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Connah's Quay Low Carbon Power

Environmental Statement Volume IV Appendix 11-M: 2025 Reptile Survey Report

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Uniper UK Limited

Prepared by:
AECOM Limited

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This report forms a technical appendix accompanying **Chapter 11: Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecology [APP-049]** of the Environmental Statement (ES) for the Connah's Quay Low Carbon Power Project (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development).
- 1.1.2 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the Construction and Operation Area was carried out in November 2023 and is detailed in Annex F of **Appendix 11-C: Botanical Technical Appendix [APP-191]**.
- 1.1.3 In January 2025 Flintshire County Council advised that the Main Development Area and the Construction & Indicative Enhancement Area (C&IEA), which are distinct areas within the Construction and Operation Area, are connected to suitable off-site habitats which are known to support populations of native reptile species, such as common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*). Previous presence/absence surveys carried out by Aspect Ecology in 2022 also recorded common lizard within the Main Development Area and C&IEA. As recorded in **Appendix 11-F Reptile Desk Study (EN010166/APP/6.4)**, two incidental records of reptiles were made within the Main Development Area in the spring and summer of 2024. These were a dead grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) and a live grass snake.
- 1.1.4 As a result of this information, presence/absence surveys for reptiles were carried out in suitable habitats within the Main Development Area and the C&IEA.
- 1.1.5 This report focuses on habitats within the Order limits excluding the Accommodation Work Areas (hereafter known as the Construction and Operation Area). This area is shown on **Figure 3-3: Areas Described in the Environmental Statement (EN010166/APP/6.3)** sheets 6 to 8 and Plate 3-2 of **Chapter 3: Location of the Proposed Development (EN010166/APP/6.2)**.
- 1.1.6 The Accommodation Works Areas are considered in **Appendix 5-A: Environmental Screening of Accommodation Works (EN010166/APP/6.4)**.

1.2 Scope of this Report

- 1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to update reptile baseline technical information presented in **Appendix 11-F Reptile Desk Study (EN010166/APP/6.4)** only, based on data gathered to date. It does not seek to specify mitigation or make an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of the Proposed Development. The formal EclA is provided as **Chapter 11: Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecology (EN010166/APP/6.2)** and commentary is provided within Section 5 of this report in the context of the conclusions made therein.
- 1.2.2 The study area and survey area used and referenced within this report are defined within Section 3.

2. Relevant Legislation and Policy

2.1 Legislation

2.1.1 Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) and sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) are European Protected Species (EPS), protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (hereafter the Habitats Regulations) (Ref 1). It is an offence to:

- deliberately kill, injure, disturb or capture them;
- deliberately take or destroy their eggs;
- damage or destroy their breeding sites and resting places (including when the smooth snake or sand lizard are not present);
- possess, control or transport them (or any part, alive or dead); and
- sell, offer, or publish an advert to sell them.

2.1.2 It is also an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Ref 2) to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb them while they occupy a structure or place used for shelter or protection;
- obstruct access to a place of shelter or protection;
- possess or transport them (or any part, alive or dead); and
- sell, offer, or publish an advert to sell them.

2.1.3 For all other native reptile species, i.e. adder (*Vipera berus*), grass snake, common lizard, viviparous lizards (*Zootoca vivipara*) and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Ref 2) to intentionally kill or injure them, possess or transport them (or any part, alive or dead), sell, offer or publish an advert to sell.

2.1.4 Licenses to permit otherwise illegal activities relating to smooth snake and sand lizard can be issued for specific purposes and by the relevant licensing authority, which in Wales is Natural Resources Wales (NRW). These EPS Mitigation Licenses (EPSMLs) are issued under the Habitats Regulations (Ref 1). It is an offence not to comply with the terms and conditions of an EPSML once issued.

2.1.5 In some circumstances a license may also need to be obtained to permit mitigation for other reptile species e.g. where trapping and translocation is required.

2.1.6 All native reptiles are highlighted as Priority Species within section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Ref 3).

