6.7

G – Wintering Bird Survey Report

REDSTART

Goat Mill Road Enterprise Park-RIBA Stage 2

Wintering Bird Survey Report

March 2025



GENERAL DISCLAIMER:

This report has been prepared by Redstart in favour of [Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council] ("the Client") and is for the sole use and benefit of the Client in accordance with the agreement between the Client and Redstart under which Redstart's services were performed. Other than in respect of liability which cannot be excluded by law, Redstart accepts no liability to any other party in respect of the contents of this report. This report is confidential and may not be disclosed by the Client or relied on by any other party without the express prior written consent of Redstart.

Whilst care has been taken in the construction of this report, the conclusions and recommendations which it contains are based upon information provided by third parties ("Third Party Information"). Redstart has for the purposes of this report relied upon and assumed that the Third Party Information is accurate and complete and has not independently verified such information for the purposes of this report. Redstart makes no representation, warranty or undertaking (express or implied) in the context of the Third-Party Information and no responsibility is taken or accepted by Redstart for the adequacy, completeness or accuracy of the report in the context of the Third Party Information on which it is based.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION:

Redstart understands and acknowledges the Authority's legal obligations and responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the "Act") and fully appreciates that the Authority may be required under the terms of the Act to disclose any information which it holds. Redstart maintains that the report contains commercially sensitive information that could be prejudicial to the commercial interests of the parties. On this basis Redstart believes that the report should attract exemption from disclosure, at least in the first instance, under Sections 41 and/or 43 of the Act. Redstart accepts that the damage which it would suffer in the event of disclosure of certain of the confidential information would, to some extent, reduce with the passage of time and therefore proposes that any disclosure (pursuant to the Act) of the confidential information contained in the report should be restricted until after the expiry of 24 months from the date of the report.

Quality Management

Job No	70121691		
Project	Goat Mill Road Enterprise Park-RIBA Stage 2		
Location	Goat Mill Road, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf		
Title	Wintering Bird Survey Report		
Document Ref	70121691-RED-74-XX-RP-L-0004	**Issue / Revision**	P01
File reference	70121691-RED-74-XX-RP-L-0004		
Date	March 2025		
Prepared by 1	Trevor Fletcher (Senior Ecologist)	Signature (for file)	
Checked by	Richard Poole (Principal Ecologist)	Signature (for file)	
Authorised by	Geraint Pitman (Associate Director)	Signature (for file)	

Revision Status / History

Rev	Date	Issue / Purpose/ Comment	Prepared	Checked	Authorised
P01	31/03/2025	Issued	TF	RP	GP

Contents

1. Introduction 1
2. Methodology 2
3. Results 5
4. Discussion and evaluation of wintering bird assemblage 9
5. Impact assessment 10
6. Recommendations 12

Drawings

70121691-RED-74-XX-M2-L-3008 - Wintering Bird Survey Results

Appendices

Appendix A - Desk Study Data
Appendix B - Survey Details
Appendix C - Legislation and Conservation Designations
Appendix D - Nature Conservation Value – Definition of Terms
Appendix E - Wintering Bird Species of High and Medium Conservation Concern – County Status

Non-Technical Summary

Site Location	Land north of the A4102 Goat Mill Road, Pen-y-Darren, Merthyr Tydfil (approximate Central Grid Reference (CGR) S0 0617706853).
Proposed Development	Business Enterprise Park.
Purpose of survey/s	Provide a characterisation of the wintering bird assemblage on the Site and surrounding area to inform any constraints wintering birds may present to the proposed development.
Dates of survey and names of surveyors	27 November 2024 - Trevor Fletcher (Senior Ecologist) and Tara Okon (Ecologist). 17 December 2024 - Trevor Fletcher and Tara Okon. 07 February 2025 - Trevor Fletcher and Tara Okon.
Overview of Results	• There were 62 records for 13 bird species returned from the data search for within the last 10 years and up to 1km from the Site. • A total of 33 different bird species were recorded in the Survey Area during the survey, of which eight were recorded as flying over the Survey Area only. • There were 10 species of high conservation concern recorded during the survey, including two Schedule 1 WCA species, red kite and winter visitor redwing, and six species listed on Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) 2016 Act. • There were no wildfowl (swans, geese or ducks) recorded during the survey. • Wader records were confined to a single sighting of a snipe. • Gulls (herring gull and lesser black-backed gull) were predominantly recorded flying over the Survey Area. • Raptors (birds of prey) recorded included red kite, kestrel, buzzard and sparrowhawk. • The Survey Area is of no more than **Local** value for wintering birds.
Mitigation	• Retention of woodland habitat. • Appropriate siting of plant, machinery, compounds and access routes to minimise impact on breeding bird habitat. • Pollution control measures. • Lighting control.
Enhancement	• Habitat such as creation of hedgerow, planting of native fruit/berry bearing trees. • Creation of scrapes/pools to support resident, wintering and migrant bird species.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Redstart was commissioned by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) to undertake a wintering bird survey for the proposed development of a business enterprise park on a parcel of land north of the A4102 Goat Mill Road, Pen-y-Darren, Merthyr Tydfil (approximate Central Grid Reference (CGR) S0 0617706853).

The primary purpose of the survey was to provide a characterisation of the wintering bird assemblage on the Site. The information was gathered to inform any constraints wintering birds may present to the proposed development.

The report includes details of the survey methodology and results and provides recommendations for further survey, compensation, mitigation measures and post-construction monitoring where required.

The area of proposed works is referred to as the 'Site', the wider area covered by the breeding bird survey (a 50m buffer around the Site) is the 'Survey Area'.

