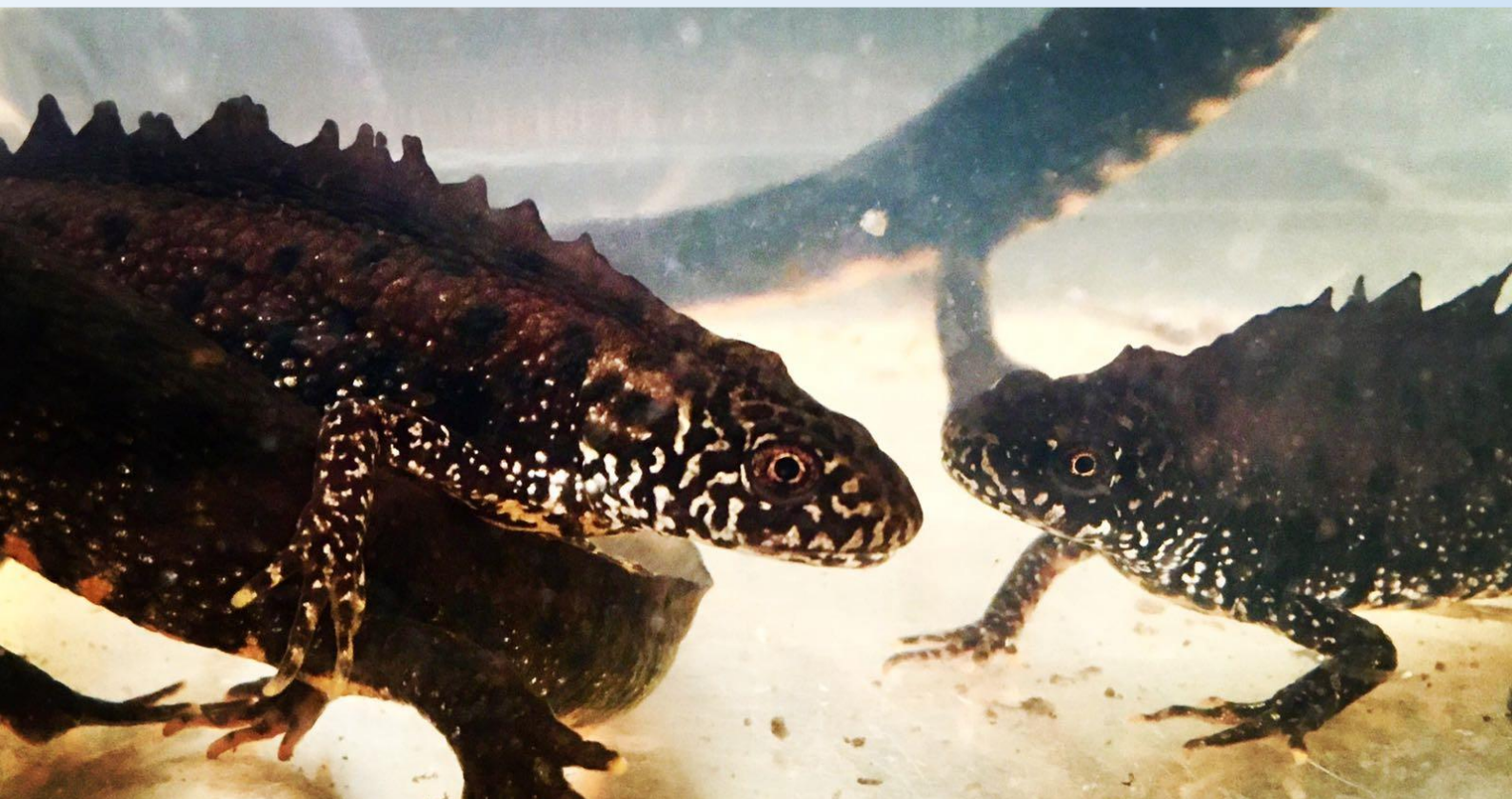




Parc Ynni Calon y Gwynt

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Appendix 5I: Great Crested Newt Survey Report





Parc Ynni Calon y Gwynt

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Appendix 5I: Great Crested Newt Survey Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wind2 Ltd commissioned WSP UK Ltd to undertake Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) surveys to establish whether they are present or likely to be absent at the proposed Parc Ynni Calon Y Gwynt (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'). The location of the Proposed Development, hereafter referred to as 'Site', is on the hills to the north of the A470 trunk road, centred on NGR: SO 001 983.

