Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for a proposed development on land at Marcholws, Peniel, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire SA32 7AA

Client: A & A Butler

Survey Date: 6/11/2025

Report Reference: WW/61125

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1. Introduction

Wyndrush Wild was contracted to carry out a preliminary ecological appraisal in support of an application to Carmarthenshire County Council for redevelopment of an existing contractor's yard.

The proposed development is at Marcholws, Peniel. The grid reference is SN441232 (see figure 1 below).

The aim of the survey is to provide baseline data on habitat and species, both on and adjacent to the site, and to investigate potential impacts that may occur during construction and post-construction stages. An assessment is made of any potential impact on Priority Habitats or protected species or sites in the area.

Approximate boundary of Survey Site at Peniel

Site Description

The proposed site is an existing contractor's yard on a former farmyard at Macholws. There are several sheds. The yard is set amongst agriculturally-improved grassland. There is a small watercourse on the eastern boundary, which joins the Nant Crychiau. This stream discharges into the Afon Gwili, which in turn joins the Afon Tywi at Carmarthen.

Proposed Development Site

2. Methodology

2.1 Desk Exercise

A limited desk exercise was carried out.

There are no designated sites within 2km, however the Afon Tywi SSSI / SAC lies several kilometres downstream with hydrological continuity via tributaries of the Afon Gwili. Otter and six fish species are the basis of the SAC designation.

The Carmarthenshire Rare Plant Register and British Bryological Society databases hold no records for the site. There are numerous bat roosts in the surrounding area; the adjoining farmhouse held a roost of Brandt's / whiskered and brown long-eared bats prior to re-development (Swann, 2022).

2.2 Extended Phase I Survey

A thorough site inspection was made on 6th November 2025. The survey followed the methodology set out by the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 1993) and then subsequently by the Institute of Environmental Assessment (1995) and CIEEM. The methods provide quick and accurate classification of habitats.

In addition, the survey looked for field signs of protected species and assessed the habitat for their potential presence. Measures taken included:

- A search for signs of bats on the site.
- Consideration of the potential impact of the development on otters, reptiles and other protected species.
- Recording birds and identifying the suitability of the habitat for nesting birds especially those listed as species of conservation concern.

2.3 Constraints

There were no significant constraints to survey. Breeding birds could not be recorded due to the time of year, but an assessment could be made of their likely presence.

3. Results

3.1 Vegetation and habitat survey

The habitats at the site location were recorded in detail. The application area comprises built ground (J3.6) and intact species-poor hedgerow (J2.1.2). Improved grassland (B4), running water (G2) and scattered broadleaved trees (A3.1) lie alongside the site.

Phase I habitat map

Built Ground J3.6

The yard has sheds, hard-standings, machinery and materials storage areas

The site comprises a working yard with sheds and machinery, underlain by hard-standing. A yard extension into an improved field to the north is used for timber storage. There are a small number of common ruderal plants to the fringes of the yard. A bat scoping assessment of a building proposed for replacement is provided below.

The habitat has no ecological significance.

Intact Species-poor Hedgerow J2.1.2 / Scattered Trees A3.1 / Running Water G2

There is a tree-lined stream alongside the eastern boundary, with a few scattered mature trees on the inside

The concrete track to the yard is edged by annually-flailed hedges comprising a relatively species-rich mixture of shrubs including hazel, hawthorn, sycamore, oak and blackthorn. There are no standard trees, except in a short length against an adjoining property.

The eastern boundary below the yard edge is shaley soil with scattered mature oak and ash trees. There is a small stream below this, edged by nettles and other nutrient-tolerant plants, and with patches of brooklime in the stream bed. Piped outfalls and surface water flows from the yard discharge onto the slope above the stream.

Trackside hedges

All hedgerows are classed as Priority Habitat under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. These annually-flailed hedges are of minor ecological significance. The scattered mature trees and the stream are similarly of some minor ecological interest.

Current outflow from yard towards stream

Stream corridor at edge of yard

3.2 Protected species

This blockwork shed held no evidence of bats

There are open-fronted agricultural sheds on the yard which have no suitability for roosting bats. One barn earmarked for removal was subject to a bat scoping assessment. It has concrete blockwork walls and cement fibre-board corrugated roofing sheets. Internally, walls are smooth blockwork with no crevices, and there are no enclosed roof voids below the corrugated sheets. Although bat access would be possible, e.g. through open doors and windows, the building presents no roost spaces. No droppings or other signs of bats were found, and no further survey should be necessary.

The internal space of the barn is unsuited to roosting bats

The site has no potential for any other protected species.

3.3 Invasive Non-Native Species

No invasive species were found.

4. Discussion

4.1 Scheme Details

The development proposal is for improvements to the yard, including a new shed, plant room and wash-bay, and a new office to replace an existing barn.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Protected Sites

Site design, particularly with regards to the proposed wash-bay, should take account of the potential for site run-off to enter the catchment of the Nant Crychiau, which ultimately drains into the Afon Tywi SAC. A treatment system for wash water could entail a wetland filtration system, although locating this on the line of the existing watercourse is not recommended, and creating a root-protection zone around the scattered mature trees would prevent work within the stream corridor here. Piping grey water to a wetland system in the field to the north-east of the yard may be more satisfactory if the wash-bay location permits this.

Potential location for wetland filtration system in field to north-east of yard

4.2.2 Lighting

To reduce or avoid potential impacts on nocturnal wildlife, any security or external lighting associated with the scheme should be minimised. Lights should be downward-directed and hooded to avoid excess light-spill, and on short duration PIR sensors.

4.3 Compliance with Environment Act (Wales) 2016 / Net Biodiversity Gain

A suitably designed wetland treatment system for waste water within the improved grassland field to the north-east of the yard could provide an enhancement for biodiversity as well as a pollution control system. Bird and bat boxes could be incorporated onto or into a new office building. Such measures should be fully detailed in planning drawings, and an accompanying Green Infrastructure statement

5. Summary and Conclusions

Provided best practice is followed in the design and construction process, the proposed development would not present a significant risk to protected species or sites in the area. The proposal should develop a design which demonstrates net biodiversity gain, and detail intended measures in a Green Infrastructure Statement.

6. References

Nature Conservancy Council 1990. *Handbook for Phase I habitat survey*.

Swann (2022) *Bat Survey, Marcholws, Peniel*. Wyndrush Wild report.