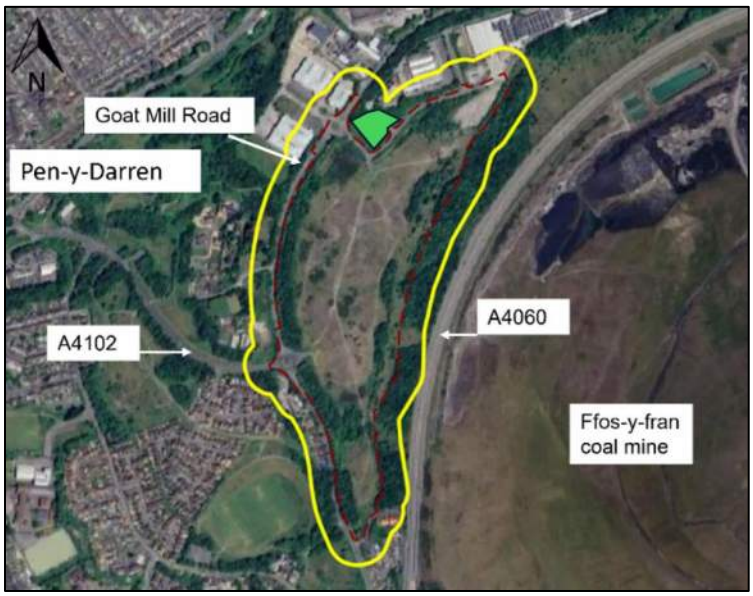
The Site and Survey Area are shown on Figure 1.

1.2 Site Description

The Site is in Pen-y-Darren, east of Merthyr Tydfil. The A4060 is to the east of the Site and to the west and north the A4102 Goat Mill Road and an unclassified road, linking to residential and industrial areas. Land to the east of the A4060 comprises open moorland and former opencast mine workings and associated infrastructure.

The majority of the Site is frequently accessed by recreational walkers / dog walkers and at the time of survey did not appear to be under any active management. During the survey period an area of land was fenced out in the Survey Area, had been cleared of vegetation and was in the process of development.

Figure 1: The Site is outlined in dashed red, the Survey Area in yellow. An ongoing development area is labelled in green. Adapted from Google Earth (Google Earth, 2024). Not to scale.



1.3 Proposed Works

This report has been completed in advance of enabling works on the Site, which will include vegetation clearance and ground investigation works. The long-term vision for the Site is for development of a business enterprise park, comprising mixed use commercial and industrial activities, with individual plots of land within the Site being sold to developers by MTCBC once essential infrastructure is in place.

2. Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

The following resources were accessed for information regarding bird records and species distribution within the Survey Area and the wider landscape.

- South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC, 2024);
- British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Birdtrack (Accessed 13/02/2025);
- The most recent National avifauna - The Birds of Wales (Venables *et al*., 2021);
- The most recent County avifauna - East Glamorgan Bird Report No.61 (Glamorgan Bird Club, 2022).
- A previous wintering bird survey report for the Site for a survey undertaken in 2019 by FPCR on behalf of Sirius Planning Consultants (FPCR, 2020); and
- A wintering bird scoping survey report for the Site for a survey undertaken in 2022 by FPCR on behalf of Sirius Planning Consultants (FPCR, 2022).

Aerial photographs and Ordnance Survey (OS) maps were reviewed to identify areas with potential for waders, wildfowl, gulls and raptors within or adjacent to the Site.

A summary of bird records from the SEWBReC data search is provided in Appendix A.

2.2 Field Survey

A wintering bird walkover survey was undertaken, following the general guidance for surveying non-breeding birds outlined in the Bird Survey and Assessment Steering Group guidance (2023). These guidelines were followed to ensure there was appropriate survey effort, species recorded/mapped, and the timing of visits maximised the potential to detect the full range of wintering birds likely to be encountered through the winter period during daylight hours.

A survey transect was designed to ensure full visual coverage of the Survey Area.

The transect route is shown on Drawing 70121691-RED-74-XX-M2-L-3008.

Taking into account best practice guidelines for surveying non-breeding birds (Bird Survey and Assessment Steering Group,2023) and prior recent knowledge of the habitats present within the Survey Area (Redstart, 2024), a total of three walkover surveys were carried out in November 2024, December 2024 and February 2025.

Full survey details are provided in Appendix B.

During each visit the transect was walked at a slow, steady pace to ensure birds could be detected by sight or sound. Frequent stops were made to scan for birds, using high magnification binoculars.

Surveys were carried out in appropriate weather conditions, avoiding days with high winds, heavy rain or poor visibility; guarding against the possibility of under recording due to suppressed bird activity.

Surveys were carried out by experienced ornithologists with good knowledge and experience of the likely species assemblage for the geographical location and habitat types present.

Adopting Bird Survey and Assessment Steering Group, 2023 guidelines all species encountered were recorded but only mapped for Priority species that were using the Survey Area, defined as,

- Species listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);

- Species listed on Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016;
- Red and Amber listed species on the UK Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC5) list;
- Localised or highly specialised species regardless of inclusion above (e.g., crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra*) in coniferous woodland);
- Nationally or locally declining species regardless of inclusion above (e.g.,chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*));
- Colonial roost sites containing more than one individual of any species; or,
- Exceptional counts or aggregations of any species.

Considering the geographical location of the Survey Area, Red and Amber listed species on the Birds of Conservation Concern in Wales (BoCCW4) list were also included in this report.

Legislation and conservation designations in regard to UK bird species is outlined in Appendix C.

All Priority bird species (as defined above) using the Survey Area, and their approximate location were recorded on either large-scale maps or a GPS enabled device using standard two-letter BTO codes. Bird activity was recorded using standard BTO behaviour codes.

Counts of secondary species were recorded separately as the highest number detected in a distinct location in the Survey Area.

Observations of birds moving high overhead but not using the Site were also summarised.

2.3 Data Analysis

A map was produced showing the distribution of Priority species (as defined in Section 2.2) for the three survey visits.

2.3.1 Conservation Status

Subsequently, each species of bird identified as using the Survey Area during the survey was allocated a level of relative protection status/conservation concern based upon their statutory/non-statutory designation (outlined in Table 1). Further details of these designations for birds are detailed in Appendix A and Appendix D.

Drawing 70121691-RED-74-XX-M2-L-3008 categorises Priority bird species recorded using the Survey area according to their level of conservation concern (i.e., high or medium).

Table 1: Classification levels for birds of conservation concern

Level of conservation concern/protection status	Legislation
High	S1/SPI/UK Red List/Wales Red List
Medium	UK Amber List/Wales Amber List
Low	UK Green List/ Wales Green List

2.3.2 Nature Conservation Value

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidance on Ecological Impact Assessment (CIEEM, 2024) assesses nature conservation value within a geographical context. To attain a particular value level a species population or assemblage of species should meet the criteria outlined in Appendix D.