It is understood that the Proposed Development will comprise 11 wind turbine locations, a construction compound, substation and tracks. In addition, a battery storage area will be incorporated into the Proposed Development.

Previous ecological surveys identified suitable breeding habitats present within the Site as well as suitable habitats for foraging and commuting GCN.

A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment and Environmental DNA (eDNA) assessment of all accessible waterbodies was undertaken between 2024 – 2026 in accordance with the standard approach developed by Oldham et al.¹ and refined by Amphibian and Reptile Groups UK².

Following the positive eDNA result for one waterbody, Pond 2 (P2), a population size class assessment was carried out in 2026. Peak adult counts indicated a small population size class was present within this pond.

If the buffer zone of 250 m around P2 cannot be avoided during works, then a licence from NRW be obtained to proceed lawfully.

The data within this report represents a robust assessment of GCN population within the ponds on Site at the time of survey but there is potential for populations to change prior to commencement of the Proposed Development.

GCN are also likely to be using the Site for refuge, foraging and / or commuting. It is recommended that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is produced, which will include the covering of excavations at night (or provision of an escape route), night working restrictions, restrictions on light spill onto habitats that may be used by GCN, pollution prevention measures in accordance with best practice guidelines, noise, vibration and dust control measures, and biosecurity measures.

¹ Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S., and Jeffcote M. (2000) Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the great crested newt. *Herpetological Journal* 10: 143-155

² ARG UK (2010, updated 2024). Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Guidance. Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK.



The CEMP will be delivered under a GCN licence in Wales, issued by Natural Resources Wales. This will comprise an application including Site and Proposed Development details, a reasoned statement addressing the legal tests, and a detailed method statement outlining how impacts to GCN will be avoided, mitigated, or compensated. It will be supported by the survey data presented within this report, impact assessment, and mapped mitigation proposals such as trapping, exclusion fencing, and habitat creation. The licence will also include a timetable of works, post-development monitoring, and a long-term management plan to ensure the species' favourable conservation status is maintained.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.1.1. WSP UK Ltd (WSP)¹ was commissioned by Wind2 Ltd to support a Development of National Significance (DNS) application for the proposed Parc Ynni Calon Y Gwynt. The proposals are located in Powys, Mid-Wales NGR: SO 001 983), hereafter referred to as the 'Site' and comprise the 'Main Site' and the 'Access Road'. The Main Site is located on the hills to the north of the A470 trunk road, approximately 3.5km east of the village of Carno, 3.5km north of the village of Pontdolgoch and 12km north-west of Newtown. The Access Road is planned to extend for approximately 4.6km from the southern grid reference SO 01372 93553. The extent of the Site, which includes both the Main Site and the Access Road, is shown in **Figure5H 1**. The Proposed Development design is shown in **Figure5H 1** and described further in **Section 1.3**.

1.2. ECOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.2.1. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was carried out in 2023³ and updated in 2026⁴ to classify and map the habitats present and identify their suitability for supporting protected and notable species. During the PEA the Main Site was identified as suitable to support Great Crested Newts (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* and other amphibians due to the ditches and the ponds within the Site which are considered likely to support common amphibian species during their aquatic stages. It was also noted that the surrounding grassland may provide suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians. The rock and log piles within the Site could also provide suitable refugia and hibernacula for amphibian species. DataMapWales and a paper quantifying the status GCN⁵ indicate that there is suitable habitat for GCN approximately 2 km north-east of the Site. The Site appears to be on the border of the range of GCN in Wales.
- 1.2.2. Four ponds were identified within the Site (or within 250 m of the Site boundary) during the desk study and field survey; these are shown in Figure 5I.1. A further five ponds were identified within 500 m but outside of 250 m of the Site so were not included in the HSI Assessment. Three ponds Pond 1, Pond 2 and Pond 4 (P1, P2, and P4) (as shown in Figure 5I.1) were subject to a HSI assessment, owing to land access restrictions to P3. A HSI assessment of the three waterbodies was undertaken in 2024 in accordance with the standard approach developed by Oldham et al.⁶ and refined by Amphibian and Reptile Groups UK⁷. The objective of the HSI assessment was to assess the suitability of the waterbodies within a 250 m buffer of the Site to support GCN and inform the need for further surveys. The full results of the HSI assessment can be found in the previous PEA report.

