

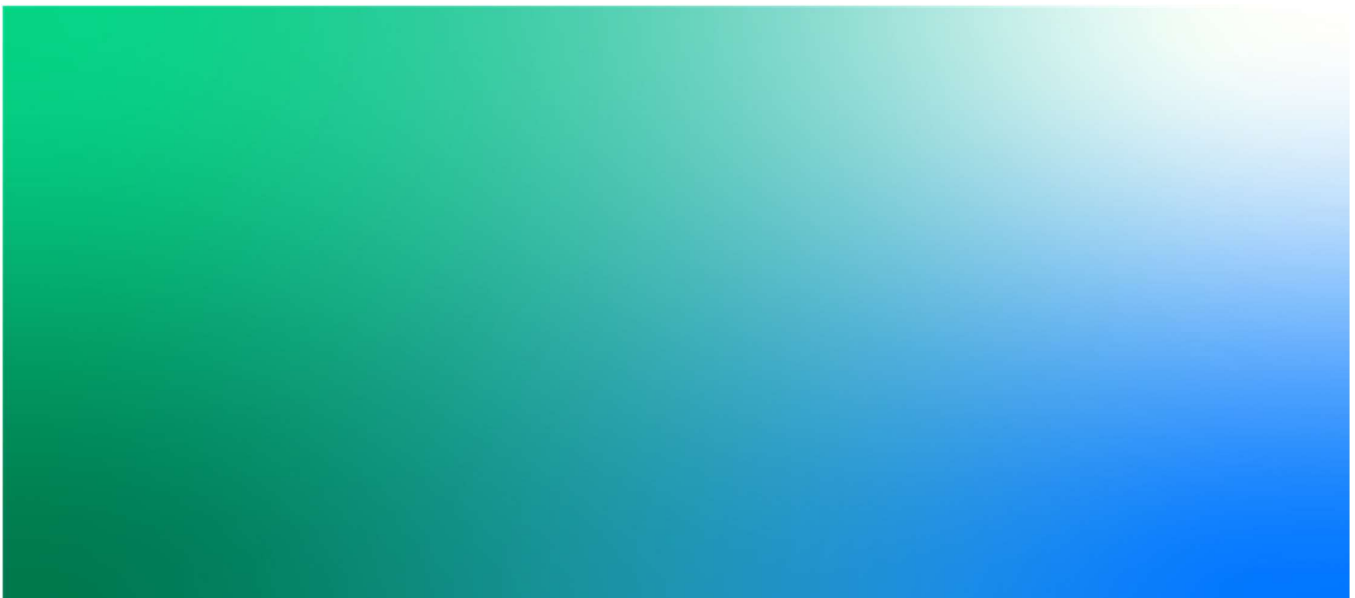


A465 Sections 5 and 6
Pant Road Playground Ecology Report

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Welsh Government



A465 Sections 5 and 6

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Client Name: Welsh Government
Project Manager: David Sallis
Author: Liam Maries

Jacobs U.K. Limited

Churchill House
Churchill Way
Cardiff, CF10 2HH
United Kingdom
T +44 (0)29 2035 3200
F +44 (0)29 2035 3222
www.jacobs.com

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1. Introduction

This ecology report is provided in support of a planning application to seek the temporary change of use of Pant Road Playground, 'the Site' to provide temporary operational space for the business known as Merthyr Motor Auctions (MMA). This is required to mitigate the impact of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Dualling Section 5 and 6, 'the Scheme', on the business.

The works required to widen the A465 means that an area of operational land, in the vicinity of the existing A465 Pant Road Viaduct, will be unavailable to MMA during construction. This area of the MMA site is currently used as a combination of sales space, car parking, vehicle storage and onload/offload to vehicle transporters.

