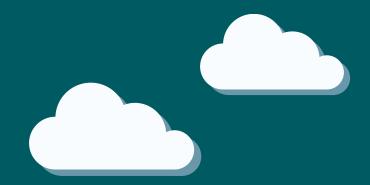
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Awel y Môr Offshore Wind Farm

Category 6: Environmental Statement

Volume 5, Annex 5.7: Dormouse Survey Report

Date: April 2022

Revision: A

Application Reference: 6.5.5.7

Pursuant to: APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)



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REVISION	DATE	STATUS/ REASON FOR ISSUE	AUTHOR:	CHECKED BY:	APPROVED BY:
A	March 2022	ES	SLR	RWE	RWE

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AWEL Y MÔR OFFSHORE WIND FARM

Dormouse Survey Report

Prepared for: GoBe Consultants (on behalf of Awel y Môr Offshore Wind Ltd)



Document Control	
Document Properties	
Organisation	SLR Consulting
Project Name	Awel y Môr Offshore Wind Farm
Report Title	Dormouse Survey Report
Author(s)	Jess Colebrook
Draft version/final	DRAFT
Document reference	5.5.7_AyM_ES_Volume5_Annex5.5.7_DormouseSurvey_v2.0

Date	Revision No	Prepared By	Reviewed By	Approved By	Status	Comments
27/09/21	0	Jess Colebrook	Duncan Watson		Draft	
10/11/21	1	Jess Colebrook	Matt Faulkner		Draft	For client comment

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SLR Ref No: 406.05356.00009

November 2021

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1.0 Introduction

Awel y Môr Offshore Wind Farm (AyM) is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is being undertaken and an Environmental Statement (ES) will be provided as part of a Development Consent Order (DCO) application under the Planning Act 2008.

SLR Consulting was commissioned by GoBe Consultants, on behalf of Awel y Môr Offshore Wind Ltd (The Applicant), in May 2020 to undertake the onshore ecological work necessary to inform the EIA. This report provides details of the dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* survey undertaken in summer and autumn 2021.

As AyM progresses, the emerging scheme design will continue to be refined and so the precise locations and final extent of the proposed scheme are subject to change. Therefore, the scheme details presented in this report may vary from those that are ultimately presented within the ES, but the survey area includes all areas currently under consideration at the time of survey.

1.1 Background

An EIA Scoping Report was prepared in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and Regulation 6 of the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007. The EIA Scoping Report was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) in June 2020. Within the EIA Scoping Report, full details were provided as to the proposed approach for ecological survey and assessment. An EIA Scoping Opinion was provided by PINS in response to the EIA Scoping Report, in July 2020. Comments made in the EIA Scoping Opinion have been taken into account within this report, where relevant. Both documents are available at the PINS website¹; the EIA Scoping Report and EIA Scoping Opinion content is not repeated here, and readers should refer to the original documents for details.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was subsequently carried out during the period July to September 2020 for three landfall locations, cable route corridors and substation locations that were under consideration by The Applicant at that time. The PEA was informed by additional desk-based study and initial habitat survey, based on interpretation of aerial imagery and ground-based survey, where access was possible. Findings were presented in a PEA² report, submitted to the AyM EIA Evidence Plan Expert Topic Group (ETG) (which includes Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Denbighshire County Council (DCC), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT)), in February 2021 for information and comment. The PEA report included detailed survey proposals for dormouse.

In line with the recommendations in the PEA report, and following discussion and agreement of the final survey scope during an ETG meeting on 26th February 2021, the dormouse surveys commenced in April 2021.

1.2 Survey Area

In accordance with the EIA Scoping Report and PEA report, and as agreed at the ETG meeting in February 2021, the dormouse survey comprised:

- Hazelnut searches at woodland within the Draft Order Limits (DOL) that were presented at Statutory Consultation, plus the surrounding area extending 100 m (i.e. 100 m either side of the onshore export cable corridor (ECC) and to all sides of any other infrastructure or works areas such as Temporary Construction Compounds (TCCs) and access tracks).
- Nest tube survey which was undertaken at all woodlands and hedgerows that may be breached by the

² For a copy of the PEA refer to AyM Offshore Windfarm Environmental Statement Volume 5, Annex 5.1.



¹https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/wales/awel-y-mor-offshore-wind-farm/?ipcsection=docs

onshore cable corridor south of the A525 and which are potentially suitable for use by dormice. The woodland survey also included use of nest boxes in addition to tubes. Hedgerows north of the A525 were scoped out, due to lack of suitable structure, foodplants and/or connectivity.