³ WSP (2024). Calon y Gwynt – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

⁴ WSP (2026). Calon y Gwynt – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2026 Update

⁵ French GCA, Wilkinson JW, Fletcher DH and Arnell AP. (2014). Quantifying the Status of Great Crested Newts Wales. NRW Science Report Series. Report 31 pp24 NRW, Bangor.

⁶ Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S., and Jeffcote M. (2000) Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the great crested newt. Herpetological Journal 10: 143-155

⁷ ARG UK (2010, updated 2024). Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Guidance. Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK.

- 1.2.3. Four ponds (P1 – 4) were identified within a 250 m buffer of the Main Site, of which three were subject to a HSI assessment, with scores of 0.59, 0.55 and 0.35. These scores indicated that P1 and P2 have a 'below average' suitability for GCN. Therefore, P1 and P2 provide habitat that is suitable to support GCN. P4 returned a 'poor' suitability to support GCN, and therefore the presence of breeding GCN within this waterbody is considered unlikely.
- 1.2.4. Following the HSI assessment it was recommended that further GCN surveys were required for the two ponds assessed as having a 'below average' suitability and during the field survey (P1 and P2), An eDNA assessment was undertaken on P4 despite the poor HSI score to provide robust evidence of GCN presence or likely absence, as a HSI assessment alone cannot reliably rule out occupancy.
- 1.2.5. An Environmental DNA (eDNA) survey of the three ponds was undertaken following the PEA in 2024, with one pond (Pond (P) 2) returning a positive eDNA result (**Annex 5I.2**).

2. METHODS

2.1. OVERVIEW

- 2.1.1. During the eDNA one pond (P2) returned a positive eDNA result (**Annex 5I.2**) in 2024. The design of the Proposed Development is such that an access track passes within 50 m of P2. Under Natural England standing advice, works within close proximity of a pond can affect great crested newts and their terrestrial habitat. Therefore, a population size assessment was carried out with the approach of torching and egg search following good practice guidance⁸. This compromised six surveys.

2.2. POPULATION SIZE CLASS ASSESSMENT

- 2.2.1. The population size class assessment comprised six visits to the water body, following good practice guidance⁸. The surveys were spread across the recommended survey period (mid-March to mid-June, with at least two of the visits falling between mid-April and mid-May). Survey visits were completed under suitable weather conditions, when overnight temperatures were above 5°C and wind and rain were not sufficient to affect the torchlight survey results (through disturbance to the water surface).
- 2.2.2. The survey techniques used during each survey visit included:
- **Torchlight searching** – each water body was searched systematically for amphibians after dark using a bright torch; all amphibians observed were recorded, with the number of male, female and juvenile newts of each species noted. The duration of the torchlight survey was determined by the time taken to walk slowly around the water body perimeter; and
 - **Egg searching** – suitable vegetation in each water body was searched for newt eggs which are laid on submerged or floating leaves and folded around the egg. The duration of the egg search was either the amount of time required to search thoroughly all vegetation present, or a maximum of 15 minutes per survey visit⁹.
- 2.2.3. The resultant peak adult count of GCN was then cross referenced with standard guidelines to establish the population size class⁸. The population size class categories within the guidelines are reproduced below for information:
- Small – maximum peak adult counts¹⁰ of up to ten;
 - Medium – maximum peak adult counts of between 11 and 100; and
 - Large – maximum peak adult counts over 100.

DATES OF SURVEY AND PERSONNEL

- 2.2.4. On the following dates torching surveys was undertaken:
- 24/03/2026;
 - 15/04/2026;
 - 29/04/2026;
 - 06/05/2026;

⁸ English Nature (2001). Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.

⁹ Once a great crested newt egg had been recorded, no egg searching occurred on subsequent visits to avoid unnecessary uncovering of eggs which would then be at an increased risk of predation.

¹⁰ Peak counts, as counted at a water body, on one night, through torch survey.

- 12/05/2026; and
- 13/05/2026.