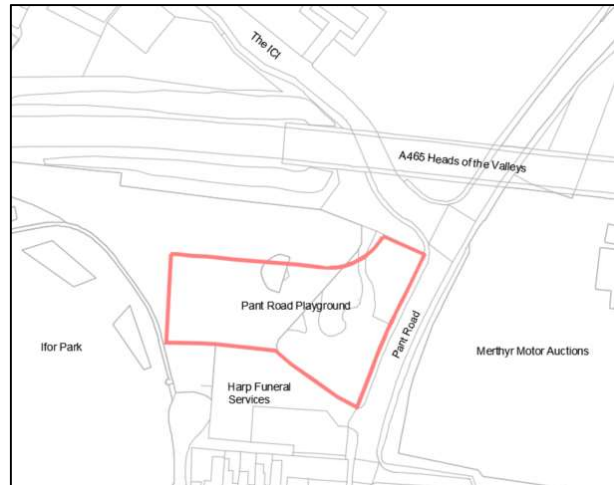
MMA is located opposite the Site and in order to reduce the impact on MMA's business during construction, it is proposed to temporarily remove the playground to create a hardened secure area for car parking, vehicle storage and onload/offload of vehicle transporters.

The period of occupation by construction activities is likely to be of the order of 3 years, but could be longer, and once completed the playground facility will be reinstated with a modern play facility in a reconfigured space that is aligned with the modern approach to imaginative play.

The Site comprises hardstanding, amenity grassland and scattered scrub and play equipment as identified edged red right.

The immediate surrounding comprises grassland and dense, continuous scrub, notably within Ifor Park to the west and urbanised and industrial areas with Pant Road forming the eastern boundary of the survey area.

The Site would be cleared to facilitate development. This area is indicated the Proposal Plan Figure 1 and is hereon referred to as the 'survey area'. The Site would be primarily maintained as bare ground (unbound granular material). Shielded lighting is proposed on around the boundary.



Pant Road Playground Location

Upon completion of the proposed works the site would revert to a children's playground area. The remediation/biodiversity enhancement measures will be agreed with both the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) county ecologist and landscape architect prior to implementation.

The purpose of this document is to present the results of a Phase One Habitat survey undertaken in May 2019 and to assess the impact of the proposed works on any ecologically sensitive features. This report includes recommendations for mitigation as appropriate.

2. Methodology

2.1 Desk study

Records for all protected and notable species within 2km, and all protected sites such as Local Nature Reserves (LNR), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) data originating from within 2km of the proposed works were requested from South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBREC) (unique reference code: 0189-560), and the Biodiversity Information Service (BIS) for Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park (unique reference code: 3189946) in January 2019. Only records within the last 10 years have been included in this report.

2.2 Field survey

2.2.1 Extended Phase One Habitat Survey

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was completed on 30 May 2019. The survey was undertaken in accordance with the standard methodology set out by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 2010), which included mapping habitat types and identifying plant species observed on the site.

The habitats identified were evaluated for their potential to support legally protected species and other species of conservation concern and compared to published lists of nationally rare or scarce and Biodiversity Action Plan species, such as those found in the:

- schedules of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
- schedules of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- sections of the Environment (Wales) Act;
- UK Red Lists (Eaton et al. 2009, Wigginton 1999); and,
- local and National Biodiversity Action Plans.

2.3 Limitations

It should be borne in mind that the behaviour of animals can be unpredictable and may not conform to standard patterns recorded in scientific literature. Therefore, this report cannot predict with absolute certainty that animal species will occur in apparently suitable locations or habitats, or that they will not occur in locations or habitats that appear unsuitable.

3. Results

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Statutory and Non-statutory Designated Sites

Statutory and non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the survey area are shown in Figure 2 and details are given in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Designated sites within 2km of proposed works

Site name	Approximate distance from proposed works (km)	Reason for Designation
Cwn Taf Fechan Woodlands SSSI	1.42	Located where the partially wooded valley of the Taf Fechan crosses the north crop Carboniferous Limestone. Mixed deciduous woodlands cover steep slopes and spoil from quarries with one of the few Glamorgan stations for <i>Gymnocarpium robertianum</i> . There are interesting plant communities in flushes around tufa springs and luxuriant growths of bryophytes in the splash zone of the river.
Bryniau SINC	0.53	Semi-upland site comprising a complex mosaic of mainly acidic habitats associated with disused quarries (Bryniau Quarries) and spoil tips.
Blaenmorlais SINC	0.69	Mosaic of upland habitats at the western edge of Merthyr Common. Mainly acid grasslands with acidic flushes, grass-heaths, dry heathlands, marshy