Within this report the following terms are used:

- Study Area: This is the 2km zone around the DOL that were presented at Statutory Consultation.
- Nut Search Survey Area: woodland within the DOL that were presented at Statutory Consultation, plus the surrounding area that is within 100 m from the DOL that were presented at Statutory Consultation;
- Presence/absence Survey Area: All woodlands plus hedgerows that may be breached south of the A525.
- Areas other than these are specifically described.

1.3 Purpose of this Report

This report presents the findings of the dormouse survey. The report seeks to establish baseline conditions and identify habitats that may be important for the species. The assessment of impacts resulting from the onshore elements of AyM is beyond the scope of this report and is covered in the Onshore Biodiversity and Nature Conservation chapter of the ES.

The main objectives of the work were to:

- identify the extent of suitable habitat for dormice within the Survey Areas;
- determine the presence/absence of dormice within the Survey Areas; and
- evaluate the importance of the dormouse population (if present) in a local, regional and national context.

1.4 Evidence of Technical Competence and Experience

A team of ecologists from Enfys Ecology Ltd undertook the field surveys, as detailed in Table 1-1. At least one NRW licence holder was present during all surveys.

Table 1-1
Survey Staff

Name	Experience of dormouse survey	Professional Membership
Rhian Hughes	NRW LICENCE REF: S087744/1 Rhian has been involved in dormouse work in North Wales since 2007, during this time she worked as the North Wales Dormouse Project Officer from 2007 – 2010, and has since maintained a network of volunteers to carry out dormouse surveys as well as carrying out surveys herself.	Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)(MCIEEM)
	Since 2016 she has also been trained to carry out microchipping on dormice and is now licenced to carry out microchipping at Coed Fron Wyllt on dormice over 8g in weight. Rhian also microchips dormice (under licence) at RWE's Clocaenog Forest Wind Farm, North Wales as part of the monitoring programme and research at the site. Rhian holds her own survey licence and has been the	



Name	Experience of dormouse survey	Professional Membership
	named ecologist for a number of development licences for dormice. She has previous experience of presence/absence surveys and monitoring for large projects such as the onshore connection for Burbo Bank offshore windfarm project which involved onshore infrastructure near St Asaph.	
Lucy Boyett	NRW LICENCE REF: S089771/1 Lucy has monitored dormice at the site Coed Fron Wyllt, North Wales for over 13 years, where there is a large known dormouse population, gaining extensive knowledge of dormouse ecology, nest identification, handling and recording. During 2015 and 2016 she trained to microchip	Associate member of CIEEM (ACIEEM)
	dormice, without anaesthetic, and is now licensed to undertake microchipping at Coed Fron Wyllt as part of the monitoring programme there. Lucy also microchips dormice (under licence) at RWE's Clocaenog Forest Wind Farm, North Wales as part of the monitoring programme and research at the site.	
	Lucy holds her own survey licence and has been the named ecologist for a number of development licences for dormice. She has previous experience of presence/absence surveys and monitoring for large projects such as the onshore connection for Burbo Bank offshore windfarm project which involved onshore infrastructure near St Asaph.	
Jane Kingsley	Jane has assisted with dormouse box monitoring at Coed Fron Wyllt, North Wales for the last two years. As there is a large known population here, she has gained experience of nest identification, handling and recording of dormice.	None
Sophie Johnson	Sophie has over 10 years of experience surveying dormice including monitoring at Coed Fron Wyllt, North Wales and a number of the surrounding woodlands, where there is a large known population. During these surveys she has gained experience of nest identification, handling and recording. She also has assisted with presence /absence surveys for large projects such as onshore connection for Burbo Bank offshore windfarm project which involved onshore infrastructure near St Asaph.	None



This report has been authored by Jess Colebrook, a Principal Ecologist at SLR Consulting with over 20 years' experience as a professional ecologist. Jess is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) and a full member of CIEEM (MCIEEM). Jess is leading the onshore ecological work necessary to inform the EIA for AYM.

Additional technical support and Quality Assurance review has been provided by Duncan Watson, a Technical Director at SLR Consulting with over 23 years' experience as a professional ecologist. Duncan is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) and a full member of CIEEM (MCIEEM).



2.0 Methodology

2.1 Baseline Data Collection

2.1.1 Desk Study

A desk-based study for protected species records has been undertaken to identify sources of pre-existing ecological data of relevance, that could inform the EIA; this is reported within Table 2-1 of the PEA report. Subsequent to completion of the PEA report, an updated data request was made to Cofnod for records within c.2km of the DOL that were presented at Statutory Consultation and any data received up to 8th September 2021 have been included in this report.