The level of nature conservation value for a species was informed by the nature conservation status of each species and county level data taken from the most recently published East Glamorgan Bird Report (Glamorgan Bird Club, 2022). Details for county level designations for species of high and medium conservation concern are provided in Appendix E.

Wintering species recorded during the survey were compared to these criteria and assigned to the appropriate nature conservation value level.

An assessment of conservation status, in combination with nature conservation value of a species/species assemblage, together with spatial analysis/behaviour of wintering birds across the Survey Area, enables evaluation of the likely impact of the development on wintering birds.

2.4 Survey Constraints

No survey method for species where there is imperfect detection can assure a full species list. It is unlikely, given the survey method used and the similarity of results from the survey and previous reports reviewed for the desk study, that any wintering species that would alter the evaluation for any impact assessment have been overlooked.

Part of the Survey Area could not be directly accessed (see Figure 1), however it was possible to view this area through the perimeter fencing and therefore there was no significant constraint to recording the presence of wintering birds.

Where third party data is referred to, for example from online searches and Biodiversity Record Centre data, Redstart cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the information.

The length of time that the survey data remains valid will depend on a case-by-case basis, but it is generally considered that if the proposed works do not commence within two years of the date of the survey in this report an update may be required (CIEEM, 2019).

3. Results

3.1 Desk Data

A desk study was undertaken for the Site to inform a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (Redstart, 2024). Information relevant to this wintering bird report was reviewed and is summarised as follows.

3.1.1 Designated Sites

No International or National statutory designated sites were recorded within a 2km radius of the Site. Statutory designated sites will not be discussed further in this report.

3.1.2 Non-designated Sites

There were two non-statutory designated sites, both Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) within a 2km radius of the Site; Glynmil SINC was 790m south-southeast of the most southerly extent of the Site, and Merthyr Common South SINC 820m southeast of the southerly extent. Both SINC sites have habitat suitable for a range of bird species, the only specific reference to birds in the SINC designations was for the Merthyr Common South SINC, described as 'important for a range of ground nesting birds and the presence of peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) on high cliffs to the south'.

3.1.3 Habitats

A range of habitats with suitability for wintering birds were recorded during the Phase 1 habitat survey conducted in February 2024 to inform a PEA report (Redstart, 2024), including plantation woodland, scattered trees, scrub, grassland, marsh/marshy grassland and bare ground.

Habitat likely to support significant numbers of wildfowl, waders or gulls was not present on Site (e.g., large waterbodies or areas of pasture).

3.1.4 Bird Records

The SEWBReC dataset was filtered for records of wintering birds between November and February inclusive for the last 10 years and within 1km of the Site. Where a specific date for a sighting was unavailable, all species unlikely to be present (e, g., summer migrant visitors) were filtered out of the search.

A total of 62 records for 13 species of protected and priority birds were returned from the filtered SEWBReC data, including one Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 1 (WCA1) species red kite (*Milvus milvus*).

There were four bird species recorded within approximately 500m of the Site in the data search, red kite, bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and house sparrow (*Passer domesticus)*. The closest record was for Schedule 1 species red kite, 127m from the Site CGR.

A total of seven Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Section 7 (S7) listed priority species were recorded from the SEWBReC data search within a 1km radius, including bullfinch, house sparrow, skylark and starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). The closest S7 record was for bullfinch approximately 480m from the Site.

The BTO Birdtrack database returned no bird sighting records for the Survey Area within the month prior to 13 February 2025. The closest record (two red kite on 22 January 2025) was from approximately 1.5km north of the Survey Area.

A summary of the SEWBReC dataset for birds is shown in Appendix A.

3.2 Previous Wintering Bird Survey

A wintering bird survey of the Site was undertaken in 2019 by FPCR on behalf of Sirius Planning Consultants (FPCR, 2020). Survey effort was limited to one visit, carried out outside of the generally accepted time period for wintering bird surveys, in March 2020. A total of 26 species were recorded. The Site was assessed as being of no more than **local** value for wintering birds.

A further single visit scoping survey was carried out on the Site on 14 January 2022 (FPCR, 2022) where a total of 20 species were detected. This total included three amber listed species of medium conservation concern and S7 Priority species dunnock (*Prunella modularis*). The report concluded that the 'site provides limited resources for birds'.

3.3 Field Survey

3.3.1 Habitats

Habitats across the Site and wider Survey Area had suitability to support a range of resident species of bird, including Priority species, but were not likely to support significant numbers of wildfowl, waders or gulls due to an absence of suitable habitat such as large waterbodies or areas of pasture that could be used for feeding, bathing and resting.

The central area of the Site comprised semi-improved grassland and areas of bare ground, interspersed with stands of willow species (*Salix* sp.), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) scrub that could be used by passerine species for shelter and feeding in winter.

The northwest corner of the Site had an area of marsh / marshy grassland, fed by an engineered stream that had potential to support low numbers of waders such as snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) and jack snipe (*Lymnocryptes minimus*).

Engineered watercourses were also present in the south of the Site and had potential to provide feeding opportunities for species such as grey wagtail (*Motacilla cineria*).

Plantation woodland was dominant along the eastern margin of the Site, with semi-natural broadleaved woodland forming the western boundary, woodland areas had potential to support a wide range of species, including winter visitors such as redwing (*Turdus iliacus*) to feed and shelter/roost.

Although there were no buildings within the Site, residential housing to the south had potential to support species with an affinity to buildings (e.g. starling and house sparrow) and industrial units outside of the Survey Area to the north and northeast had features suitable for gull species to roost and loaf.

3.3.2 Birds

A total of 33 bird species were recorded in the Survey Area, eight of these species were recorded as flying over the Survey Area only.

Species of High Conservation Concern

There were 10 species of high conservation concern recorded during the survey, including two Schedule 1 WCA species, red kite and winter visitor redwing, and six species listed in Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) 2016 Act.

Species of Medium Conservation Concern

There were seven species of medium conservation concern recorded during the survey including green woodpecker (*Picus viridis*), coal tit (*Periparus ater*), wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) and woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*) that were occasionally noted using the Survey Area.

Species of Low Conservation Concern

Species of low conservation concern accounted for 16 of the 33 species recorded during the survey.

Raptors

Red kite was the most frequently recorded raptor, seen on all three surveys and invariably seen flying over the eastern boundary of the Survey Area and then flying east where they were lost to view. A maximum of four were seen together during the February survey.

