Appendix 8C
CSA Environmental (2024b). Dormouse Survey Report - Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm, Maesteg

Dormouse Survey Report

November 2024

Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm, Maesteg

Prepared by
CSA Environmental

On behalf of
Fisher German

CSA environmental

masterplanning | ecology | landscape | heritage

Report Reference	Revision	Date	Prepared by	Approved by	Comments
CSA/7086/03	-	27/11/2024	GG	CSm	

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report has been prepared by CSA Environmental on behalf of Fisher German. It sets out the findings of dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* survey work for Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm (hereafter referred to as 'the Site). Overhead and underground power lines for a new 66kv electricity line are proposed at the Site, for which outline permission for a Development of National Significance will be sought.

1.2 The survey area occupies c. 2.3ha and is situated within a belt of ancient woodland (Cwm Cerdin) that extends across a section of the proposed route from north-east to south-west, centred at grid reference SS 845 889.

1.3 The survey objective was to determine the presence or likely absence of hazel dormouse in suitable woodland habitats within the Site. This follows a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CSA Environmental, October 2024; CSA/7086/01) which identified the potential for this species to be present on-site within the proposed route and impacted by works associated with the proposals. The results will be used to inform any mitigation strategy required for dormice.

1.4 The scope of this report has been determined with due consideration for best-practice guidance provided by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2017), and to the Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development (BS 42020:2013) published by the British Standards Institution (2013).

2.0 LEGISLATION

2.1 The dormouse is legally protected through inclusion under the Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is afforded further protection as a European Protected Species (EPS) under Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

2.2 Collectively and in summary, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture dormice
- Intentionally, deliberately or recklessly disturb dormice in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect the ability of any significant group of dormice to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young or the local distribution of or abundance of the species
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to places used by dormice for shelter or protection (whether occupied or not) or intentionally or recklessly disturb a dormouse whilst it is occupying such a place
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a dormouse.

2.3 Where development is proposed that would result in an offence under the Regulations, an EPS statutory derogation licence (often termed 'EPS Mitigation Licence') will need to be secured from Natural Resources Wales to permit an act that would otherwise be unlawful. Such a licence can only be granted following receipt of planning permission with all relevant conditions discharged, and where it has been demonstrated that specific statutory derogation tests have been met.

3.0 METHODS

Desktop Study

3.1 During a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the Site and wider survey area (CSA Environmental/7086/01), the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) was contacted for records of protected/notable species, including hazel dormouse. This information was requested for an area encompassing the Site and adjacent land within c. 2km.

3.2 Aerial imagery and OS mapping were also reviewed, and consideration given to the potential for dormice to occur on-site, in the context of the surrounding habitats and their connectivity.

Presence/Likely Absence Surveys

3.3 Dormouse nest tubes were installed at the site on 24 June 2024 by Rhiannon Taylor ACIEEM and Charlie Morgan. The intention of these surveys is to determine the presence or likely absence of dormice within suitable habitat across all areas of the Site that will be impacted by the proposals. A total of 50 dormouse nest tubes and 10 nest boxes were distributed within the belt of ancient woodland that crosses the proposed route. The location of these nest tubes and boxes is shown on the Dormouse Survey Plan (see Appendix A).

3.4 Nest tubes are made from stiff, double-walled black plastic sheets or similar material, 25cm long with a 5cm x 5cm cross-section. A thin plywood tray is inserted into the tube with a short projection at one end and an end block at the other which seals the tube. The tubes are then tied in a suitable location along a horizontal branch in vegetation. Dormice are known to readily use these tubes to build their nests (Bright *et al*., 2006). Nest boxes are constructed from wood and include an entrance hole of 30mm and a removable lid, they measure 20cm high by 14cm wide with a depth of around 18cm. The boxes are then sited about 1.5m from the ground and secured to a suitable tree trunk, with the entrance hole facing towards the trunk.