Site name	Approximate distance from proposed works (km)	Reason for Designation
		grasslands, bracken slopes and smaller areas of wet heathland and scrub.
Morlais Hill SINC	1.0	Complex semi-upland area of limestone-influenced habitats, partly derived from old limestone quarries (Morlais Quarries) and screes associated with the former Morlais Castle.
Merthyr Common North SINC	1.1	Extensive area of upland common land supporting a mosaic of both wet and dry moorland habitats.
Cwm Taf Fechan SINC	1.4	The SINC contains Cwm Taf Fechan SSSI. The limestone geology gives rise to limestone woodlands, species-rich calcareous grasslands, species-rich neutral grasslands and calcareous scrub.
Merthyr Common Central SINC	1.5	Common land situated to the east of Merthyr Tydfil. It has an upland character and comprises a range of habitats, including areas of marshy grassland, acid grassland, wet heath and small ponds.
Gynos Wood SINC	1.6	Small area of wet woodland and an adjacent field supporting marshy grassland, acid grassland and bracken stands immediately to the north of the Heads of the Valleys Road.
Pan March and Traed y Milwyr, Llechryd SINC	1.8	Not detailed in the Review of sites of importance for nature conservation (2018).

There are also 8 areas of Ancient Woodland within 2km of the survey area.

3.1.2 Protected Species

Table 3.2 lists the records submitted to the databases of SEWBREC and BIS within 2km of the survey area. Figure 2 shows the locations of the local record centre records within 1km of the proposed works.

Table 3.2 Records within 2km of the proposed works (2010-2020)

Species	Scientific name	Date of latest record	Approximate distance of closest record from proposed works (m)
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	02/12/2015	326
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	31/05/2015	555
Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	19/05/2018	694
Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	05/04/2018	728
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	30/12/2017	687
Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>	03/06/2017	879
Serotine	<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	03/09/2015	1212

Species	Scientific name	Date of latest record	Approximate distance of closest record from proposed works (m)
Brown long-eared bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	11/01/2017	1375
Unidentified <i>Myotis</i> Spp	<i>Myotis</i> spp.	Unknown	1488
Soprano pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Unknown	1488
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	02/05/2018	1488
Lesser horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	Unknown	1488

Eighteen buildings with low to moderate potential for roosting bats were identified within 50m of the survey area. Bat back-tracking surveys were undertaken, but no bat roosts were identified during the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) baseline surveys (Environmental Statement Volume 2 – Appendix 11) (Jacobs, 2017a-d).

To minimise delays to the start of construction works, Jacobs has been undertaking a programme of pre-construction ecology surveys for the A465 Heads of the Valley Dualling scheme, to inform any necessary European Protected Species (EPS) licencing that would be required ahead of the construction phase. Dusk emergence/ dawn re-entry surveys were undertaken and static detectors were deployed on Pant Road viaduct to the north of the survey area in 2019. No evidence of bats using the structure was recorded during these surveys (Jacobs, 2019). Bat back tracking surveys have been undertaken within 250m of the A465 Heads of the Valley Dualling scheme during 2020 with the aim of identifying maternity roosts. A roost used by a single common pipistrelle was identified approximately 45m south of the site and is shown on Figure 2. Limited bat activity, primarily commuting behaviours, was recorded within 100m of the site (Jacobs, 2020).

3.2 Field Study

3.2.1 Site Description

The Extended Phase One Habitat plan of the proposed works is shown in Figure 3 and accompanying target notes (TN) are presented in Appendix A.