Section 7 Priority species kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) was recorded during the November 2024 survey, hunting over the southern part of the Site. The bird was mobbed by corvids and flew away to the south soon after arriving on the Site.

Common raptor species buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) was recorded on the eastern boundary of the Survey Area, where two birds were noted together during the February visit in a location where breeding was recorded as probable during the 2024 breeding season (Redstart, 2025).

A sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) was recorded flying over the northern area of the Site during the February visit.

Wildfowl (Swans, Geese and Ducks)

There were no species of wildfowl recorded using the Survey Area, or flying over during the survey.

Waders

Records for waders were confined to a single record for snipe during the February survey visit. The bird was accidentally flushed from an area of marshy grassland and flew away high to the southwest.

Gulls

Large gull species herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) and lesser black-backed gull (*Larus fuscus*) were recorded during all three visits. The birds were recorded flying high over the Survey Area, with a maximum total of 250 birds, and most frequently flying from south to north. On one occasion several herring gulls were recorded flying low over the Site, appearing to be checking out potential food resources on the ground (either carrion or discarded takeaway food items) that were being eaten by magpie (*Pica pica*).

A full list of bird species recorded during the wintering bird survey is presented in Table 2 along with their relative levels of conservation concern, statutory and non-statutory designation and assigned conservation value level.

Table 2 also provides a level of conservation concern and nature conservation value of wintering species using the Survey Area, with a peak count for all species either using or flying over the area where notable.

Species not identified as being on the Red or Amber lists in Table 2, or are not S7 species, are all Green-listed species of low conservation concern.

Table 2: The conservation designation and recorded activity of all bird species detected during the wintering bird survey

English vernacular name	Scientific name	WACA Schedule 1	SPI Wales	UK Red List	UK Amber List	Wales Red list	Wales Amber list	Activity	Conservation concern of wintering species (if using Survey Area)	Nature conservation value of wintering species (if using Survey Area)	Peak count (where notable)
Feral pigeon	*Columba livia*							Fly- over only.	-	-	
Woodpigeon	*Columba palumbus*				*			Using woodland to shelter/ rest.	Medium	Local	
Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*				*		*	Roosting in marshy grassland. One bird on one occasion.	Medium	Site	
Herring gull	*Larus argentatus*		*	*		*		Fly-over only.	-	-	c.250
Lesser black-backed gull	*Larus fuscus*				*		*	Flying over only.	-	-	c.30
Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*				*			Fly -over on one occasion.	Medium	Local	
Red kite	*Milvus milvus*	*						Fly-over only.	-	-	4
Buzzard	*Buteo buteo*							Resting in woodland. Pair seen on one occasion in previous breeding location.	Low	Local	
Great spotted woodpecker	*Dendrocopos major*							Feeding / shelter in Survey Area.	Low	Site	
Green woodpecker	*Picus viridis*						*	Feeding in Survey Area	Medium	Local	
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*		*		*	*		One bird hunting on Site on one occasion.	High	Local	
Jay	*Garrulus glandarius*							Using woodland/ fly over Site.	Low	Site	
Magpie	*Pica pica*						*	Ranging over Survey Area, feeding on Site.	Medium	Local	
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*							Flying over only.	-	-	
Carrion crow	*Corvus corone*							Mainly flying over, occasionally using woodland to rest.	Low	Site	
Raven	*Corvus corax*							Fly-over.	-	-	
Coal Tit	*Periparus ater*						*	Feeding, shelter in Survey Area.	Medium	Local	
Blue tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*							Feeding, shelter in Survey Area.	Low	Site	
Great tit	*Parus major*							Feeding, shelter in Survey Area.	Low	Site	
Skylark	*Alauda arvensis*		*	*			*	One recorded using marshy grassland to rest on one occasion.	High	Local	
Long-tailed tit	*Aegithalos caudatus*							Small flock feeding / commuting through woodland in Survey Area.	Low	Site	
Goldcrest	*Regulus regulus*					*		Feeding/ resting in scrub and woodland in Survey Area.	High	Local	
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*				*			Feeding/ resting in scrub and woodland in Survey Area.	Medium	Local	
Treecreeper	*Certhia familiaris*							Once in woodland in Survey Area.	Low	Site	
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*							Feeding, sheltering in woodland and occasional flight across Site.	Low	Site	
Redwing	*Turdus iliacus*	*						Feeding, sheltering in woodland. Low numbers on one occasion.	High	Site	
Mistle thrush	*Turdus viscivorus*			*			*	Mainly fly overs, occasionally using woodland in Survey Area.	High	Local	
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*							Using woodland and scrub across Survey Area.	Low	Site	
Dunnock	*Prunella modularis*		*		*		*	Occasionally in scrub on Site.	High	Local	
Pied wagtail	*Motacilla alba*							Flying over -one on one occasion.	-	-	
Chaffinch	*Fringilla coelebs*						*	Recorded in woodland feeding, sheltering.	Medium	Local	
Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*		*		*			Occasionally calling from scrub and woodland.	High	Local	
Lesser redpoll	*Acanthis cabaret*		*	*			*	Small numbers feeding/ commuting around Site, often in mixed species flocks.	High	Local	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*							Frequent small flocks across Survey Area, mainly feeding in deciduous trees.	Low	Site	
Siskin	*Spinus spinus*							Flock of up to c.60 birds, feeding in woodland and commuting around Survey Area.	Low	Site	c.60

4. Discussion and Evaluation of Wintering Bird Assemblage

4.1 Designated Sites

Neither of the two SINC sites located within 1km of the Site are likely to be impacted by the proposed development as the closest was 790m south south-east of the Site.

4.2 Desk Study

The desk study returned a relatively low number of wintering bird species (13), including two WCA1 species. This low diversity of species is likely a consequence of under recording in the 1km radius around the Site.

Although habitat on Site may have some suitability for the occasional presence of gulls and wildfowl the lack of suitable resting, bathing or feeding locations such as large waterbodies or pasture make it unlikely that significant numbers would be present.

Wader species recorded in the desk study, such as snipe could use the relatively small area of marshy grassland on the Site to shelter, roost and feed but are unlikely to be present in significant numbers due to daytime disturbance, mainly dogs off leads, consistently observed during the three survey visits.