3.5 Monthly checks were carried out between July and November 2024 in accordance with the Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd ed. (Bright *et al*., 2006) and intended to demonstrate a minimum combined 'search effort' score of 20, as based upon the indices of probability within Table 1 below. A search effort score of 20 is taken to be the minimum to adequately determine presence or likely absence of dormice within a survey area. Nut searches were carried out alongside monthly checks.

Table 1. Index of probability of finding dormice present in nest tubes in any one month

Month	Index of probability	Cumulative search effort score
April	1	1
May	4	5
June	2	7
July	2	9
August	5	14
September	7	21
October	2	23
November	2	25

3.6 Checks were undertaken by Sebastian Fitzgerald MCIEEM (Natural Resources Wales Class Licence Number S093492/1) and Rhiannon Taylor ACIEEM (Natural England Class Licence Registration Number 2023-11504-CL10A-DOR). Bird droppings and other material such as wood mouse nests were cleaned out if found, to maintain the potential of each tube to be used by dormice.

Limitations

3.7 There were no specific limitations to the dormouse surveys, which were conducted at an optimum time of year and in good conditions.

3.8 Due to the timing of instruction, and limited timeframe of the project, the dormouse survey could not be set up until June 2024 and tubes/boxes collected in in November 2024. With a standard 50 nest tubes, this would have resulted in a combined 'search effort' score of 18, below the required minimum combined 'search effort' score of 20. However, an additional 10 nest boxes were also deployed to give greater confidence. If the 'search effort' score is scaled up by 1.2 to account for additional effort with 10 nest boxes, it results in a 'search effort' score of 21.6 over five of the eight survey months, including the optimal period of August/September. Given the absence of any evidence and the period/search effort covered, this is considered sufficient to confirm likely absence.

3.9 Only a section of the ancient woodland belt was subject to survey due to landownership constraints and the route of potential impact.

4.0 RESULTS

Desktop Study

4.1 A desktop review of aerial imagery and OS mapping found that the proposed route passes through Cwm Cerdin ancient woodland, which comprises of optimal dormouse habitat, with successional woodland that is well connected to other areas of suitable habitat.

4.2 The SEWBReC provided six records of hazel dormouse from within the search area. The majority of these records are associated with the Craig Yr Aber woods situated c. 0.5km south-east of the most southern point of the proposed route. A minor road and open grazed pasture with no/limited hedgerow boundaries prevent direct habitat connectivity between this large woodland and the Site (as shown on Figure 1 below). Hazel dormice need well connected woodland and/or hedgerows to move from one habitat to another and disperse across the landscape. Although the woodland has reduced connectivity to Craig Yr Aber, it is connected to plantation woodland to the west and further native woodland to the east and south-east via tree lined hedgerows and stream corridors. The potential for this species to occur on-site could therefore not be ruled out following the desk study and records from woodland locally.

Figure 1 Aerial image showing survey area (redline) and habitat connectivity

Presence/Likely Absence Survey

4.3 No evidence of hazel dormice activity was observed during the suite of nest tube and nest box checks conducted within Cwm Cerdin ancient woodland. No evidence of any small mammal nests or feeding signs were identified at all during the checks.

4.4 With no evidence of hazel dormice having been identified, the survey effort undertaken is sufficient to determine the likely absence of this species from on-site habitats in accordance with the scoring system cited above.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Dormouse presence/absence surveys of suitable woodland habitats within the proposed route have failed to detect the presence of hazel dormice, and this species is concluded to be likely absent from the Site.

5.2 Nonetheless, local records indicate that this species is present in the surrounding landscape, and as such there is an opportunity for development proposals to deliver potential enhancements for this species, which could support future colonisation of the Site.