There is a small area of ephemeral vegetation (TN 1) at the north-eastern boundary comprising common chickweed *Stellaria media* (O), lesser trefoil *Trifolium dubium* (R), yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* (R), creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense* (R), dandelion *Taraxacum* agg. (R), procumbent pearlwort *Sagina procumbens* (R). The study area is dominated by hardstanding (children's play area) (TN 2) and amenity grassland (TN 3), which is mown to ground level. The amenity grassland comprises perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne* (F), annual meadow-grass *Poa annua* (O), cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* (O), daisy *Bellis perennis* (O), white clover *Trifolium repens* (O), common chickweed *Stellaria media* (O), greater plantain *Plantago major* (R), dandelion *Taraxacum* agg. (R), groundsel *Senecio vulgaris* (R), shepherd's-purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris* (R), yarrow *Achillea millefolium* (R). A single young sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* tree (TN 4) is present at the north-western corner.

3.2.2 Protected and Notable Species

No evidence of protected or notable species were recorded during the survey, and the site offers limited ecological value. The single young sycamore tree has potential to support breeding birds.

3.2.3 Non-Native Invasive Species

No invasive species were identified within the study area.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Habitats

The habitats present on site are considered to be of limited ecological value.

4.2 Protected and Notable Species

4.2.1 Breeding Birds

The young sycamore tree at the north-western boundary has potential to support breeding birds. However, as part of the Sites design development the proposal has been reconfigured to remove the need for this tree to be felled.

4.2.2 Bats

The Site is located within a built-up residential and industrial area, with multiple sources of artificial lighting present. This lighting would already affect how bats use this area and the surrounding habitat. Nevertheless, there are records of light-sensitive bat species within 2km of the proposed development, and therefore a sensitive lighting strategy should be employed. The development will likely result in a net increase in external artificial lighting, although this should be temporary in nature, as the site will be reinstated once construction works have been completed. This is expected to take at least 3 years. Considering paragraph 6.8.1 of the National Planning Policy Wales (Welsh Government, 2018), any external lighting design should consider the recommendations of the Bat Conservation Trusts document entitled 'Bats and Lighting in the UK – Bats and the Built Environment Series. The requirements of this document have been considered in the development of the lighting proposal. Please refer to the Lighting Proposal Report for further details.

4.2.3 Other Species

The site has limited potential to support other protected species. Nevertheless, it is recommended that good practice construction methodology should be employed to avoid impact to any small mammals that may incidentally use the site as a commuting route. If any trenches are dug out, they should either be completely covered at night, or left with a means of escape (plank or other item left at no greater than 30 degrees) so any animals that may fall in can get out.

4.2.4 Post construction Enhancement Recommendations

After the project has been completed, and the Site is no longer required, the land would be returned for use as a children's play area. It is recommended that the re-instatement works include enhancement measures to aid compliance with key national (Welsh Government) and local (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council) policy objectives for biodiversity. A Habitats Management Plan (HMP) will be drawn-up outlining the planting regime including age/size of tree specimens to be used, wild-flower planting details, biodiversity enhancement measures and management and maintenance measures for 5 years following establishment. The remediation/biodiversity enhancement measures will be agreed with both the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) county ecologist and landscape architect prior to implementation.

5. References

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Jacobs (2017b) A465 Heads of the Valleys Dualling Sections 5 and 6 - Dowlais Top to Hirwaun. Environmental Statement Volume 2 Appendix 11F – Jacobs Summer 2015 Ecology Survey Results.

Jacobs (2017c) A465 Heads of the Valleys Dualling Sections 5 and 6 - Dowlais Top to Hirwaun. Environmental Statement Volume 2 Appendix 11G - Jacobs Summer 2016 Ecology Survey Results.

Jacobs (2017d) A465 Heads of the Valleys Dualling Sections 5 and 6 - Dowlais Top to Hirwaun. Environmental Statement Volume 2 Appendix 11H – Jacobs 2016 Bat Survey Results

Jacobs (2019) A465 Heads of the Valleys Dualling Sections 5 and 6 - Dowlais Top to Hirwaun. Pre-construction Phase Bat Structures and Culverts Factual Report.

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JNCC (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit. Peterborough: JNCC.