4.3 Survey

The wintering bird assemblage recorded during the survey comprised species that are common and widespread throughout the Eastern Glamorgan recording area which incorporates the Site, this includes all the species of high and medium conservation concern recorded during the survey.

The likelihood of the Site to support wintering species was considerably reduced by use of the Site by recreational walkers/dog walkers, which included frequent use by a search and rescue group using the Site to train several dogs at a time (pers. comm., discussion between Trevor Fletcher and member of public on Site on 17/12/2024, and direct observation of activity) which would discourage gulls, wildfowl, waders from using the area to rest during the day.

Corvids, gulls and raptor species such as red kite were noted flying over the Site but not utilising it for rest, shelter or feeding, the exception being occasional observation during surveys of a few corvids consuming discarded takeaway food items on Site.

The central area of grassland and scattered scrub supported a limited number of wintering species such as commonly occurring passerines dunnock and wren. These species were recorded in low numbers and infrequently and were likely to be accessing the scrub for feeding and sheltering.

The woodland margins of the Survey Area held the greatest diversity and concentration of wintering birds, all were commonly occurring species in Eastern Glamorgan. There were no flocks of species of high or medium conservation concern recorded.

4.4 Wintering Bird Assemblage

It is considered that the Survey Area is of no more than **Local** value for wintering birds (see Appendix D) based upon the presence of a wide range of wintering species, including those of high and medium conservation concern, but where no species were present in, or near to, county important numbers. There were no wildfowl or gulls recorded using the Site and use by raptors was limited to a single record of kestrel attempting to hunt on the Site, a pair of buzzard, probably holding territory in woodland in the Survey Area but outside the Site boundary, and a flyover sparrowhawk.

5. Impact Assessment

The assessment of likely impact on wintering bird species arising from the proposed development is based on;

- An understanding of individual species ecological requirements.
- Number and location of species across the Survey Area.
- Extent of suitable habitat outside the Survey Area, in the wider landscape.
- Conservation status based upon legislation (S1/SPI) and current non-statutory designations (Red/Amber/Green listed BoCC5 and BoCCW4).
- Likely location and extent of works and associated siting of plant and access routes pre-and during construction, and;
- Overall design of the works, including lighting and landscaping.

It should be noted that, as no final design for the works was available at the time of writing this report, the potential impacts presented in the following section are a broad outline and may need to be refined/reviewed as the programme is refined.

5.1 Potential Impacts

Potential impacts on wintering bird species as a result of the works include, but are not confined to the following;

Direct mortality, habitat loss (foraging, shelter and roosting) and fragmentation, degradation of habitats and increased disturbance (e.g., lighting, noise, air pollution).

The effects of these potential impacts include but are not limited to; reduced species abundance, reduced species richness, and loss of wintering habitat.

The potential impacts of the works and their likely magnitude as discussed; are based upon no mitigation measures being applied.

5.1.1 Habitat Clearance, Loss and Fragmentation

Removal of habitat (vegetation and ground clearance) will be required to facilitate the enabling works. If work is carried out during the winter there could be disturbance and loss of habitat for small numbers of bird species such as snipe using marshy grassland, and common passerines foraging and sheltering in scrub and woodland.

Short-term displacement of small numbers of bird species with potential for presence during winter within the Survey Area, including species of high and medium conservation concern such as dunnock, wren, chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) and woodpigeon is likely to occur.

The presence of suitable wintering habitat in the surrounding landscape and the common/locally common status of wintering species, indicates that in the worst case there would be a dispersal of these species away from the Site into readily available nearby suitable habitat.

The adverse impact of habitat loss is likely to be low in the short-term and low to negligible in the long-term for the species recorded at the local scale as there is an abundance of suitable habitat within the wider landscape. Impacts are likely to be relatively minor if woodland corridors are retained as most of the species recorded using the Survey Area were in the woodland on the eastern and western boundaries, with very little use of the main grassland area which formed the majority of the Site.

5.1.2 Disturbance from Construction Work

Construction work will likely require additional lighting. Noise levels will increase and there is the likelihood of air pollution from dust and exhaust fumes created by plant and machinery.

Disturbance, if works are carried out in winter, is likely to lead to avoidance of, and displacement from, construction areas and their vicinity by birds.

It is likely that if the woodland bounding the Site to the east and west is retained (as is anticipated) there will be no long-term impact on the species recorded, or their abundance. There may be a short-term dispersal away from the Site during the construction phase, but recolonisation of retained habitat is anticipated in the operational phase of the development.

Impact is likely to be moderate in the short-term and low to negligible in the long-term for wintering bird species recorded in the Survey Area.

5.1.3 Pollution

There are hydrological pathways between the Site and the wider landscape (i.e. culverts draining from the Site, under Goat Mill Road and continuing to the east), pollution run-off has the potential to have a localised adverse impact in the short-term, although it should be noted that most waterbodies to the east of the Site are associated with a former open cast mining site and are likely to be impacted by extant pollution.

Long-term impacts through pollution are likely to be low once works are completed.

5.1.4 Lighting

In the short-term additional lighting is likely to be required for health and safety and security. If lighting is not controlled and directional, spill onto suitable roosting and sheltering habitat such as retained woodland could cause disturbance to wintering birds using the Survey Area.

The most likely long-term impact on wintering birds in the absence of mitigation would be additional lighting in the operational phase that, if not directed away from retained woodland habitat, could cause disturbance to species using the habitat to roost and expose them to increased risk of predation.

The potential short-term and long-term impacts and likely magnitude of impact discussed are based upon no mitigation measures being applied.

If recommendations for mitigation, compensation and enhancement detailed in section 6 are followed, the magnitude of the adverse impacts on all species recorded as wintering, both short and long term, will be reduced and the proposed works will also be compliant with relevant wildlife legislation.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Mitigation

6.1.1 Habitat Retention

The retention of woodland habitat on the eastern and western boundaries of the Site is to be encouraged as this habitat held the overwhelming majority of wintering birds within the Survey Area.

Retention of woodland will continue to provide wintering habitat for a wide range of species and provide a habitat corridor for birds (and other species) which links to the wider environment.

Preserving marshy ground in the northwest extent of the Site (or on-site compensation for its loss) is also recommended as this provided roosting habitat for low numbers of wintering species such as snipe and skylark.