2.1.2 Field Surveys

Hazel nut search and initial habitat assessment

Dormice leave characteristic chew marks in hazel nuts which, if found, are sufficient to conclude dormouse are present. Hazel nut searches were undertaken within accessible woodlands/hedgerows during the field survey undertaken for the PEA, however, no evidence of the species was recorded at that time. Additional nut searches were made during site visits for the Habitat and Hedgerow Survey³. Special effort was also made to record the presence of dormouse food plants within hedgerows during the habitat surveys; during which hazel *Corylus avellana* was not found to be as abundant as anticipated, however other species such as bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, elm *Ulmus glabra* and honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* were found to be locally frequent.

Habitat-based assessment

The results from the PEA, Habitat and Hedgerow Survey and desk study were used as the basis to limit the scope of the dormouse survey to the area south of the A525. As noted previously, hedgerows north of the A525 were scoped out due to lack of suitable structure, foodplants and/or connectivity. Thereafter, each hedgerow and woodland south of the A525 that could potentially be breached by the onshore elements of AyM was assessed for its suitability to support dormice. This assessment was undertaken by Rhian Hughes on the 8th and 9th April 2021. The location of each hedgerow or woodland that was subject to this assessment is indicated on Figure 1.

The habitat-based assessment involved recording the presence of following key attributes:

- Species-rich hedge;
- Species-poor hedge;
- Broadleaved woodland;
- Coniferous woodland;
- Presence of dormouse food plants, and which species;
- Additional notes, such as factors which may increase or decrease suitability; and
- If further nest tube/nest box survey was necessary.

³ Refer to SLR report AyM Offshore Wind Farm Habitat and Hedgerow Survey, June 2021, included at Volume 5 Annexe 5.3 of the PEIR.



Presence/Absence Survey (Nest tube/nest box survey)

Of the 39 hedgerows/woodlands subject to habitat-based assessment, 15 were assessed as needing further survey. The further survey was undertaken broadly in accordance with standard methods⁴ and a total of 428 nest tubes or nest boxes were installed during the period 17^{th} May -15^{th} June 2021.

The standard dormouse survey method requires that at least 50 tubes or boxes are used to sample a site (size of site is not stated), spread at 20m intervals. The nest boxes/tubes are then repeatedly checked, usually monthly, for the presence of dormice or dormouse nests. In order to conclude likely absence, a search effort score of 20 must be reached based upon the values used in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1
Index of probability of finding dormice in nest tubes in any one month

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
Index of probability	1	4	5	5	5	7	2	2

Due to the limited extent of the width of the ECC, the standard method was amended such that tubes/boxes were placed at a closer distance to each other than set out in the standard methods, with 25 tubes installed per hedgerow. 25 tubes and ten boxes were installed at each woodland. The locations for each are shown on Figure 2, and grid references are provided in the raw data at Appendix 1.

Table 2-2 provides details for each survey date.

Table 2-2
Survey Dates and Details

Date	Surveyor(s)	Details
17 – 18 th May 2021	Rhian Hughes and Jane Kingsley	Boxes and tubes installed.
15 th June 2021	Rhian Hughes	Remaining tubes erected (southern parts of the survey area).
29 th June 2021	Rhian Hughes, Jane Kingsley	Tube/Box numbers 2 – 216 (installed in May) checked.
28 th July 2021	Lucy Boyett, Jane Kingsley	All tubes and boxes checked.
27 th August 2021	Lucy Boyett, Sophie Johnson	Tube/box numbers $2-411$ checked. Presence of cattle prevented checks to $412-428$.
30 th September 2021	Lucy Boyett, Jane Kingsley	All tubes and boxes checked.
29 th Oct 2021	Lucy Boyett, Jane Kingsley	All tubes and boxes checked.
26 th Nov 2021	Lucy Boyett, Jane Kingsley	All tubes and boxes checked.

The search effort score for the boxes/tubes is therefore as follows (noting box 1 went missing after installation):

2-216 = 27;

⁴ Bright, P.W., Morris, P.A. and Mitchell-Jones, A. (2006). 'Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Edition', (Peterborough: English Nature).



Page 6

- 217 411 = 22; and
- 412 428 = 17 (this is referenced in the limitations section below).

2.1.3 Limitations

Desk Study

Desk study data are unlikely to be exhaustive, especially in respect of species, and are intended mainly to set a context for the study. It is therefore possible that protected species (in this case dormice) not identified during the data search do in fact occur within the study area.

Field Survey

During the presence/absence survey a small number of tubes were damaged by livestock or by hedge cutting activity and rendered unsuitable for use (details are included in the raw data at Appendix 1). As soon as any such damage or disturbance was noted a replacement tube was installed within 3 days.