6.0 REFERENCES

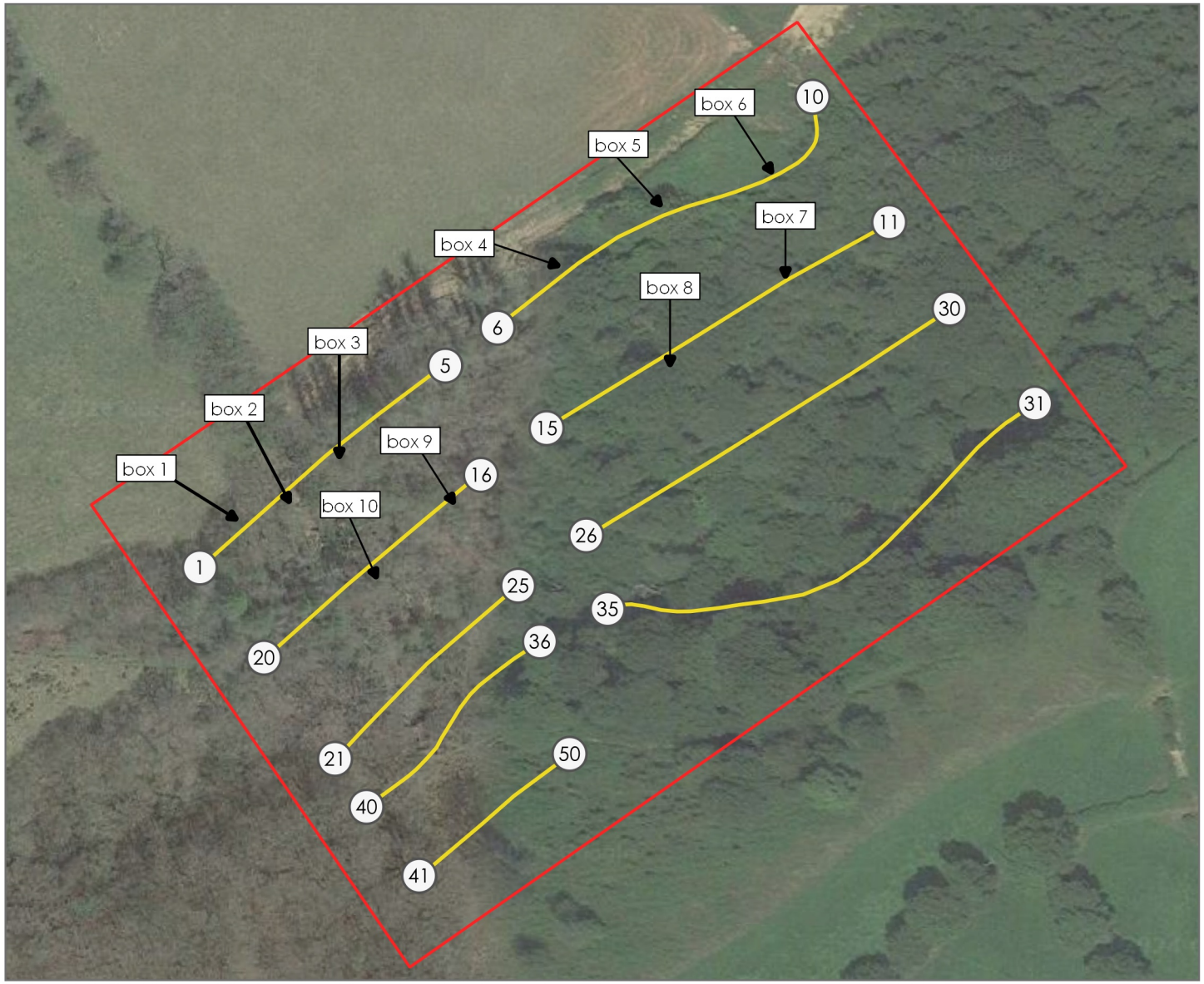
Bright *et al.*, 2006. *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook.* 2nd ed. Peterborough: English Nature

CIEEM, 2017. *Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

Appendix A

Dormouse Survey Plan

(CSA/7086/106)



N

Survey area

Nest tube location

Nest tube number

Nest box number

0 25 50 m

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Project	Foel Trawsnant Wind Farm	Date	November 2024	Drawing No.	CSA/7086/106
Drawing Title	Dormouse Survey Plan	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	-
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