6.1.2 Siting of Plant, Compounds, and Access Routes

An ecologist with ornithological experience will be consulted prior to any construction of access routes, siting of plant, machinery, or compounds to minimise loss or disturbance of suitable wintering habitat and species.

6.1.3 Pollution Control

Standard best practice and pollution control measures must be implemented in accordance with relevant guidance (e.g., CIRIA, 2001 and Environment Agency (2018). Guidelines for Pollution Prevention (GPP), particularly GPP 5 Works and maintenance in or near water, outlined in NetRegs (2018) to ensure that watercourses on site e.g., ponds and drainage channels, are not directly or indirectly adversely affected by silt, dust, uncontrolled surface water run-off, inappropriate storage of materials and/or inappropriate refuelling of machinery.

These measures must be detailed in a Risk Management Plan/Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

All materials (especially if hazardous or toxic) must be stored securely at least 7m away from the watercourse.

All static machinery must be placed on drip-trays or oil absorbent nappies. Trays should be emptied regularly to ensure that they contain any spills.

Refuelling of machinery should not be carried out on site.

6.1.4 Lighting

Any temporary or permanent lighting plan must ensure that light spill onto woodland edge habitat is avoided to minimise the impact on sheltering and roosting birds.

6.2 Enhancement

Planning Policy Wales (12th Ed., 2024) states that, ‘planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity.’

6.2.1 Habitat Enhancement

Where woodland is removed, re-planting with native tree species on a 3:1 basis is recommended (Welsh Government, 2024), this would maintain and enhance habitat for woodland bird species. Consideration should be given to creating new hedgerow habitat within the Site as part of the landscape masterplan. Planting of a wide range of locally sourced, native species would provide shelter, roosting and feeding resources in the winter months.

Planting of native fruit or winter berry bearing trees within the Site would also provide food resources for a range of bird species.

Improvement of marshy grassland area for birds could be carried out and/or incorporation of features near new attenuation ponds. Measures could include creation of shallow scrapes and pools to provide feeding and drinking resources for resident and migrant bird species using the Site in winter, and other seasons.

Note: *The recommendations made in this report should be considered alongside recommendations for faunal species and habitats in other reports in respect to these works.*

References

Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group. (2024). Bird Survey Guidelines for assessing ecological impacts, https://birdsurveyguidelines.org

BTO Birdtrack.https://app.bto.org/birdtrack/grid-refs/list-grid-species-new.jsp [Accessed:13 February 2025].

CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM (2019) Advice note on the Lifespan of Ecological and Surveys Reports (Accessed online – 09.01.2025 at http //: cieem.net).

Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

FPCR (2021) Ecological Appraisal-Land off Goat Mill Road, Merthyr Tydfil. Sirius Planning.

FPCR (2022) Ecology Response-Land off Goat Mill Road, Merthyr Tydfil. Sirius Planning.

Gilbert, G., Gibbons, D.W., Evans, J. (1998) Bird monitoring methods. RSPB, Sandy, Bedfordshire.

Goodship, N.M. and Furness, R.W. (2022) Disturbance Distances Review: An updated literature review of disturbance distances of selected bird species. A report from MacArthur Green to NatureScot.

Google Earth (2024).

East Glamorgan Bird Club (GBC) (2024) Bird Report Vol.61 2022.Online at www.glamorganbirds.org.uk

Johnstone, I.G., Hughes, J., Balmer, D.E., Brenchley, A., Facey, R.J., Lindley, P.J., Noble, P.G., and Taylor, R.C. (2022). Birds of Conservation Concern in Wales 4: the population status of birds in Wales. Milvus: The Journal of the Welsh Ornithological Society.

NetRegs (2018) Best Practice Guidelines (GPP) -Works and maintenance in or near water: GPP5 Available at http://www.netregs.org.uk/environmental-topics/pollution-prevention-guidelines-ppgs-and-replacement-series/ Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPPs) – Full list: https://www.netregs.org.uk/environmental-topics/guidance-for-pollution-prevention-gpp-documents/ [Accessed July 2024]

Redstart (2024) Goat Mill Road RIBA Stage 2 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) Report

Redstart (2025) Goat Mill Road RIBA Stage 2 Breeding Bird Survey Report

Stanbury, A., Eaton, M.A., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., Mulloch, N., Noble, D., and Win, I. (2021) Birds of Conservation Concern 5: The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isles of Man and second IUCN red list assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. British Birds 114, 723-747.

