

Site Name: Bike Park Wales, Gethin Woodland Centre, Abercanaid, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 1YZ

Report Reference: WWE25107 PEA – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Date: 09/12/2025

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Reviewed: Misho Baxendale Principal Ecologist MCIEEM & MARborA

1. Introduction

Bike Park Wales, Gethin Woodland Centre, Abercanaid, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 1YZ (Grid reference: SO 05132 03460) is subject to planned works (under approved planning permission) to construct new camping facilities including camping pods, shepherds' huts, lodges, and associated infrastructure as part of Phase 3 (for which planning has been granted).

A previous Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken at the site by Wildwood Ecology in 2018, in addition to bat transect surveys, static monitoring, reptile surveys, and breeding bird surveys, followed by a further walkover accompanied by a Ground-level Tree Assessment, bat activity surveys (static monitoring and walked transect), and bird surveys in 2022. The results of these surveys can be found in the previous Ecological Impact Assessment (Report Reference: WWE22067 EclA Rev D 27/03/2025).

A walkover of the site to conduct an up-to-date PEA and Ground-level Tree Assessment was undertaken by Dr Amy Williams Schwartz MCIEEM Senior Ecologist of Wildwood Ecology on 16/10/2025, following the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017) guidelines and using UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 codes (UK Hab, 2023).



Figure 1 – Aerial photograph showing site boundary (red and yellow lines).

2. Survey methods

UKHab Habitat Survey

A field survey was undertaken on 16/10/2025.

All habitats present within the site with the suitability to support rare, protected, or otherwise notable species of flora or fauna were noted, as well as incidental observations of species.

An UKHab Habitat Plan was produced in QGIS, incorporating Target Notes used to highlight features of ecological interest (Figure 4).

Desk study

No updated biological records were requested from SEWBRc as part of this survey, as records were obtained in 2022 and then further updated by findings of the Wildwood Ecology surveys throughout that year. Desk study data was collected from the following sources:

- South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) (May 2022);
- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) (May 2022 & updated/checked in November 2025); and
- previous surveys on the site by Wildwood Ecology (outlined in WWE22067 EclA Rev D, March 2023)

Designated sites

Results from desk study data showed that there were no designated sites (SACs, SPAs, RAMSARs) within 10km, one national designated site (SSSIs, NNRs, LNRs) within 2km of the site, and six LWS within 1km of the site.

- Cwm Glo a Glyndyrys SSSI (950m N of the site)
- Abercanaid Fields SINC (onsite)
- Graig Gethin SINC (<50m W)
- Rhydyar West SINC (75m N)
- Cwm Woods SINC (450m NW)
- Buarth-Waunydd SINC (563m SE)
- Afon Taf SINC (630m E)

Priority and notable habitats

The following priority/notable habitats were noted within and adjacent to the site:

- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland; and
- Pond (approximately 300m south-west)

A small area of the site is classed as 'restored ancient woodland site', see the figure below.

