



Craig y Perthi Solar Farm

Environmental Statement

Appendix 6.4 Otter Survey Report

Prepared for



JBM Solar Projects 25 Limited

July 2023
3312-01-TA06-004



Document Control

Revision	Date	Longleaf	Reviewed / Approved By
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Otter Survey

Craig Y Perthi Solar Farm

June 2023

A report by

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Report details

Central grid reference: ST 392 876
Report date: 3rd June 2023
Report review: Colin Hicks BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Report reference: CYP_Otter_3842_030623

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 24 months from the date of survey. If work has not commenced within this period, an updated survey by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required.

Revisions

Date	Report no:	Comment
3 rd June 2023	CYP_Otter_3842_030623	Original report

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1. Introduction

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete an Otter survey on an area of land for Craig Y Perthi Solar, Bishton near Newport.

1.1. Survey aims

The aim of this survey is to ascertain whether Otter are present within the assessment site.

Where appropriate, the survey will provide the information required to determine the appropriate level of mitigation required to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation and relevant planning policy.

2. Methodology

2.1. Desktop survey

The data search collated existing biological records of Otter within 5km that are held by South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre.

This data was examined and an assessment was then made, based on known habitat preferences, as to whether these species may be present within the assessment site and how they may be affected by the proposal

2.2. Field survey

Field signs of Otter were searched for by an ecologist who meets the required competency level for Otter surveys. This required an inspection of ree banks and channel features. Spraint, footprints, slides, and possible holts and couches were looked for and recorded.

The survey was completed in August 2021 and updated on 25th May 2023 in suitable weather conditions with no recent rain.

2.3. Survey constraints

All areas of the assessment site were readily accessible, and Otter can be surveyed for at any time of year. Although steep ree banks and tall vegetation did make it difficult to get a full view of ree margins, these open grassy areas would be unlikely to support regularly used resting places or holts, and any slides would be evidence. There are no significant constraints to the results of this survey.

3. Results

3.1. Desktop survey

There are 117 records for Otter within 5km. The nearest record is associated with the assessment site at Ridings Reen.

River Usk (Lower Usk) SSSI is located 3km to the north east of the assessment site. This SSSI comprises a river corridor important for communities characteristic of shaded upland rivers with mosses and lichens as well as otter and fish populations. There is a good range of breeding birds associated with riverine habitats, together with localised populations of the Atlantic stream crayfish.

3.2. Habitat Assessment

The wider site is predominantly comprised of agricultural grasslands and arable with negligible value for Otter. However, the field margins comprise a network of reens (drainage ditches) that are fringed with semi-natural vegetation comprising Bulrush *Typha* sp., Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Soft Rush *Juncus effusus*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, sedges and common grasses.

Water quality is good in most areas, with potential to support populations of common amphibians, small fish and Eel which are a key prey for Otter.

Significant areas of dense scrub suitable for natal holts is lacking.