2.2 Planning Policy

- 2.2.1 Full details of relevant national and local planning policy relevant to ecology are provided in **Appendix 7-A Legislative, Policy and Guidance Framework for Technical Topics [APP-179]**.
- 2.2.2 Of particular relevance to this survey report, sand lizards are mentioned in the Flintshire Local Biodiversity Duty Plan (Ref 4) making sand lizard a local biodiversity action plan (LBAP) species.

3. Method

3.1 Desk Study

- 3.1.1 All recent records for reptiles and designated sites relating to reptiles were requested from Cofnod - the Local Environmental Records Centre (Ref 5) for North Wales within 2 km of the Construction and Operation Area (hereafter known as the study area). This distance is considered appropriate to obtain an indication of reptile presence within the wider landscape. With regard to desk study data, "recent" records are considered to be those no older than 10 years from the date of the desk study (requested March 2024). Records outside of this period are historical and have only been reported where more recent records for a species do not exist.
- 3.1.2 Reptile data was also obtained from a previous presence/likely absence survey conducted by Aspect Ecology in 2022 within the Main Development Area and the C&IEA (Ref 6, Ref 7, Ref 8, and Ref 9). Incidental records of reptiles made during ecological surveys for the Proposed Development in 2024 have also been collated.

3.2 Field Survey

- 3.2.1 An experienced reptile surveyor carried out a walkover of the Proposed Development Site on 7 May 2025 to identify suitable reptile habitat; this was informed by a desk-based review of aerial imagery, and existing knowledge of the Proposed Development obtained during surveys for other species and habitats. Two areas were selected for further survey as shown in **Figure 11M-1** (hereafter referred to as the survey area):
- Survey Area A (Main Development Area) – a mix of grassland, and hedgerow and scrub edge habitat; and
 - Survey Area B e (C&IEA) – a mix of scrub edge habitat and more open areas of grassland and bare ground.
- 3.2.2 At the time of this initial assessment a total of 217 artificial refuges, consisting of bitumen roofing felt sheets measuring approximately 0.5 m x 0.5 m, were placed within 2.33 hectares of suitable reptile habitat within the survey area. The refuge positions were selected for their full or partial sun exposure from the morning to late afternoon. The refuges were placed at the margins of scrub, hedgerow and more-open areas (grassland and bare ground) at a density of 94 refuges per hectare (**Figure 11M-1**) and allowed to bed-in to their surroundings for two weeks before further survey.
- 3.2.3 The density of the refuges exceeded the minimum density recommended as good practice in Froglife (1999) (Ref 10). The latter advises that the number of refuges used "*will depend on many factors, such as the likelihood of disturbance, size of survey area and what the survey is attempting to achieve*", going on to recommend 5-10 refuges per hectare for general survey purposes. Clearly, the higher the density of refuges deployed, the greater the likelihood of reptiles finding and utilising the refuges. Therefore, exceedance of the recommended minimum density of refuges increases confidence in the survey results.

- 3.2.4 The further survey for reptiles consisted of twenty visits to the survey area between 22 May 2025 and 24 September 2025. Each survey visit comprised two elements:
- a walked transect to survey the artificial refuges; and
 - visual observation to scan likely basking areas and to check any natural refuges that were present within the areas targeted for survey.
- 3.2.5 The survey approach followed the good practice detailed in Gent & Gibson (2003) (Ref 11) and Froglife (1999) (Ref 10) in relation to the minimum number of visits, appropriate weather conditions (with a target temperature range of between 10°C and 20°C) and the time of day for each visit. Each visit was separated by at least two days of suitable weather conditions.
- 3.2.6 If reptile presence has been confirmed, Froglife (1999) (Ref 10) has been used to estimate the population size of reptiles within the survey area. This is based on peak adult counts recorded by surveyors in a single visit.
- 3.2.7 **Table 1** below shows the population class assessment criteria for reptiles outlined in Froglife (1999) (Ref 10) based on the maximum number of adults seen by observation and/or under refuges, per visit.