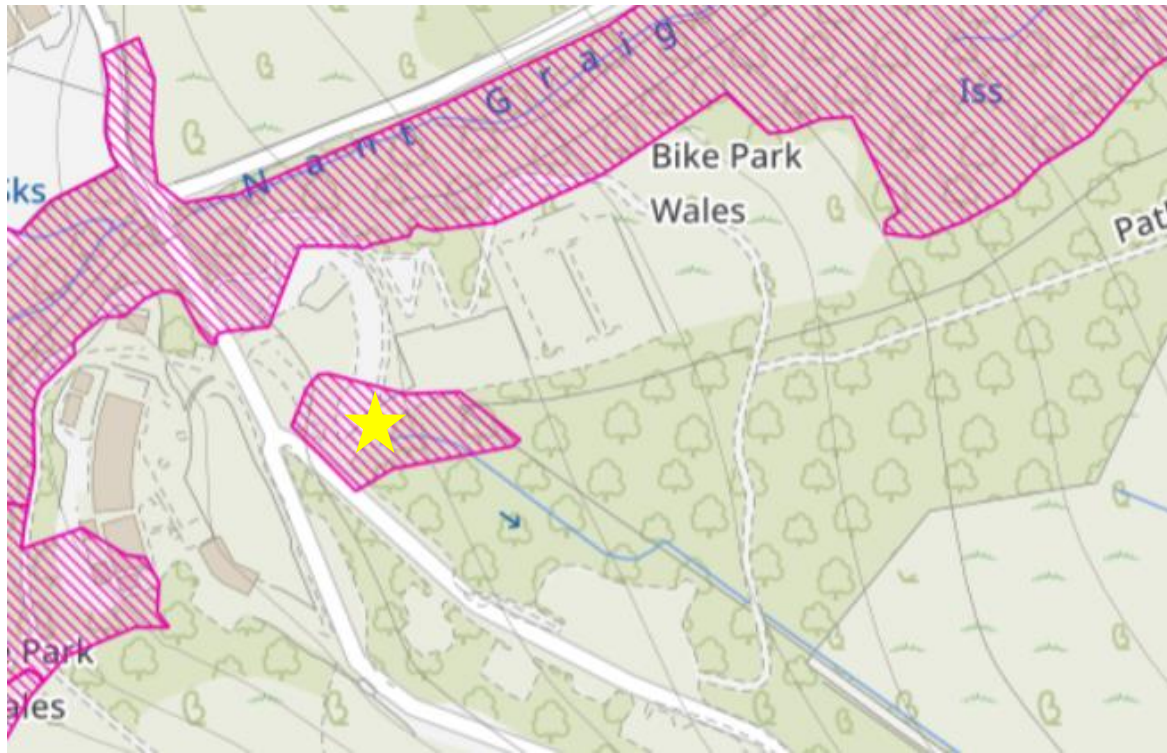


Figure 2 – Map taken from DataMap Wales “WOM21 Ancient Woodland Inventory” showing the extent of ancient woodland and restored ancient woodland site in the vicinity. Yellow star denotes area of restored ancient woodland site within the proposed development boundary.

Priority and protected species

Priority and protected species records were returned from the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) for species located within 2km of the site, and/or were located during previous Wildwood Ecology surveys and include the following:

- Amphibians: common frog, common toad, and palmate newt on site during surveys. Great crested newt unspecified sighting 1.1km from site
- Bats: records for at least six species of bat within 2km of the site, five of which were recorded during surveys on site in 2018 (common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, noctule, and *Myotis* species), and three in 2022 (common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, lesser horseshoe)
- Badger: dead on road 0.3km from site
- Birds: a variety of records both existing and during surveys, notable of which was crossbill (a Schedule 1 breeding bird) recorded on site
- Hazel dormouse: there were no records of hazel dormouse returned from SEWBRC. However, online records from the Natural Resources Wales public register of protected species licences, returned a total of 13 hazel dormouse records in counties neighbouring Merthyr Tydfil. This included – Rhondda Cynon Taf, Caerphilly, and Brecon Beacons. As detailed locations of the licence records were not provided, an assessment of the distance of these records from the site could not be made. However, it is assumed likely that hazel dormouse are also present in the Merthyr Tydfil county (potentially under recorded).
- Hedgehog: dead on road 0.4km from site
- Otter: unspecified sighting 0.8km from site
- Reptiles: common lizard recorded on site during surveys, slow worm and grass snake recorded 0.8km from site
- Water vole: unspecified sighting 1.4km from site

Field survey

Table 1 - Field survey timings and conditions

Date	Weather conditions			
	Temp [°C]	Cloud cover [Oktas]	Wind speed [Beaufort scale]	Rain
16/10/2025	11	8	2 (3)	Nil

Field survey limitations

The following limitations relevant to this assessment were noted:

- Although the extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey falls outside the recommended seasonal period for botanical surveys, the evaluation and habitat descriptions (and hence the impacts and their significance), are considered to be accurate for the following reasons:
 - given the type of vegetation and habitats present, the valuation of the intrinsic interest is considered unlikely to change;
 - access was possible to all areas of the site and the vegetation was clearly visible; and
 - previous surveys carried out by Wildwood Ecology in 2018 and 2022 collected extensive information on plant species present on the site.
- New biological records were not requested from the Local Records Centre as part of the desk study as records were obtained in 2022 and then further updated by findings of the Wildwood Ecology surveys throughout that year

Habitats

Table 2 sets out descriptions of the habitats present within the site using UK habitat Classification Version 2.0 codes, along with a list of species present.