16 nest tubes (numbers 412 - 428) had a score of less than 20 due to difficulties of access during one visit. These tubes are all within the same hedgerow, at the substation area. Given the abundance of tubes installed in the adjacent linked hedgerows and which scored more than 20, the slightly suboptimal score for the tubes 412-428 is not considered to impact the conclusions of this report.

An ecological study provides only a "snapshot" of the conditions prevailing at the time of survey. Lack of evidence at the time of survey does not necessarily preclude dormice from being present within an area at a later date.

Nevertheless, given the site context and the types of habitat present, the level of survey is considered to be sufficient to assess the likely presence/absence of dormouse, and to meet the purpose of this report as set out in section 1.3.



3.0 Results & Discussion

3.1 Results

Review of the most recent Cofnod data confirms that one dormouse record occurs within 2km of the DOL, located within woodland approximately 630m distant from the DOL that were presented at Statutory Consultation at Coed Plas Newydd, as indicated on Figure 2. The record comprises 3 unoccupied dormouse nests found during a nest tube survey in 2013.

With regard to the 2021 field surveys:

- No evidence of dormouse was recorded from nut searches undertaken in both 2020 and 2021.
- No evidence of dormouse has been found during presence/absence surveys carried out during 2021 to date.

Raw data from the habitat-based assessment is included at Appendix 1.

3.2 Discussion

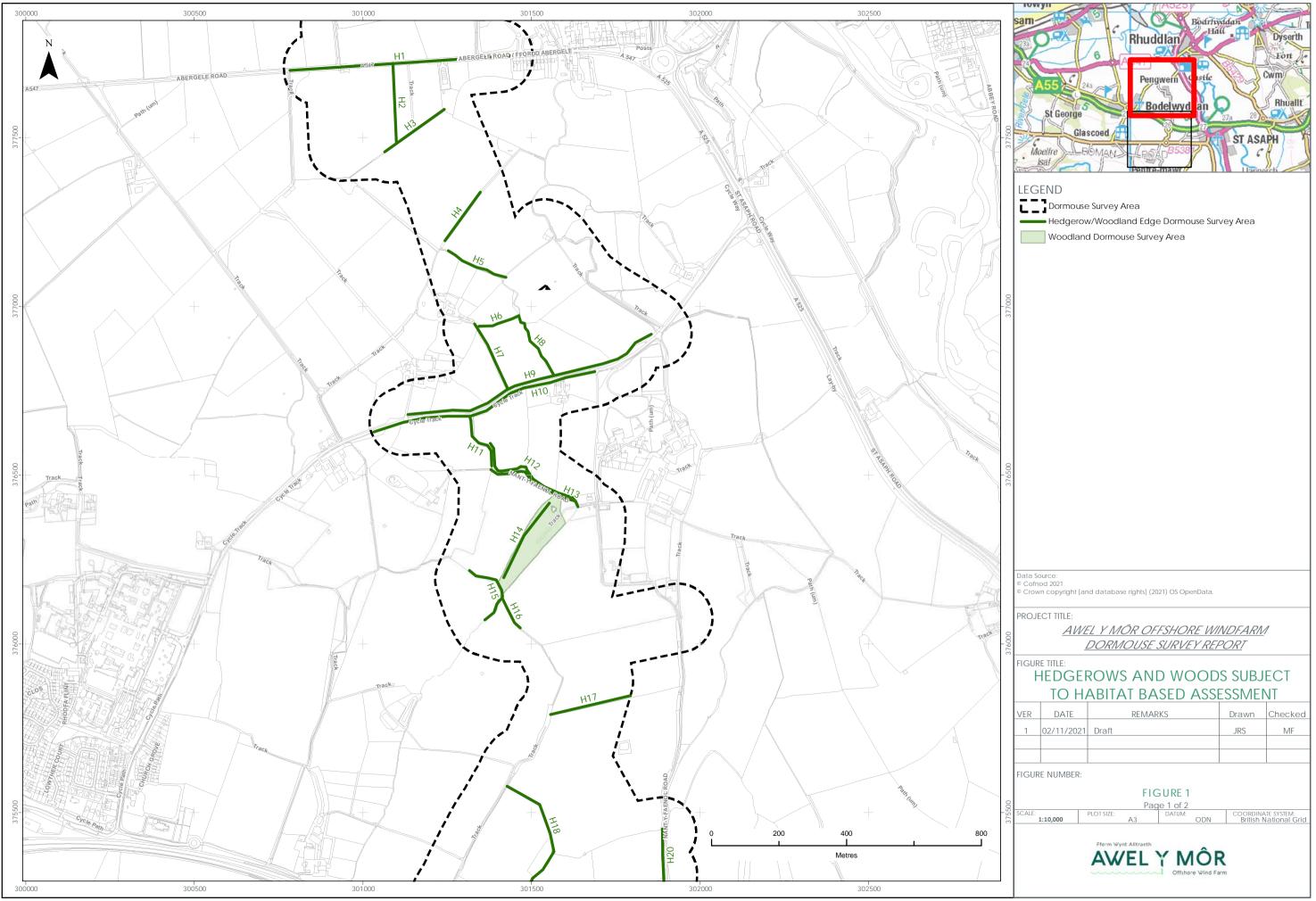
Desk study data confirms that dormice are present to the south of the DOL that were presented at Statutory Consultation; suitable connecting habitats within the Survey Areas have potential to assist with supporting the local population.