Table 1: Population Class Assessment Criteria for Reptiles

	Low population <i>Score 1</i>	Good population <i>Score 2</i>	Exceptional population <i>Score 3</i>
Adder	<5	5 – 10	>10
Grass snake	<5	5 - 10	>10
Common lizard	<5	5 - 10	>10
Slow worm	<5	5 - 10	>10

3.3 Nature Conservation Evaluation

- 3.3.1 Evaluation of the relative nature conservation value of the identified ecological features within a site (encompassing nature conservation designations, ecosystems, habitat and species) is required to inform an EclA.
- 3.3.2 The method of evaluation that has been utilised has been developed with reference to the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland – Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal and Marine (CIEEM, 2018) (Ref 12). These guidelines give advice on scoping and carrying out environmental assessments and place appraisal in the context of relevant policies. Data received through consultation, desk-based studies and field-based surveys are used to allow ecological features of nature conservation value or potential value to be identified, and the main factors contributing to their value described and related to available guidance. This data can also be used to identify other relevant values e.g. socio-economic or ecosystem

services values, but this is beyond the remit of this report and requires the involvement of other relevant specialists.

- 3.3.3 The value of a species may relate to its geographic location (species may be rare and more valued towards the edge of their geographic range), the extent to which the component species are threatened throughout their range, or their rate of decline. The value of a species associated with the Proposed Development has been defined with reference to the geographical level at which it is considered to matter. This assessment has been made with reference to published guidance and criteria where available e.g. criteria to assess relative value within the context of the Flintshire Biodiversity Action Plan (Flintshire Local Biodiversity Duty Plan) (Ref 4).

3.4 Limitations and Assumptions

- 3.4.1 The aim of a desk study is to help characterise the baseline context of the Construction and Operation Area and provide valuable background information that would not be captured by a single site survey alone. Information obtained during the course of a desk study is dependent upon people and organisations having made and submitted records for the area of interest. As such, a lack of records for a particular species does not necessarily mean that the species do not occur in the desk study area. Likewise, the presence of records for species does not automatically mean that these still occur within the area of interest or are relevant in the context of the Construction and Operation Area.
- 3.4.2 During visits 2, 4, 11, 13, 16 and 18, less favourable weather conditions were observed at certain times throughout these surveys. During visit 4 and visit 11 the surveys were paused for approximately 10 minutes, on both occasions, due to rain showers, but it was dry throughout thereafter and it is not considered detrimental enough to impact survey results. Again, during visit 2 the survey was paused from 10:56 to 11:13 and 11:35 to 11:41 due to light drizzle, and 11:52 to 12:03 due to a rain shower; however, it was dry with sunny spells for the rest of the survey and it is therefore not considered to have had an impact on survey results. Visit 13 was delayed due to heavy showers prior to the survey and was started later in the morning. Reptiles were still observed during this survey and therefore it is not considered to have impacted on survey results. During visit 16, some strong winds and heavy rain were observed but this was intermittent, and reptiles were still observed during the survey, therefore it is not considered to have impacted on survey results.

4. Results and Evaluation

4.1 Desk Study

- 4.1.1 There are no designated sites within the study area that have been designated for reptiles.
- 4.1.2 Cofnod returned nine records of grass snake and 15 records of common lizard within the study area. The closest grass snake record is approximately 0.4 km west of the Order limits. The closest record for common lizard is approximately 0.9 km east of the Order limits. The locations of these records are shown in **Figure 11F-1 of Appendix 11-F: Reptile Desk Study [APP-196]**.
- 4.1.3 The 2022 presence/likely absence survey by Aspect Ecology targeted the Main Development Area and C&IEA, which are the locations within the Order limits containing habitat with potential to support reptiles (see **Section 4.2**). This survey recorded the presence of common lizard within the C&IEA, with a peak count of two common lizard across the survey. Based on this, it was concluded that a small population of common lizard used habitats within the C&IEA. No reptiles were recorded during the surveys at the Main Development Area.
- 4.1.4 Two incidental records of reptiles were made by AECOM within the Main Development Area in the spring and summer of 2024. These were a dead grass snake and a live grass snake. The locations of these sightings are shown in **Figure 11F-2 of Appendix 11-F: Reptile Desk Study [APP-196]**. The live grass snake was found just south-east from the centre of the Main Development Area. The dead snake was found near the ponds on the western boundary of the Main Development Area.