Welsh Government (2018) National Planning Policy Wales. <https://gov.wales/planning-policy-wales> (accessed May 2020)

6. Figures

Figure 1: Pant Road Playground Proposal Plan

Figure 2: Pant Road Playground Biological Records within 2km

Figure 3: Pant Road Playground Phase 1 Habitat Survey Results

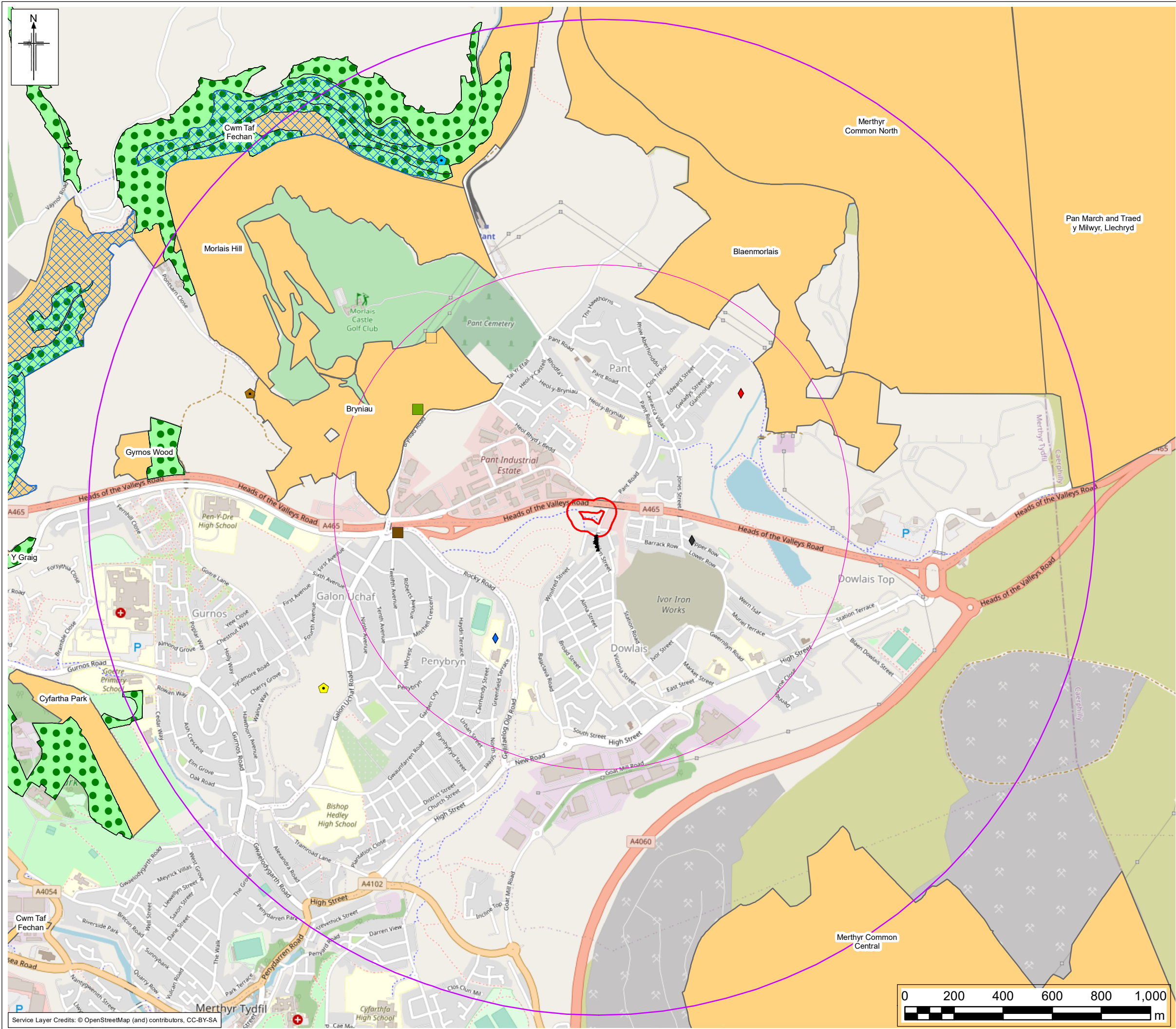


FIGURE 2

- Legend**
- Compensation site boundary
 - 1km study area
 - 2km study area
 - Brown Long-eared Bat
 - Common Lizard
 - Common Pipistrelle
 - Common Toad
 - Kestrel
 - Lapwing
 - Lesser Horseshoe Bat
 - Red Kite
 - Serotine
 - Slow-worm
 - Soprano Pipistrelle
 - Myotis spp.
 - Single common pipistrelle roost
 - Cwm Taf Fechan Woodlands SSSI
 - Ancient woodland
 - Site of importance for nature conservation (SINC)