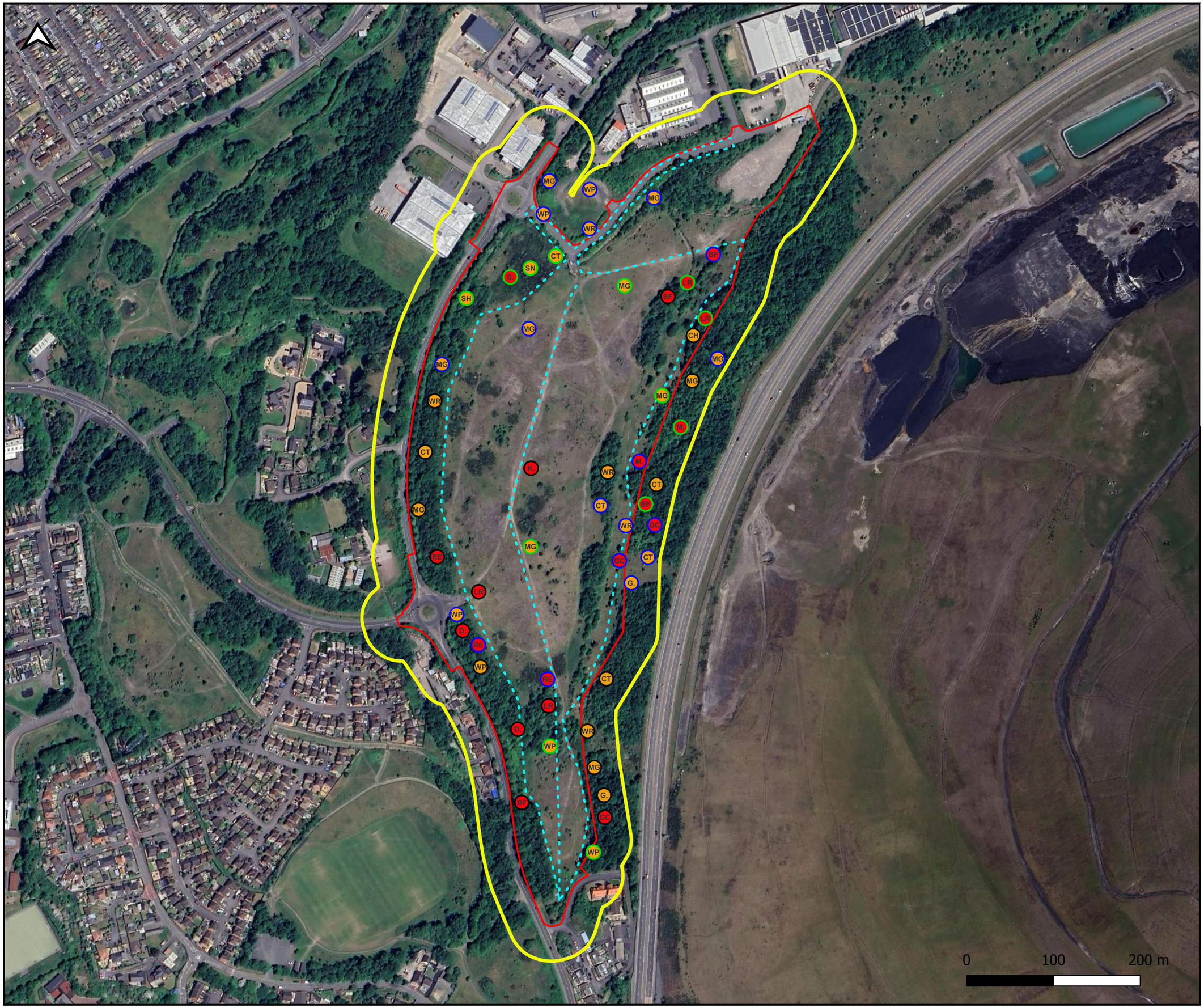
South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) (2024) Goat Mill Road, Merthyr [LERC Reference:0234-889].

Welsh Government (2024). Planning Policy Wales. Edition 12. [Online]. [Accessed September 2024]. Available at: http://www.gov.uk

Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended).

Drawings

- 70121691-RED-74-XX-M2-L-3006 Wintering Bird Survey Map



Key

- Site
- Survey Area
- Transect Route

Level of Conservation Concern

- High (Sch1/S7/BoCCUK5 Red/ BoCCW4 Red)
- Medium (BoCCUK5 Amber/ BoCCW4 Amber)

Survey 1

- High
- Medium

Survey 2

- High
- Medium

Survey 3

- High
- Medium

P01 TO TF GP First Issue. 16/04/2025

Purpose of issue
S2 - Issued for Information

Classification
Public

Client
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Project
Goatmill Road RIBA Stage 2

Drawing Title
Wintering Bird Survey Results

Drawn TO Checked TF Approved GP

Project No	Date	Scale	Size
70121691	March 2025	1:3,700	A3

Drawing identifier Revision: P01
70121691-RED-74-XX-M2-L-3008

REDSTART
Quest House, St Mellons Business Park, Fortran Rd, St. Mellons, Cardiff, CF3 0EY
www.redstartwales.com

© 2025 Microsoft Corporation © 2025 Maxar © CNES (2025) Distribution Airbus DS

Appendix A - Desk Study Data

SEWBReC Data Summary

Protected and Priority bird species within 1km of the Site

Protected/priority bird species records returned from SEWBReC (within the last 10 years, between November and February inclusive and within 1km of the Site) are provided in the following table.

Common name	Scientific name	Legislation/ conservation status	No. of records	Most recent record
Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*	S7, WBR(RSPB), UKBAm(RSPB)	3	2021
Dunnock	*Prunella modularis*	S7, Bern, UKBAm(RSPB)	6	2021
House sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	S7, WBAm(RSPB), UKBR(RSPB)	15	2021
Red kite	*Milvus milvus*	BDir1, WCA1.1, WCA9, CITES, WBAm(RSPB)	4	February 2020
Skylark	*Alauda arvensis*	BDir22, S7, Bern, WBAm	9	2021
Song thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	BDir22, S7, Bern, WBAm	9	2021

Species of conservation concern within 2km of the Site

Records returned from SEWBReC (within the last 10 years and within 1km of the Site for species of conservation concern between November and February inclusive) are provided in the following table.

Common name	Scientific name	Legislation/ conservation status	No. of records	Most recent record
Lesser black-backed gull	*Larus fuscus*	BDir22, WBAm(RSPB), UKBAm(RSPB)	2	2021
Long-tailed tit	*Aegithalos caudatus*	WBAm(RSPB)	6	2021
Meadow pipit	*Anthus pratensis*	Bern, WBAm(RSPB), UKBAm(RSPB)	2	2019
Mistle thrush	*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*	Bern, WBAm(RSPB), UKBAm(RSPB)	5	2021
Tufted duck	*Aythya fuligula*	BDir21, WBAm(RSPB)	8	February 2014

Appendix B - Survey Details

Details of the three wintering bird survey visits

Survey/ Surveyors	Date	Start time	Finish time	Survey conditions
1/Trevor Fletcher and Tara Okon	27/11/2024	09:50	12:10	**Temp (°C):** 4 **Cloud (Oktas):** 8 **Wind (Beaufort):** 2 **Precipitation:** None **Visibility:** Very good
2/Trevor Fletcher and Tara Okon	17/12/2024	09:10	11:25	**Temp (°C):** 10 **Cloud (Oktas):** 8 **Wind (Beaufort):** 2 **Precipitation:** None **Visibility:** Good
3/ Trevor Fletcher and Tara Okon	07/02/2025	09:10	11:10	**Temp (°C):**2 at start, 3 at finish **Cloud (Oktas):**8 **Wind (Beaufort):** 2,occasionally gusting to 3 **Precipitation:** None **Visibility:** Very good

Key: *Cloud: scale 0 - 8, 0 = clear skies, 4 = 50% cover, 8 = complete cloud cover*

Wind: Beaufort scale 0 – 12, 0 = calm, 2 = light breeze, 4 = moderate breeze, 6 = strong breeze, 7 = high wind, 9 = strong gale, 12 = hurricane

Appendix C - Legislation and Conservation Designations

Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC)

Annex 1 of the Birds Directive lists species and sub-species which are:

- in danger of extinction;
- vulnerable to specific changes in their habitat;
- considered rare because of small populations or restricted local distribution;
- requiring particular attention for reasons of the specific nature of habitat.