4.2 Review of Habitat Suitability for Reptiles

- 4.2.1 It was concluded by the PEA (Annex F of **Appendix 11-C: Botanical Technical Appendix [APP-191]**) and the Reptile Desk Study Report (**Appendix 11-F: Reptile Desk Study Report [APP-196]**) that there was potential for small numbers of common reptiles to be present within the Construction and Operation Area, especially within areas of less managed semi-natural habitat.
- 4.2.2 The habitats within the Construction and Operation Area that were identified as suitable for reptiles included open grassland, scrub, wetlands, woodlands, gardens, open mosaic habitat, and hedgerows. These habitats, which are located within the Main Development Area and the C&IEA (the survey area), could be used by the more widespread species of native reptile (as named in paragraph 2.1.3) but they are unsuitable for smooth snake and sand lizard. These latter two species are therefore not likely to occur and consequently they are not considered further within this report.
- 4.2.3 The Main Development Area was originally found to be sub-optimal for supporting grass snake and common lizard, being heavily grazed and uniform pasture. However, the land immediately adjacent to the Main Development Area was considered more suitable – particularly the western area where ponds and more rank grassland, woodland glades, tall ruderal

vegetation and scrub occurred. These habitats provided a mosaic of foraging, basking, commuting and shelter habitats suitable to support these species throughout the year.

- 4.2.4 The C&IEA provided an open mosaic of wetland, grassland and woodland edge habitats, which were considered optimal for grass snake and common lizard. The variety of habitats present afford opportunities for shelter, basking and foraging.
- 4.2.5 The above areas connect to suitable off-site habitats adjacent to the Order limits, that Flintshire County Council advised (Ref 13) were known to support populations of native reptile species.
- 4.2.6 The remaining areas of the Construction and Operation Area were mostly hard standing, with negligible value to native reptile species.

4.3 Field Survey

Weather Conditions

- 4.3.1 The weather conditions and timings for each of the reptile surveys are provided in **Table 2**. The reptile surveys were conducted in suitable weather in accordance with those stated in Gent & Gibson (2003) (Ref 11).

Table 2 Weather Conditions During Reptile Surveys

Survey Number	Date	Start Time	End Time	Temp (°C)	Wind (Beaufort)	Cloud (Oktas)	Conditions
1	22 May 2025	09:46 am	10:35 am	13 - 15	1	6	Dry
2	22 May 2025	09:31 am	12:43 pm	13 - 15	2	4	Survey paused 10:56 - 11:13 and 11:35 - 11:41 due to light drizzle, and 11:52 - 12:03 due to rain shower, otherwise dry with sunny spells
3	2 June 2025	16:08 pm	18:30 pm	18	3	2	Dry
4	4 June 2025	10:11 am	12:53 pm	14 - 18	3	4	Survey paused 10:40 to 10:49 due to rain shower but otherwise dry
5	9 June 2025	08:46 am	10:58 am	14 - 16	2	6	Dry, recent rain showers
6	11 June 2025	09:30 am	11:37 am	16 - 19	1	4	Dry, showers recently prior to survey

Survey Number	Date	Start Time	End Time	Temp (°C)	Wind (Beaufort)	Cloud (Oktas)	Conditions
7	13 June 2025	09:49 am	11:51 am	18 – 20	1	2	Dry
8	16 June 2025	08:57 am	11:10 am	19 - 21	1	6	Heavy showers throughout prior evening, dry during survey
9	20 June 2025	08:22 am	10:40 am	19 - 22	2	6	Dry
10	23 June 2025	08:41 am	10:55 am	14 - 15	4	6	Recent rain, dry at time of survey
11	26 June 2025	08:42 am	11:08 am	17	2	1	Dry, survey paused for approximately 10 minutes due to rain shower
12	30 June 2025	08:15 am	11:05 am	19 - 22	2	2	Dry
13	1 September 2025	11:59 am	14:07 pm	16 – 18	2	6	Heavy showers in the morning, dry and sunny spells during survey
14	5 September 2025	08:18 am	10:46 am	17 - 18	1	6	Recent rain, dry at time of survey