2.2.5. The lead surveyor for each survey visit holds a Natural Resources Wales (NRW) survey licence for this species.

2.3. NOTES AND LIMITATIONS

2.3.1. P3 was not subject to an HSI assessment as it is located on private land, and access was not available to undertake HSI or eDNA surveys. This is not considered to present an ecological constraint, as the pond is sufficiently distant (>250m) from the proposed works such that significant impacts on GCN and other amphibians are considered unlikely.

3. RESULTS

3.1. OVERVIEW

- 3.1.1. The potential effects on GCN and other amphibians are considered likely as the Proposed Development falls within 50 m of P2 which as identified GCN present.
- 3.1.2. The eDNA survey carried out on the three ponds returned a positive result for GCN in P2, confirming presence within this waterbody. Negative results were returned for P1 and P4 (**Annex 5I.2**), therefore GCN are considered likely absent from these ponds.
- 3.1.3. GCN were identified in P2 during the population size class assessment; peak adult counts indicate a small population size class is present as less than 10 GCN were identified during each visit.

3.2. POPULATION SIZE CLASS ASSESSMENT

- 3.2.1. GCN were found to be present in P2 located at NGR: SO 00123 99061. The results of the GCN population size class survey are summarised in Table 5I.1 below.

Table 5I.1 - Summary of Population Size Class Assessment

Water Body Ref.	Adult GCN Peak Count	Breeding Activity Recorded	GCN Population Size Class	Incidental Species Recorded
P2	4	Yes, one GCN egg was discovered on the second survey	Small	~100 palmate newts <i>Lissotriton helveticus</i>

- 3.2.2. All surveys were completed under appropriate conditions, with overnight minimum temperatures ranging between 8°C and 10°C and pond conditions suitable for methods used to be effective. Full details of weather and pond conditions on each survey visit are included in **Annex 5I.3**.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

4.1. OVERVIEW

- 4.1.1. GCN and their habitat are afforded strict protection under UK legislation; in addition, planning policy affords further protection within the planning system, as described below. As the species has been confirmed to be present on Site, it will be necessary to adopt appropriate avoidance and/or mitigation measures as part of the Proposed Development. Avoidance, mitigation, and enhancement measures are recommended in **Section 5** to enable compliance with the legislation and planning policy described below.

4.2. LEGAL COMPLIANCE

GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

- 4.2.1. GCN are afforded a high level of protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitat Regulations')¹¹, the legislation means that it is an offence to:
- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a wild GCN;
 - Deliberately disturb wild GCN; '*disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely:* and
 - (a) To impair their ability —
 - (i) To survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
 - (ii) In the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
 - (b) To affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.'
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place used by this species.
- 4.2.2. Protection is also afforded under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) with respect to disturbance of animals when using places of shelter, and obstruction of access to places of shelter.
- 4.2.3. Due to the high level of protection afforded to GCN and their habitat, mitigation for this species is governed by a strict licensing procedure administered NRW (normally, planning permission must be obtained before a licence can be sought). Licencing is subject to three tests, as defined under the Habitats Regulations, these must also be applied by the planning authority before granting permission for activities affecting GCN. For permission to be granted the following criteria must be satisfied:
- The proposal is necessary 'to preserve public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment';
 - 'There is no satisfactory alternative'; and
 - The proposals 'will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range'.

¹¹ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended) Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/1012/contents> [Accessed: June 2026].

- 4.2.4. In Wales, the GCN is protected under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016¹², which completely replaces the old Section 41 NERC Act duties in Welsh law, identifying it as a species of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.
- 4.2.5. Whilst the smooth *Lissotriton vulgaris* and palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus* are protected from sale and trade, these species are not afforded the high level of protection given to the great crested newt.
- 4.2.6. The common toad *Bufo bufo* is also listed as a Priority Species in accordance with Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016¹²; therefore, public bodies, including local planning authorities, have a duty to seek to maintain and enhance populations of this species when carrying out their functions.