Table 2 - Habitats and linear features present within the site

Habitat	Habitat description	Species present
g1c - Bracken Secondary code/s: 207 (woodland open space)	Area to the east of site with some larger trees but understory comprised of majority bracken.	Bracken, bramble
g1d - Other lowland acid grassland Secondary code/s: 14 (scattered rushes), 16 (tall forbs), 202 (young trees – self-set)	Area of acid grassland with encroaching scrub and bracken. Previously areas were plantation forestry (cleared before 2013) with successional growth of individual self-seeded trees. Some areas around the car park were recently seeded.	Grasses: cock's-foot, crested dog's tail, perennial rye grass, smaller cat's-tail, sweet vernal grass, Yorkshire fog Sedges and rushes: compact rush, field woodrush, flowering rush, jointed rush, soft rush Forbs: bird's-foot trefoil, black medick, cleavers, common nettle, creeping buttercup, creeping cinquefoil, creeping thistle, dandelion, devil's bit scabious, figwort, great willowherb, hedge woundwort, hemp agrimony, herb bennet, herb robert, lesser trefoil, mare's tail, meadow thistle, meadow vetchling, meadowsweet, sorrel, spear thistle, square-stalked willowherb, tormentil, white clover. Ferns: bracken Scrub: bramble, buddleia Individual trees: alder, cherry, hazel, pedunculate oak, willow
h3h – Mixed scrub Secondary code/s: 202 (young trees – self-set)	Areas of scrub were present along the woodland margins, as understorey and encroaching within the acid grassland area. Scrub was particularly dominant at the north-east of the site.	Alder, ash, bracken, bramble, common centaury, creeping buttercup, foxglove, gorse, hawkbit sp., hazel, heath bedstraw, hoary plantain, hogweed, knapweed, lady's mantle, rowan, sowthistle, yellow pimpernel
r1g – Other standing water Secondary code/s: 41 (pond – non-priority), 49 (freshwater – artificial), 848 (sustainable drainage system)	Reedbed filtration system installed at the west of the site with small area of open water present.	Common reed
u1b – Developed land; sealed surface	Small hard standing area around the car park.	NA

u1c – Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface Secondary code/s: 804 (car park)	Some gravel tracks/car parking.	NA
u1e – Built linear features Secondary code/s: 800 (road), 839 (track)	Access road and tracks.	NA
w1f – Lowland mixed deciduous woodland Secondary code/s: 28 (ancient woodland site), 30 (semi-natural woodland), 204 (veteran tree)	The majority of the site consisted of mixed deciduous woodland. There are veteran trees present, but many of the trees are of similar age.	Canopy: alder, ash, beech, birch sp., cherry, hawthorn, hazel, ivy, pedunculate oak, sessile oak, sweet chestnut, sycamore, willow sp. Understory: bracken, bramble, holly Ground flora: bluebell, comb fern, common nettle, herb robert, hogweed, ivy, rough meadow-grass, wood sorrel

The suitability of the site habitats for protected species relevant to the site habitats, the connectivity of the site and observed incidental evidence can be found in Table 3.