Survey Number	Date	Start Time	End Time	Temp (°C)	Wind (Beaufort)	Cloud (Oktas)	Conditions
15	8 September 2025	08:47 am	11:19 am	13 - 16	2	1	Dry
16	11 September 2025	11:21 am	13:19 pm	15 - 17	4	6	Heavy rain and strong winds on previous day. Rain showers in morning of survey, dry and sunny spells during survey
17	15 September 2025	08:40 am	11:15 am	15 - 16	3	4	Dry
18	18 September 2025	11:15 am	13:02 pm	15 - 19	1	3	Showers in morning of survey, dry and sunny spells during survey
19	22 September 2025	08:42 am	11:10 am	13 - 16	1	1	Dry
20	24 September 2025	08:44 am	11:46 am	10 - 13	1	3	Dry

Presence/ Likely Absence Surveys

4.3.2 The results of the presence/ likely absence surveys are shown in **Table 3** below.

Table 3: Reptile Presence/ Likely Absence Survey Results

Visit Number	Survey Results
1	No reptiles recorded.
2	One unknown (sex) adult common lizard on refugia 197. One adult male common lizard on refugia 184.
3	Three adult female common lizard, one found on refugia 175, one on refugia 193 and one on refugia 207. One unknown (sex) adult common lizard on refugia 198.
4	One unknown (sex) adult common lizard on refugia 165.
5	Two unknown (sex) adult common lizard. One located on refugia 212 and one located on refugia 183. One female adult common lizard located on refugia 185.
6	No reptiles recorded.
7	One unknown (maturity, sex) common lizard on refugia 209.
8	No reptiles recorded.
9	One adult male common lizard on refugia 172.
10	No reptiles recorded.
11	Two unknown (sex) adult common lizard on refugia 194.
12	One female (unknown maturity) common lizard on refugia 195. One juvenile (sex unknown) grass snake basking in area of tussocky grass in the C&IEA close to refugia 201.
13	No reptiles recorded.
14	No reptiles recorded.
15	Three female adult common lizard, one located on refugia 164, one located on refugia 205 and one located on refugia 181.
16	No reptiles recorded.
17	No reptiles recorded.
18	No reptiles recorded.

Visit Number	Survey Results
19	One unknown (maturity, sex) adult common lizard on refugia 202.
20	No reptiles recorded

- 4.3.3 Common lizard were recorded during the surveys, the results and locations of which are shown on **Figure 11M-1**. Most sightings were on refugia located in the C&IEA, and consisted of six adult females, two adult males, nine unknown sex adults, and one unknown sex juvenile.
- 4.3.4 The peak count of grass snake recorded during a survey was one individual during Visit 12. The peak count of common lizard recorded during a survey was four individuals from Visit 3.
- 4.3.5 Two common lizard were recorded in the Main Development Area, within an area of grassland. This included one adult female and one unknown sex adult.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Summary Findings

- 5.1.1 The reptile surveys concluded that the survey area supports a small population of common lizard and a small population of grass snake in accordance with guidance from Froglife (1999) (Ref 10). The peak count for grass snake was one individual and the peak count for common lizard was four individuals.
- 5.1.2 Given the minimal impact on existing reptile habitat from the Proposed Development and the small population of common lizard and grass snake recorded within the survey area, a method statement and toolbox talk will be sufficient to cover any tasks where there is likelihood of common lizard and/or grass snake being present and further mitigation will not be required.
- 5.1.3 The C&IEA, which returned the highest density of common lizard during the surveys and also where the grass snake was identified, is being used temporarily during construction of the Proposed Development as a laydown area. However, a 30 m strip of the C&IEA would be retained as an ecological safeguarding zone, as shown on **Figure 5-3: Construction Areas** of the ES **[APP-083]**. This ecological safeguarding zone returned the highest number of reptiles during the surveys and currently provides the most suitable habitat for reptile species.