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Jacobs

Churchill House, Churchill Way, Cardiff, CF10 2HH
Tel: +44(0)29 2035 3200 Fax: +44(0)29 2035 3222
www.jacobs.com

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Project	A465 HEADS OF THE VALLEYS SECTIONS 5 AND 6 DOWLAIS TOP TO HIRWAUN
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Drawing Title	Biological records and protected sites within 2km
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Drawing Status	FOR PLANNING
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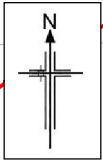
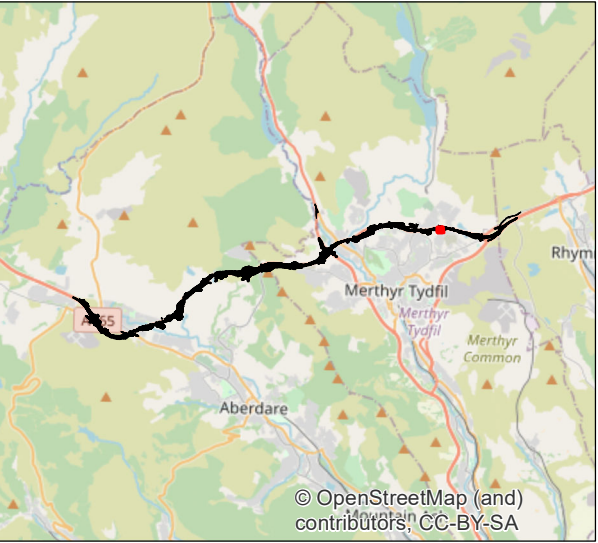


FIGURE 3

- Legend
- Compensation site boundary
 - Target note
 - A2.2 Scrub - scattered
 - J1.2 Disturbed/cultivated land - amenity grassland
 - J1.3 Disturbed/cultivated land - ephemeral grassland
 - Hardstanding



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Jacobs

Churchill House, Churchill Way, Cardiff, CF10 2HH
Tel: +44(0)29 2035 3200 Fax: +44(0)29 2035 3222
www.jacobs.com

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Project

A465 HEADS OF THE VALLEYS
SECTIONS 5 AND 6
DOWLAIS TOP TO HIRWAUN

Drawing Title

Pant Road Playground Phase
1 Habitat Survey Results

Drawing Status

FOR PLANNING

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Appendix A. Extended Phase One Target Notes and Photographs

Target note	Habitat Classification	Description	Photographs
1	J1.3 Disturbed/cultivated land - Ephemeral	Area laid with bark with vegetation growing through, including common chickweed <i>Stellaria media</i> (O), lesser trefoil <i>Trifolium dubium</i> (R), Yorkshire-fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i> (R), creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i> (R), dandelion <i>Taraxacum</i> agg. (R), procumbent pearlwort <i>Sagina procumbens</i> (R).	
2	Hard standing	Hard standing part of a children's play area	
3	J1.2 Disturbed/cultivated land -amenity grassland	Grass mown short to ground level. Species present included perennial rye-grass <i>Lolium perenne</i> (F), annual meadow-grass <i>Poa annua</i> (O), cock's-foot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> (O), daisy <i>Bellis perennis</i> (O), white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> (O), common chickweed <i>Stellaria media</i> (O), greater plantain <i>Plantago major</i> (R), dandelion <i>Taraxacum</i> agg. (R), groundsel <i>Senecio vulgaris</i> (R), shepherd's-purse <i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i> (R) and yarrow <i>Achillea millefolium</i> (R).	
4	A2.2 Scattered scrub	Young sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplanatus</i> tree.	N/A