However, due to the lack of evidence to date, dormice are considered to be absent from the Survey Areas, based on negative survey results from nut searches and presence/absence survey.



FIGURE 1

Hedgerows and Woods subject to Habitat Based Assessment



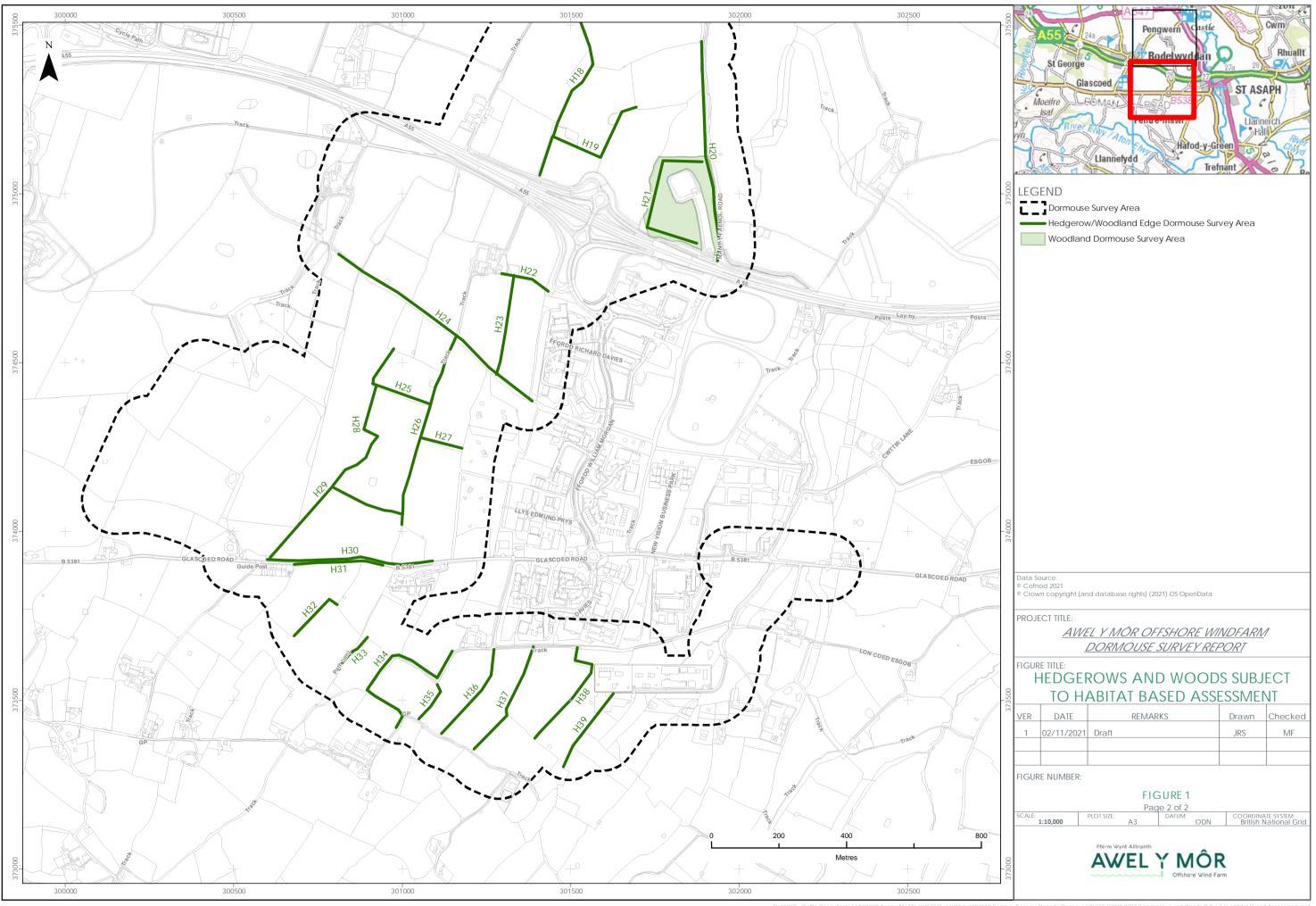
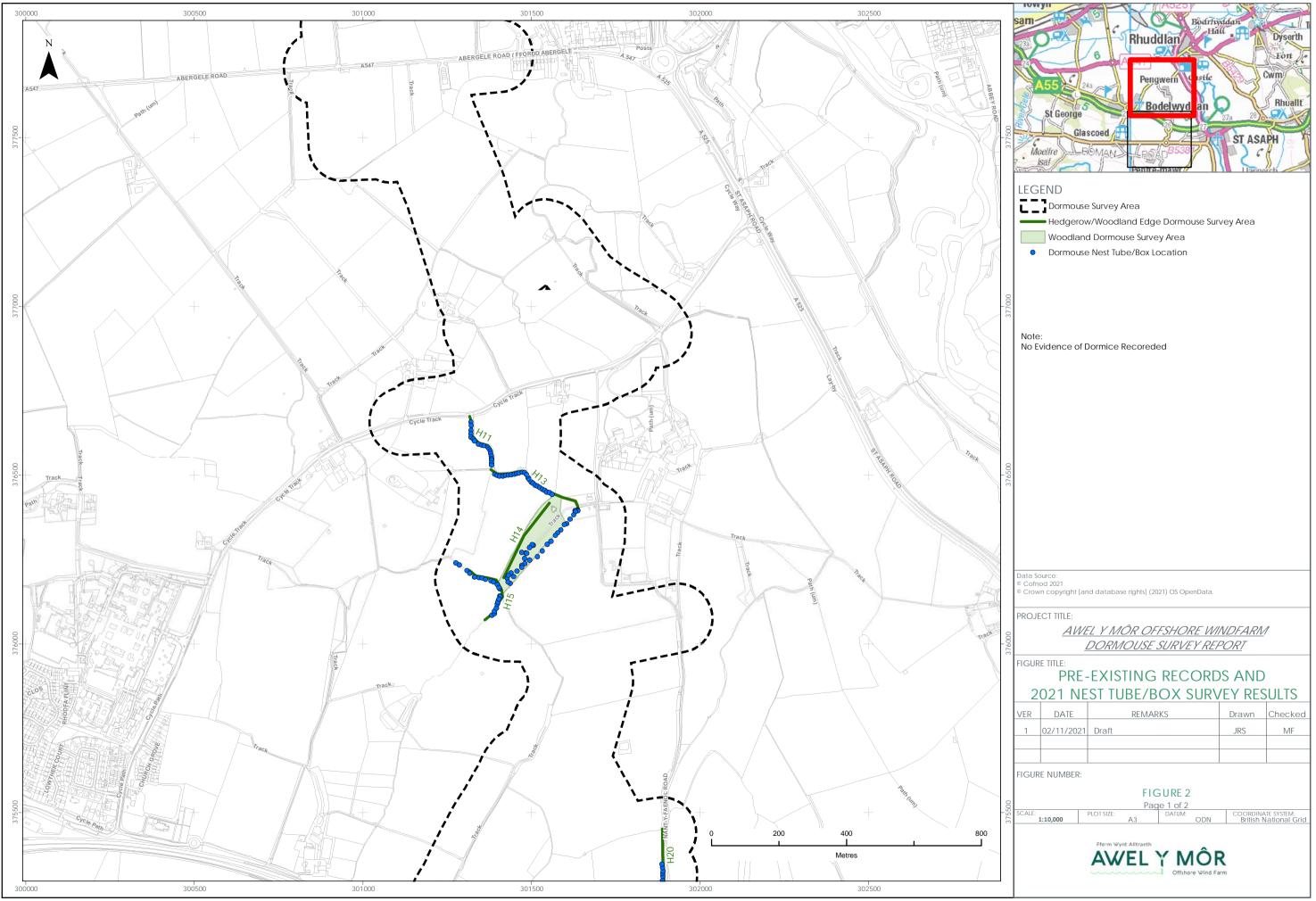
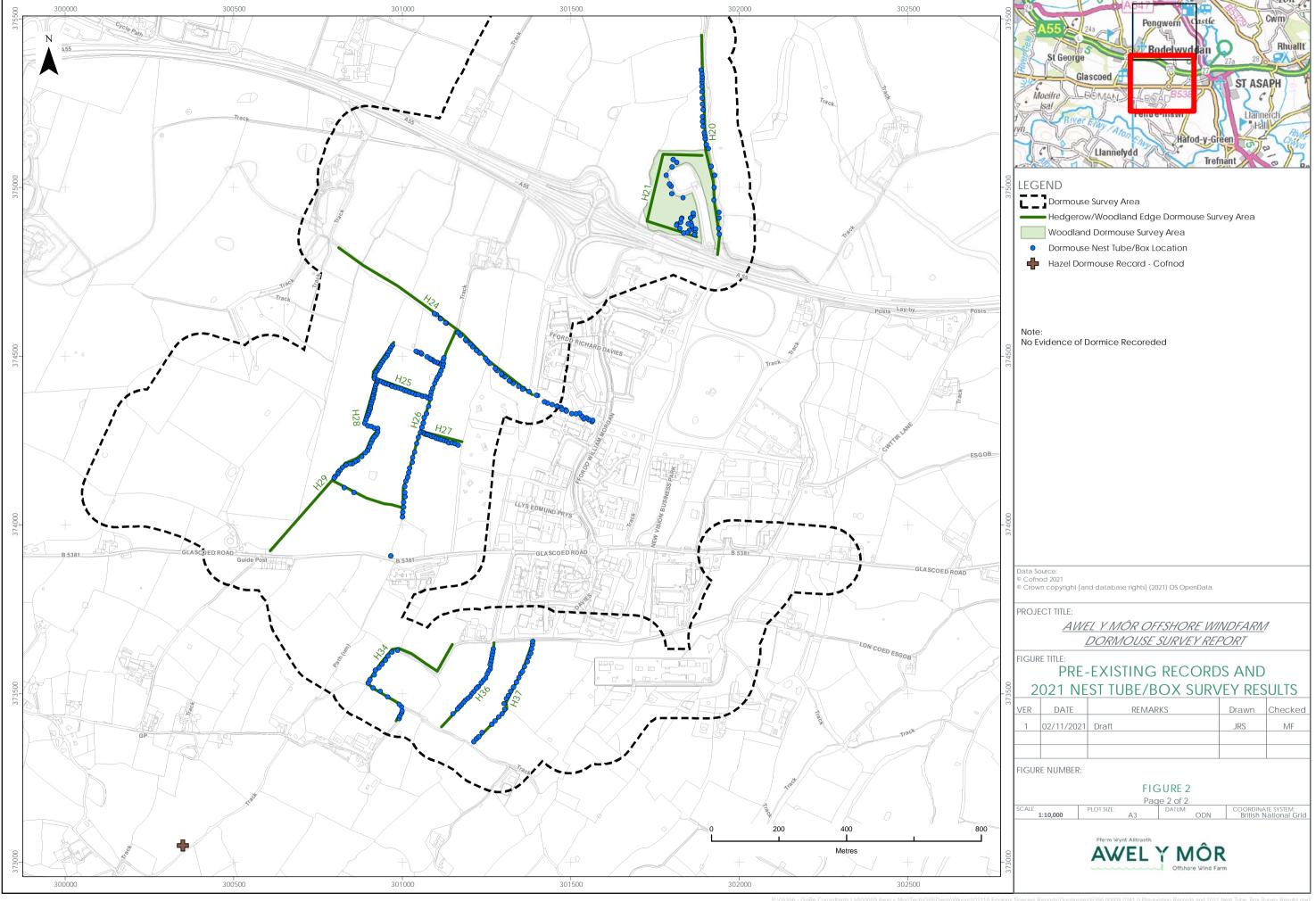