5.2 Recommendations

- 5.2.1 Due to suitable habitat being present within the C&IEA, it is recommended that works are done under a Precautionary Method of Works (PMoW), which would consist of a two phased cut between April and September in conditions where reptiles are most active. The two phased cut should be supervised by ecologists and should be separated by a period of at least 24 hours. The first cut should remove vegetation down to sward height of 150 mm, with all arisings removed, before a second cut down to ground level. All arisings should be removed to discourage reptiles from recolonizing the area after they have been removed from the area but can be placed within retained areas of the C&IEA such as the safeguarding zone, away from the works, to create reptile refugia. This is already included within the **Framework Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (EN010166/APP/6.4)**.
- 5.2.2 Prior to the installation of the acoustic fencing, reptile and amphibian fencing should be implemented around the safeguarding zone following displacement to prevent reptiles from being harmed by the works. This has been updated within the **Framework CEMP (EN010166/APP/6.4)**.
- 5.2.3 As detailed in the **Framework CEMP (EN010166/APP/6.4)**, the safeguarding zones within both the Main Development Area and the C&IEA should be managed accordingly to maintain and/or enhance suitability for reptiles. This may include implementing sufficient habitat management to these areas to prevent them from evolving into dense scrub habitat and introducing new refugia into these areas such as log piles.

5.3 Nature Conservation Evaluation

- 5.3.1 Due to the small number of reptiles recorded within the survey area, it is considered that the survey area is of no more than Local nature conservation importance for common lizards and grass snake.

5.4 Conclusions

- 5.4.1 Considering the low reptile populations present within the survey area, and anticipated impacts of the Proposed Development, it is expected that the reptile population sizes will not be adversely affected and can be retained without the need for off-site mitigation (including translocation of individuals). This is consistent with the assessment conclusions presented in **Chapter 11: Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecology [APP-049]**.

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Annex A: Figure

PROJECT
 Connah's Quay Low
 Carbon Power

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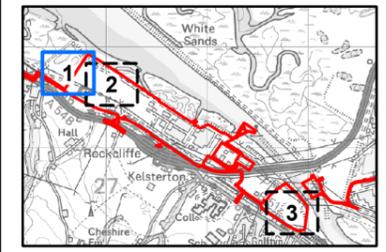
LEGEND

- Order limits
- Reptile Refugia with Recorded Reptiles
- Reptile Refugia with no Recorded Reptiles
- Survey Area A - Main Development Area



Refugia Ref: 164
 Species: Common Lizard
 Count: 1
 Sex: Female
 Maturity: Adult

Refugia Ref: 165
 Species: Common Lizard
 Count: 1
 Sex: Unknown
 Maturity: Adult



NOTES

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ISSUE PURPOSE
 Appendix 11M-2025 Reptile Survey Report

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FIGURE TITLE
 Reptile Survey Results
 Sheet 1 of 3

FIGURE NUMBER
 Figure 11M-1

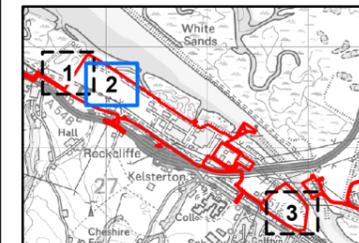
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SHEET 1



- LEGEND**
- Order limits
 - Reptile Refugia with no Recorded Reptiles
 - Survey Area A - Main Development Area



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FIGURE TITLE
Reptile Survey Results
Sheet 2 of 3

FIGURE NUMBER
Figure 11M-1

1:1,500 @ A3



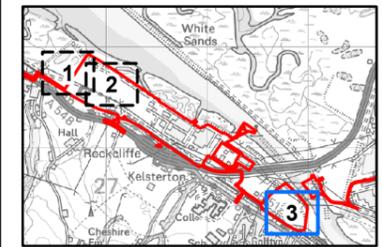
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LEGEND

- Order limits
- Reptile Refugia with Recorded Reptiles
- Reptile Refugia with no Recorded Reptiles
- Grass Snake Record
- Survey Area B - Construction and Indicative Enhancement Area



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NOTES

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ISSUE PURPOSE
Appendix 11M-2025 Reptile Survey Report

DATE
February 2026

PROJECT NUMBER
60717119

FIGURE TITLE
Reptile Survey Results
Sheet 3 of 3

FIGURE NUMBER
Figure 11M-1