Table 3 - Protected species potentially present onsite

Species or group	Habitat suitability	Site connectivity	Notes/notable onsite features	Presence confirmed?
Amphibians, including great crested newt	Good	Excellent/direct	Filter pond present at north-west of the site, toads found during reptile surveys.	Confirmed onsite via incidental evidence
Badger	Excellent	Excellent/direct	No signs of badger directly observed but likely to use the habitat.	Onsite habitat was suitable and the site had good connectivity to the surrounding landscape
Bats: foraging and commuting	Excellent	Excellent/direct	Variety of habitats present for foraging bat species.	Confirmed onsite during previous surveys.
Fish	Poor	Poor	Some small ditches present but likely to dry frequently.	Onsite habitat was unsuitable and there was no connectivity to the surrounding landscape
Fungi	Excellent	N/A	Lots of standing and lying deadwood supporting saprotrophic fungi.	Confirmed onsite via incidental evidence
Hazel dormouse	Good	Excellent/direct	Dormouse not recorded in Merthyr, however are known to be present in neighbouring counties and considered likely to be in the local area.	Onsite habitat was suitable and the site had some connectivity to the surrounding landscape

Hedgehog	Excellent	Excellent/direct	Suitable habitat for nesting/foraging/hibernation	Onsite habitat was suitable and the site had good connectivity to the surrounding landscape
Invertebrates	Good	Excellent/direct	Many different plant species recorded to support a variety of invertebrates.	Onsite habitat was suitable and the site had good connectivity to the surrounding landscape
Nesting birds	Excellent	Excellent/direct	Many bird species identified on site, multiple of which were found to be nesting during previous surveys.	Confirmed onsite during previous surveys.
Otter	Good	Good	Some habitat suitability for otters, and they are likely to at least occasionally utilise the large pond approx. 300m to the south-east of the site.	Onsite habitat was suitable and the site had some connectivity to the surrounding landscape
Reptiles	Good	Excellent/direct	Reptiles known to be using scrub/woodland edge and areas of grassland.	Confirmed onsite during surveys.
Water vole	Poor	Good	Site does not contain suitable habitats for water vole.	Onsite habitat was unsuitable but there was some connectivity to the surrounding landscape

Invasive species

No species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 were observed to be present onsite.

Ground-level Tree Assessment

Tree reference numbers (where available) taken from the tree plans produced by Treescene – numbers not in brackets from tree survey report dated March 2025, bracketed numbers from report dated November 2019.

Table 4 – Ground-level Tree Assessment results

Tree reference	Tree species	PRF type	PRF description
(T23)	Oak	PRF-I	Small cracks, fissures
Unknown – between (T23) & (T41)	Unknown	PRF-M	Dead tree, highly suitable, 2x woodpecker holes and large rot hole
(T41)	Oak	PRF-M	Broken limb (storm damage) providing large cavity
(T42)	Oak	PRF-I	Large tree with likelihood of PRFs not visible from ground
T1862 (T43)	Oak	PRF-I	Large tree with likelihood of PRFs not visible from ground
T1863 (T44)	Oak	PRF-I	Large hole currently with hornets' nest present, meaning downgrade from PRF-M to PRF-I

T1864 (T45)	Oak	PRF-M	Large cavity on north and west side of main stem. Extensive deadwood throughout crown. Some storm damage.
(T46)	Oak	PRF-I	Small cracks, fissures
Unknown – south of (T46)	Unknown	PRF-M	Hole in main trunk
Unknown, adjacent to above	Alder	PRF-I	Small cracks, fissures
T1867 (T53)	Oak	PRF-I	Various gaps around snapped branches, wounds on large branches
T1868 (T55)	Oak	PRF-I	Small holes where branches have been pruned
T1870 (T57)	Oak	PRF-I	Small cracks, fissures
T1871 (T61)	Alder	PRF-M	Large hole formed from snapped branch
T1873 (T63)	Alder	PRF-I	Small cracks, fissures

3. Impacts

Due to the proposed works, it is likely that in the absence of mitigation there will be adverse effects on the following designated sites, habitats and species.

Designated sites

- There are no statutory designated sites within the vicinity of the site that are likely to be impacted by the works – however, there are three local non-statutory designations on and adjacent to the site.
- The designation for Abercanaid Hills SINC extends into the wooded area at the east of the site. Other SINCs are in close vicinity to the site - Graig Gethin SINC (<50m W), and Rhydycar West SINC (75m N).



