning permission can be granted. Following the findings from the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, no further survey works are considered to be necessary.

Protected Species

- 5.2 If any protected species is found during the works, then work must temporarily cease and a suitably experienced ecologist be contacted for advice.

Habitat Enhancement

- 5.2 If a landscaping plan is produced for the red line boundary, it is recommended that the following measures are taken into account, to increase the biodiversity value of the site:

- Tree and shrub planting – where practical, native tree species should be planted.
- Soft landscaping should include the provision of native and non-native flowering perennial species, to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.

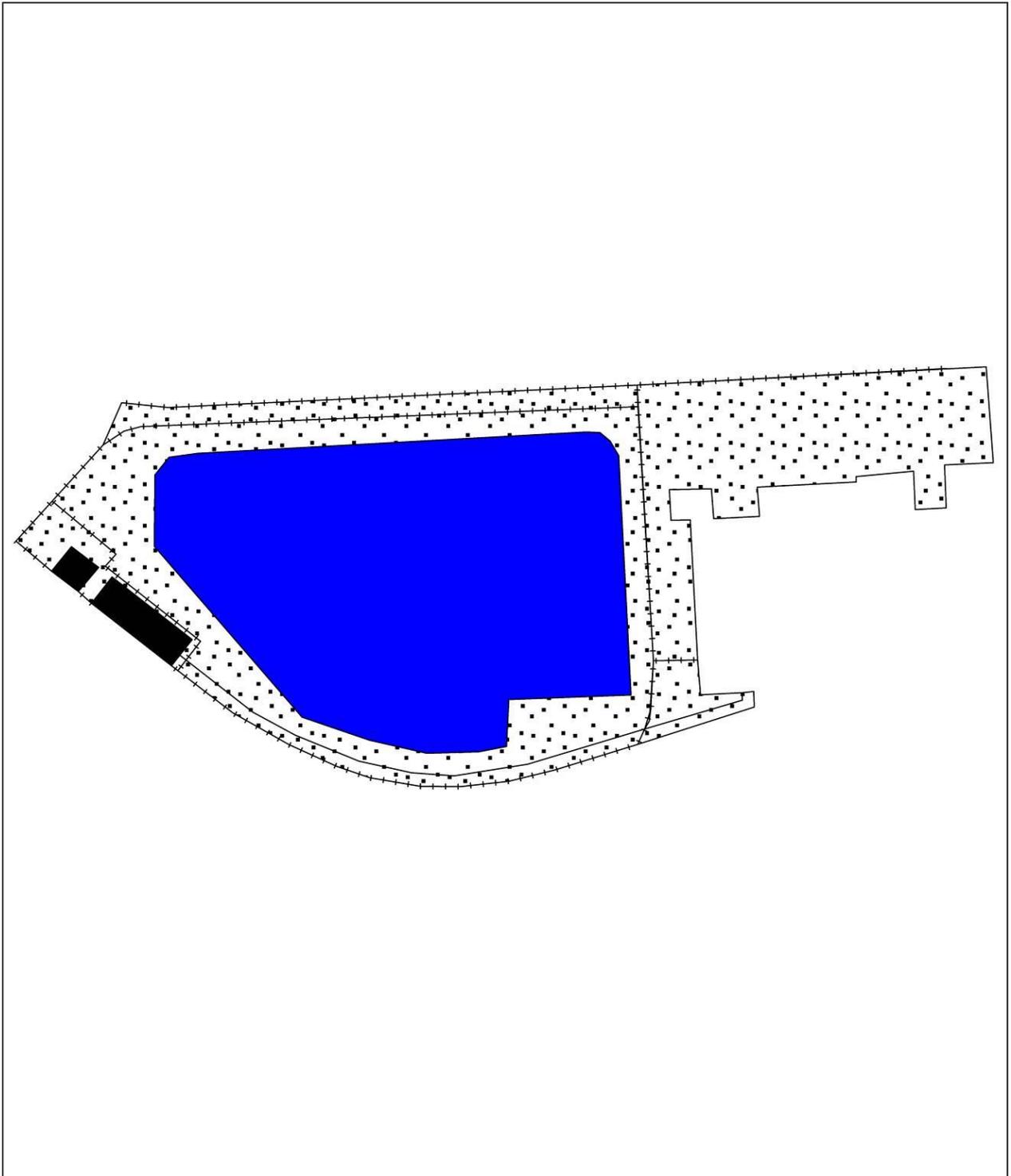
6.0 REFERENCES

JNCC. *Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a technique for environmental audit*, JNCC, Updated 2010.

Preston, C.D., Pearman, D. & Dines, T. (2002). *New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora*. Oxford University Press.

Stace, C. A. (2010). *New Flora of the British Isles, 3rd Edition*. Cambridge University Press.

PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP



Key

-  Bare Ground
-  Open Water
-  Structure
-  Fence

Phase 1 Habitat Map

**Activity Building Site,
Surf Snowdonia, Conwy**

**Drawn by: RF
Date: 05/04/18**



NOT TO SCALE



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