3.3. Field survey

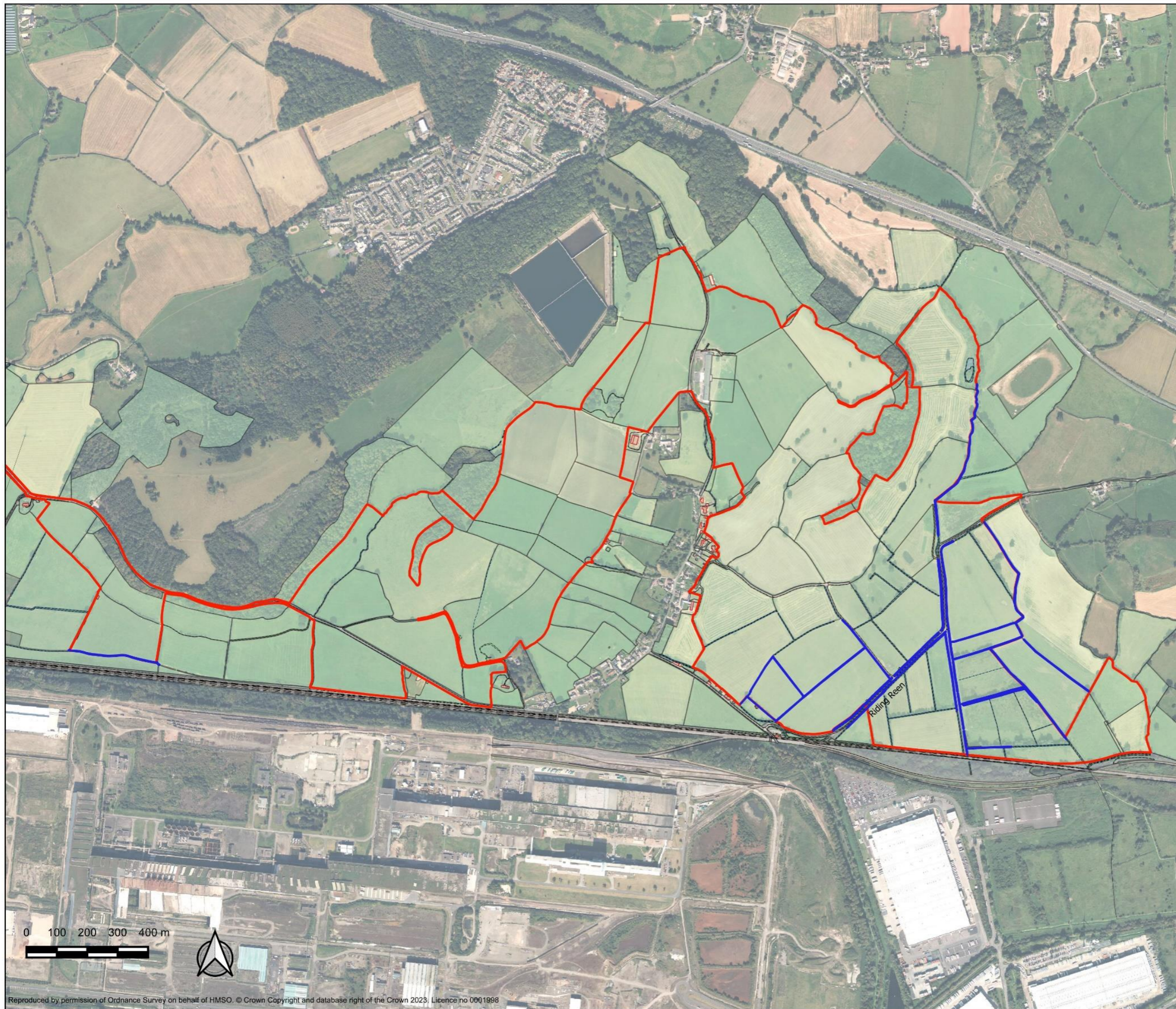
The extent of the Otter survey is shown on Map 1. During this survey, no evidence of Otter, such as actual sightings, holts, spraints, couches or slides were recorded associated with the reens within the survey area.

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Legend

- Assessment site
- Otter survey area



Title: Map 1. Field survey results

Project: Craig Y Perthi Solar Farm

Checked by: CDH Version: 01
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4. Otter and the Law

Otter, and their breeding or resting places (holts and couches), are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. They are identified as European Protected Species. Under these laws, it is an offence to:

- Capture, kill, disturb or injure otters (deliberately or by not taking enough care)
- Damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (deliberately or by not taking enough care)
- Obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places (deliberately or by not taking enough care)
- Possess, sell, control or transport live or dead otters, or parts of otters.

Otter are listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

5. Assessment of the site value for Otter

Although no evidence of Otter was recorded associated with the reens, the records search strongly suggests they are present in the general area. However, it is unlikely that otter associated with River Usk SSSI would be regularly active here as the M4 motorway and urban areas of Newport provide a significant barrier to dispersal from the Usk to the assessment site.

The proposed development site is of Site value for Otter.

6. References

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