Figure 3 – Location of extent of Abercanaid Fields SINC (boundary highlighted in blue). Other SINC extents visible in the map are Rhydycar West SINC (visible at the north-west of the image) and Graig Gethin SINC (visible at the west and to the south of Abercanaid Fields). Image produced 20/11/2025 from Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Adopted Replacement LDP 2016-2031 Proposals Map.

- Description of the SINC includes the following: “Series of fields laying either side of the A470 containing mainly species-rich semi-improved grasslands and marshy grasslands. Also some small areas of semi-natural oak/birch woodland, scattered scrub and trees.”
- As the proposals will alter, but not remove, some of the area of woodland, it is not considered that the proposed works would have a detrimental effect on the designated features of the SINC.

Priority habitats

- Woodland - There will be no removal of any mature trees, though there will be a loss of some understorey to allow the new camping provisions. Additional new planting is proposed to provide screening as per the landscape proposals masterplan and to replace any trees which may be removed, with the species planted to be of local provenance (grown in the UK) and native species only. The management plan as outlined in the landscape proposals masterplan will be implemented to ensure the survival of plants, and if any fail, these will be replaced like-for-like in the next winter season. Therefore, no woodland area will be lost as part of the current proposals. The woodland habitat will be altered, although the overall woodland character will be retained, with only clearance on the footprint of the small buildings and associated pedestrian paths.

Indirect impacts to the woodland could include the following:

- breaking connections between veteran trees
 - reducing semi-natural habitats
 - increasing light, air, and soil pollution
 - increased disturbance to wildlife (particularly at night, as the site is currently only used during the daytime, but not at night)
 - increased trampling of plants and soil erosion
 - increased fly tipping and litter
- Pond – due to the distance between the site and Webber's Pond as well as the nature of works, it is not considered that these works will have a negative impact on the pond.

Protected species

- Amphibians – due to the loss of/damage to suitable terrestrial habitats nearby. There is also a risk of killing/injury to amphibians during the clearance and construction phases of development, as well as increased risk of trampling during the operational phase of the development.
 - European badger – due to the loss of suitable foraging habitat onsite, higher levels of nocturnal disturbance due to overnight stays on the site and the potential for direct killing/injury of badger during the construction phase of the proposed development.
 - Foraging and commuting bats – the site is used as a flight-path and foraging habitat for at least six bat species, including light-sensitive species (brown long-eared, *Myotis* species, and lesser horseshoe). Due to the loss of understory habitat and new artificial lighting proposed at the campsite, in the absence of suitable mitigation, there is a risk of significant impacts on the local foraging and roosting bat populations at the site.
 - Hazel dormouse – due to the loss of suitable woodland habitat onsite, despite the lack of records for hazel dormouse in the local area, in the absence of suitable mitigation there is a risk of killing or injuring dormouse if they are present at the site (as they are known to be present in neighbouring counties). Indirect impacts could also occur if dormouse were present, as a result of new artificial lighting, noise, and disturbance including trampling of habitat.
 - Hedgehogs - loss of suitable foraging habitat onsite, higher levels of nocturnal disturbance due to overnight stays on the site and the potential for direct killing/injury of hedgehogs during the clearance construction phase of the proposed development.
 - Nesting birds – due to nesting birds being confirmed onsite during previous surveys and onsite habitats being highly suitable for use by nesting birds. Proposals will result in a reduction in available nesting habitat due to removal of scrub as well as increased disturbance.
 - Reptiles – due to confirmed onsite presence, as well as presence of suitable habitats and features, and good connectivity to suitable habitats within the surrounding landscape. There is a risk of killing/injury of reptiles during the clearance and construction phases of the proposed development.
 - European otter – due to the potential for otter commuting over the site. Increased noise and light pollution at night have the potential to negatively impact otter that may be using the site due to disturbance.
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4. Recommendations

Habitats and biodiversity enhancements

Local authorities have a duty to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. Where possible, the existing onsite habitat of ecological importance should be retained to ensure that habitats and species that rely on them are not adversely affected by the development/works.

As the proposed works will impact on onsite habitats, the development must aim to provide a Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB).