For these species Member States must conserve their most suitable territories in number and size as Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Species listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive include kingfisher and red kite.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 1

All naturally occurring British bird species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The legislation protects all birds, their nests and eggs and it is an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure and take any wild bird;
- intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; or
- intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

Birds listed on Schedule 1 of the above legislation (e.g. kingfisher and red kite) are afforded further protection and it is an offence to:

- intentionally or recklessly disturb the bird while nest building or while at (or near) a nest with eggs or young; or disturb dependent young of such a bird.

Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act has replaced the Section 42 of the NERC Act 2006 in Wales. Section 7 lists the living organisms and types of habitat in Wales which are considered to be of key significance to sustain and improve biodiversity in relation to Wales.

The Act states that Welsh Ministers must take all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance the living organisms and types of habitat included in any list published under this section and encourage others to take such steps.

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12) 2024

Planning Policy Wales 12 (PPW12) states that the Planning system has a key role in reversing biodiversity decline and should ensure a Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) and ecosystem resilience.

Measures to ensure biodiversity enhancement must follow a stepwise approach (i.e., avoid, minimise, mitigate and, as a last resort, compensate for biodiversity loss). This approach should be clearly demonstrated in a Green Infrastructure Statement and follow the DECCA Framework (i.e. Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Adaptability).

Section 6.4.37 of PPW12 outlines the high biodiversity importance of trees, woodland and hedgerow, promoting planting as part of development.

Red and Amber Lists

Red-listed bird species are those which:

- Are globally threatened;
- Have suffered a historical population decline in the UK during 1800–1995;
- Have suffered a severe (at least 50%) decline in the UK breeding population over the last 25 years, or longer-term period (the entire period used for assessments since the first review, starting in 1969);
- Have suffered a severe (at least 50%) contraction of the UK breeding range over the last 25 years, or the longer-term period;

Amber-listed bird species are those which:

- Have unfavourable conservation status in Europe (SPEC = Species of European Conservation Concern)
- Have suffered a historical population decline during 1800–1995, but recovering; population size has more than doubled over last 25 years
- Have suffered a moderate (25-49%) decline in the UK breeding population over the last 25 years, or the longer-term period
- Have suffered a moderate (25-49%) contraction of the UK breeding range over last 25 years, or the longer-term period
- Have suffered a moderate (25-49%) decline in the UK non-breeding population over last 25 years, or the longer-term period
- Are rare breeders; 1–300 breeding pairs in UK
- Are rare non-breeders; less than 900 individuals
- Are localised; at least 50% of the UK breeding or non-breeding population in 10 or fewer sites, but not applied to rare breeders or non-breeders
- Are internationally important; at least 20% of European breeding or non-breeding population in UK (NW European and East Atlantic Flyway populations used for non-breeding wildfowl and waders respectively).

Appendix D - Nature Conservation Value – Definition of Terms

The examples selected for each Nature Conservation Value level are for general guidance and other considerations may apply, for example species of low value in isolation but subject to widespread national decline may be afforded higher Nature Conservation Values in some cases. The Nature Conservation Value levels are adapted from CIEEM (2016) and have been outlined to be specific to birds.

Nature Conservation Value	Selection Criteria (examples)
International	Species cited as part of a SPA and which regularly occurs in internationally or nationally important numbers (i.e. >1% of international population.
National	Species cited as part of a SSSI and which regularly occurs in nationally or regionally important numbers. A nationally important assemblage of breeding or overwintering species. A species present in nationally important numbers (i.e. >1% of UK population). Rare breeding species (<300 breeding pairs in UK).
Regional	Section 7 priority species not covered above and regularly occurring in regionally important numbers. (>1% of regional population). Species on BoCCW3 and /or BoCCUK4 Red list and regularly occurring in regionally important numbers.
County/Metropolitan	Section 7 priority species not covered above and regularly occurring in county important numbers (>1% of county population). Species on the BoCCW3 and /or BoCCUK4 and regularly occurring in county important numbers.
District	Section 7 species not covered above and are rare in the locality. Species present in just short of county important numbers. Sustainable populations of rare or scarce species in the locality.
Local	Other section 7 species not covered above and species on the Red and Amber BoCCW4/BoCCUK5 lists regularly occurring in locally sustainable populations.
Site	All other BoCCW4 and /or BoCCUK5 Green listed common and widespread species. Low numbers of Amber or Red listed species.

Appendix E - Wintering Bird Species of High and Medium Conservation Concern – County Status

Status of wintering birds taken from most recent County avifauna-East Glamorgan Bird Report number 61 (Glamorgan Bird Club, 2022).

Common name	Scientific name	Status in East Glamorgan
Woodpigeon	*Columba palumbus*	Common resident breeder.
Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	Common winter visitor and passage migrant.
Herring gull	*Larus argentatus*	Common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant.
Lesser black-backed gull	*Larus fuscus*	Common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant.
Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*	Common resident breeder.
Red kite	*Milvus milvus*	Locally common resident in the north of recording area and rare breeder.
Green woodpecker	*Picus viridis*	Common resident breeder.
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	Common resident breeder.
Magpie	*Pica pica*	Common resident breeder.
Coal tit	*Periparus ater*	Locally common resident breeder.
Skylark	*Alauda arvensis*	Common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant.
Goldcrest	*Regulus regulus*	Common winter visitor and passage migrant though numbers can be depleted due to harsh winters.
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	Common resident breeder.
Redwing	*Turdus iliacus*	Common winter visitor and passage migrant.
Mistle thrush	*Turdus viscivorus*	Common resident breeder.
Dunnock	*Prunella modularis*	Common resident breeder.
Chaffinch	*Fringilla coelebs*	Common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant.
Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*	Common resident breeder.
Lesser redpoll	*Acanthis cabaret*	Locally common resident breeder, winter visitor and passage migrant

REDSTART

Quest House,
St Mellons Business Park,
Fortran Rd,
St. Mellons,
Cardiff,
CF3 0EY

www.redstartwales.com