FIGURE 2

Pre-existing Records and 2021 Nest Tube/Box Survey Results





APPENDIX 1

Raw Data from 2021 Habitat-based Assessment

Hedge/ Wood Number	Easting	Northing	Date	Surveyor	Species poor (P) or rich (R) hedge	Broadleaved (B) or Coniferous (C) Woodland present	Food plants present	Photo & Additional Notes	Further Survey needed? Y/N
1	301111	377721	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn Crataegus monogyna, blackthorn Prunus spinosa, ash Fraxinus excelsior, bramble, sycamore Acer pseudoplatanus, ivy Hedera helix.	Hedge along busy main road. Limited connectivity	N
2	301094	377604	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble		N
3	301153	377521	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, bramble	very poor hedge, lots of gaps	N
4	301296	377267	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble	Poor hedgerows, no connectivity	N
5	301335	377116	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, ivy	Poor hedgerows, no connectivity, large gaps	N
6	301404	376951	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Blackthorn, hawthorn	Poor hedgerows, no connectivity	N
7	301384	376854	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Blackthorn, hawthorn, ivy	Poor hedgerows, no connectivity - along driveway	N
8	301511	376884	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Blackthorn, hawthorn, ivy	Poor hedgerows, no connectivity	N



Hedge/ Wood Number	Easting	Northing	Date	Surveyor	Species poor (P) or rich (R) hedge	Broadleaved (B) or Coniferous (C) Woodland present	Food plants present	Photo & Additional Notes	Further Survey needed? Y/N
9	301501	376778	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, sycamore, bramble, ivy	Along main road, more species diverse in sections but not on average (eastern more diverse, west mainly hawthorn)	N
10	301368	376692	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, ivy	Along main road	N
11	301345	376595	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, honeysuckle, ivy	More diverse and connects to H14 (woodland block)	Y
12	301484	376521	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, ivy		N
13	301508	376475	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р	В	Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, ivy, ash	Last section is edge of woodland	Υ
14	301474	376314	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р	В	Oak <i>Quercus robur</i> , hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble	Woodland edge, not best woodland, not much understorey	Y
15	301408	376164	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Blackthorn, hawthorn, honeysuckle, hazel	Connects to woodland, lots of honeysuckle - wasn't able to access a section	Y



Hedge/ Wood Number	Easting	Northing	Date	Surveyor	Species poor (P) or rich (R) hedge	Broadleaved (B) or Coniferous (C) Woodland present	Food plants present	Photo & Additional Notes	Further Survey needed? Y/N
16	301437	376088	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn	Large gaps present	N
17	301675	375819	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, ivy, bramble	New fenceline present - hedge has been pollarded - large gap at western end	N
18	301565	375390	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р	В	Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, ash - treeline up to woodland - conifers. In woodland – cherry <i>Prunus avium</i> , ash, oak, bramble	Only accessible from the south - hedgerow and woodland area. Area of trees to west of hedge in northern section	N
19	301550	375125	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р	В	Hawthorn, blackthorn, - by pond area of trees, oak, ash	Trees by pond area but only small area with limited connectivity	N
20	301899	375125	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р	В	Hazel, sycamore, hawthorn, ivy, blackthorn, ash	Hedge and woodland edge. Newly planted hedge along woodland edge	Y
21	301745	374980	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	-	В	Ash, cherry, hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, oak, conifer	Woodland area	Y



Hedge/ Wood Number	Easting	Northing	Date	Surveyor	Species poor (P) or rich (R) hedge	Broadleaved (B) or Coniferous (C) Woodland present	Food plants present	Photo & Additional Notes	Further Survey needed? Y/N
22	301369	374750	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Blackthorn, hawthorn	Very gappy, no understorey	N
23	301309	374611	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Blackthorn, hawthorn, ivy, bramble	Not the best hedge, but links up to the bridleway	N
24	301109	374618	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	-	В	Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, ivy, ash, oak	Bridleway woodland strip	Υ
25	300997	374408	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, ivy	Connects to woodland and bridleway although not the best hedge, large area to the east which is just fenceline	Y
26	301062	374305	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, ash	Connects to bridleway	Y
27	301118	374262	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, ivy, bramble	Some sections fenced off, less managed than other surrounding hedges, connects to Glascoed NR	Y
28	300888	374309	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, ivy, bramble		Y



Hedge/ Wood Number	Easting	Northing	Date	Surveyor	Species poor (P) or rich (R) hedge	Broadleaved (B) or Coniferous (C) Woodland present	Food plants present	Photo & Additional Notes	Further Survey needed? Y/N
29	300775	374113	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, gorse <i>Ulex europaeus</i> , bramble	Mainly row of trees, then a wall to the south	Y
30	300846	373920	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, ash, ivy, hazel	More diverse but spread over whole area - limited connectivity	N
31	300811	373909	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, ivy, honeysuckle, small amounts hazel	More diverse but spread over whole area - limited connectivity	N
32	300741	373756	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, bramble, honeysuckle	No connectivity	N
33	300850	373643	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, oak, bramble	No connectivity	N
34	300953	373611	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, ivy, sycamore, hazel	Much more diverse than hedges to the N, average still under species rich	Υ
35	301091	373493	08/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, honeysuckle, gorse, ivy		N
36	301220	373514	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, ivy,	Much more diverse than hedges to the N, average still	Υ



Hedge/ Wood Number	Easting	Northing	Date	Surveyor	Species poor (P) or rich (R) hedge	Broadleaved (B) or Coniferous (C) Woodland present	Food plants present	Photo & Additional Notes	Further Survey needed? Y/N
							honeysuckle, gorse, sycamore, ash	under species rich, fenced off	
37	301318	373494	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel (small amount), honeysuckle	Much more diverse than hedges to the N, average still under species rich, gaps present	Y
38	301518	373525	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р		Gorse, hawthorn, bramble, blackthorn, honeysuckle	First 12 m no hedge, some mature trees	N
39	301545	373416	09/04/2021	Rhian Hughes	Р	В	Hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, ivy, woodland edge - ash, oak	Section of broad- leaved woodland edge not directly affected.	N



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