To achieve the above, the recommendations laid out in the Habitat Management Plan (WWE22067 HMP 2022 Update), Wildlife Protection Plan (WWE20037 WPP Rev G), and Woodland Management Plan (WWE20037 WMP Rev A) will be followed. These include recommendations for root protection zones, planting, and other management. The Ecological Impact Assessment Report (WWE22067 EcIA Rev D) also has information detailing the proposed locations of species-specific enhancement such as nest/roosting boxes.

Priority and protected species

In-depth recommendations for specific species provided within the Ecological Impact Assessment Report (Report Reference: WWE22067 EcIA Rev D 27/03/2025) and are deemed to continue to be valid due to the site being in very similar condition to when it was previously assessed. The EcIA report also contains a Reptile Mitigation Strategy in Appendix V, as well as information about sensitive lighting for the site in Appendix VII. These should be followed during construction and operational stages.

The reptile mitigation strategy includes information about enhancement of habitat outside the Phase 3 boundary, and the directional two-phase clearance that will be required of vegetation to prevent killing/injury of reptiles and other wildlife.

The sensitive lighting strategy outlines dark corridors to be kept on the site (also see lighting plan in the appendix of this document), as well as proposed areas for installation of bat roosting boxes on trees.

The following points are made for general protection of wildlife:

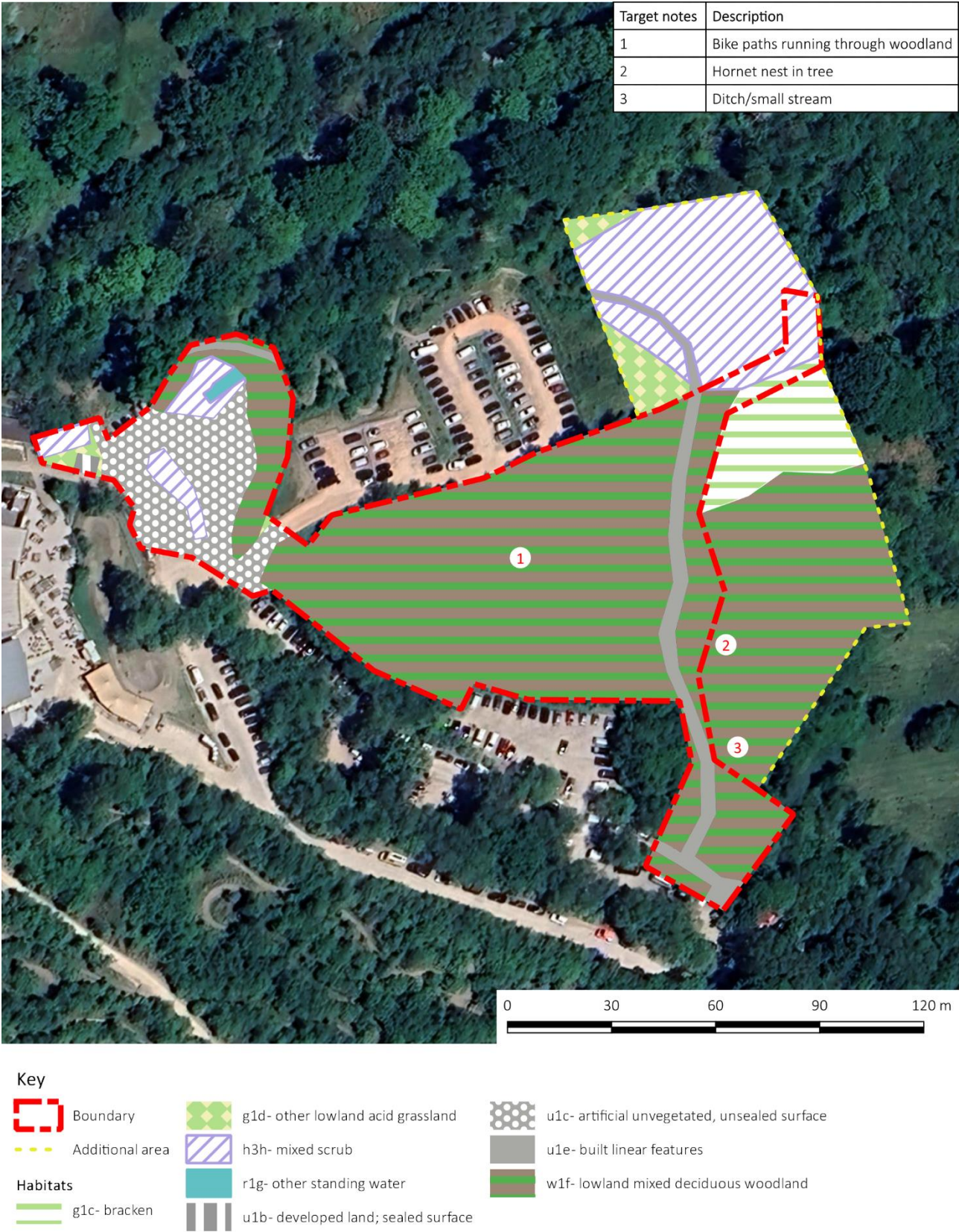
- To protect all wildlife, no trenches or excavations should be left open without a means of escape (ramps should be left at a 30-degree angle to allow escape);
- All materials, fuel, and chemicals should be kept safely away from animal access;
- If any protected species are encountered during the works, works must stop, and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted for advice

If any trees as laid out in Table 4 are to be altered or removed as part of the proposals, further investigations for bats will be required.

Conclusion

The site was not considered to have changed materially since previous surveys were undertaken on the site, and therefore any previously written reports by Wildwood Ecology regarding the proposed development are considered to continue to be accurate in their content and recommendations.

Habitat plan



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Figure 4 – UKHab plan of habitats present on site.

[illegible]

The landscape shown on this masterplan has been designed to create a high quality amenity space that maximises habitat quality.

The design was created in order to fulfill the requirements for additional parking, buildings and other features associated with the expansion of facilities at Bike Park Wales.

The landscape proposals have evolved significantly, in response to adverse effects that were identified as being likely to result from the development of the site in line with the initial plans. The design presented is the result of series of refinements to layout and specification which are intended to avoid or reduce such effects.

SCALE

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= score for each question out of 20



Project Title:
Elko, Tacks, Stiles, & McCracken

Drawing title:
EPG Landscape Study area

Client:
Elko, Tacks, Stiles

Date:
4/15 November 2015

Resolutions:
1. The drawing is a landscape study area for the Elko, Tacks, Stiles, & McCracken project.
2. The drawing is a landscape study area for the Elko, Tacks, Stiles, & McCracken project.
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Drawing number:
152420-201

BIKE PARK WALES: LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN



The site plan illustrates the layout of the QODA building complex, including the main building, parking lots, and surrounding landscape. Key features include:

- Vertical Planes:** Eight vertical planes (1-8) are defined by dashed blue lines, showing the building's footprint and internal circulation paths.
- Circulation Paths:** Yellow arrows indicate the main circulation paths, and yellow circles highlight specific points of interest or circulation nodes.
- Legend:** A legend on the right side of the plan defines the symbols used, including:
 - Blue dashed line: Building footprint
 - Yellow arrow: Circulation path
 - Yellow circle: Circulation node
- Scale and Orientation:** A scale bar at the bottom right indicates distances in meters (0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100). A north arrow is also present.
- Project Information:** The project name "QODA" is prominently displayed in the bottom right corner, along with the QODA logo and contact information.

Survey images



Figure 5 – Drainage pond present on site..



Figure 6 – PRF-M in alder T1871 (T61).



Figure 7 – Typical view of habitat within western woodland.



Figure 8 – Path through woodland.



Figure 9 – Area of predominantly bracken.



Figure 10 – PRF-Ms in unknown tree between (T23) & (T41).



Figure 11 – PRF-M in (T41)



Figure 12 – PRF-M in T1864 (T45)



Figure 13 - Large PRF-M hole formed from snapped branch in tree T1871 (T61).



Figure 14 – Area of scrub.



Figure 15 - Small area of acid grassland adjacent to existing car park.