4.3. PLANNING POLICY COMPLIANCE

- 4.3.1. At the national level the Planning Policy Wales (PPW)¹³ forms the basis for planning system decisions with respect to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Under PPW, GCN are treated with the highest level of regulatory scrutiny.
- 4.3.2. Under PPW, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) must follow a specific set of core guiding principles when determining planning applications.
- 4.3.3. At a local level, the Powys Nature Recovery Action Plan (PNRAP)¹⁴ lists GCN as a Locally Important species. It aims to work towards the following targets:
- To maintain existing amphibian and reptile populations within Powys, especially by protecting known breeding sites;
 - to restore and enhance amphibian and reptile habitats by developing a network of wildlife corridors and semi-natural habitats that allow migration between breeding and non-breeding sites;
 - to enhance populations by protecting and encouraging potential amphibian and reptile sites through appropriate management; and
 - Increase knowledge of the distribution and abundance of amphibians and reptiles in Powys.

¹² Environment (Wales) Act (2016) Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/3/contents> [Accessed: June 2026].

¹³ Welsh Government (2024) Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12, February 2024. [online]. Available at: Planning Policy Wales - Edition 12 (gov.wales). [Accessed June 2026].

¹⁴ Powys Nature Partnership 2022-2023. Powys Nature Recovery Action Plan. [online]. Available at: <https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/2573/Powys-Nature-Recovery-Action-Plan>. [Accessed 17 March 2026].

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION MEASURES

GREAT CRESTED NEWT

- 5.1.1. In the first instance it is recommended that where possible, habitat with suitability to support GCN is retained within the Proposed Development designs. In particular the aquatic habitat (ponds) and terrestrial habitats (grassland) so a functioning population can be maintained on Site, this should be in accordance with the Stepwise Approach. According to PPW¹³, development should follow the stepwise approach by prioritising the avoidance of biodiversity impacts, then minimising and mitigating effects, with compensation only as a last resort to achieve a net benefit for biodiversity.
- 5.1.2. It is not possible to avoid effects upon habitat utilised by GCN, and in these instances, it will be necessary to provide mitigation under licence from NRW in advance of construction works following consent of the Proposed Development. This will comprise an application including Site and Proposed Development details, a reasoned statement addressing the legal tests, and a detailed method statement outlining how impacts to GCN will be avoided, mitigated, or compensated. It will be supported by the survey data presented within this report and mapped mitigation proposals such as trapping, exclusion fencing, and habitat creation. The licence will also include a timetable of works, post-development monitoring, and a long-term management plan to ensure the species' favourable conservation status is maintained.
- 5.1.3. It is likely that prior to site clearance a programme of translocation will be required. This would involve the installation of exclusion fencing separating the works area from habitat to be retained and a programme of trapping to remove animals from the works area in advance of works. Translocation of animals may only occur during the period when newts are active, therefore trapping can normally only be undertaken during the period March to October during suitable weather conditions.
- 5.1.4. To maintain the area of suitable habitat available to great crested newts on Site it is recommended that where suitable habitats such as grassland is removed to facilitate construction, an equal area of habitat is created within the Site to mitigate the loss. It is recommended that these areas are then managed in the long term to benefit amphibians as part of the overall management of landscaped areas on Site.
- 5.1.5. GCN are also likely to be using the Site for refuge, foraging and / or commuting. It is recommended that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is produced, which will include the covering of excavations at night (or provision of an escape route), night working restrictions, restrictions on light spill onto habitats that may be used by GCN, pollution prevention measures in accordance with best practice guidelines, noise, vibration and dust control measures, and biosecurity measures.
- 5.1.6. To maintain the area of suitable habitat available to GCN within the Main Site it is recommended that where all suitable habitats are removed to facilitate construction, an equal area of habitat is created to mitigate the loss. It is recommended that these areas are then managed in the long term to benefit amphibians as part of the overall management of landscaped areas on Site.

5.2. ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

- 5.2.1. National and local planning policy requires ecological enhancement measures to be designed into new development schemes. It is recommended that enhancement measures are incorporated into the proposals which seek to achieve net gain in habitat available to amphibians on Site and ensure habitat connectivity with adjacent land. This will lead to a Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB), as encouraged by PPW¹³ and under Section 6 of Part 1 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016¹².

The proposed enhancement measures detailed in an outline Habitat Management Plan (**Appendix 5P** of this Environmental Statement) include the strategic blocking of existing ditches within the north-western part of the site to encourage water pooling and the formation of marshy grassland habitat. This intervention will enhance ecological connectivity with adjacent habitats. These measures are expected to deliver an NBB.

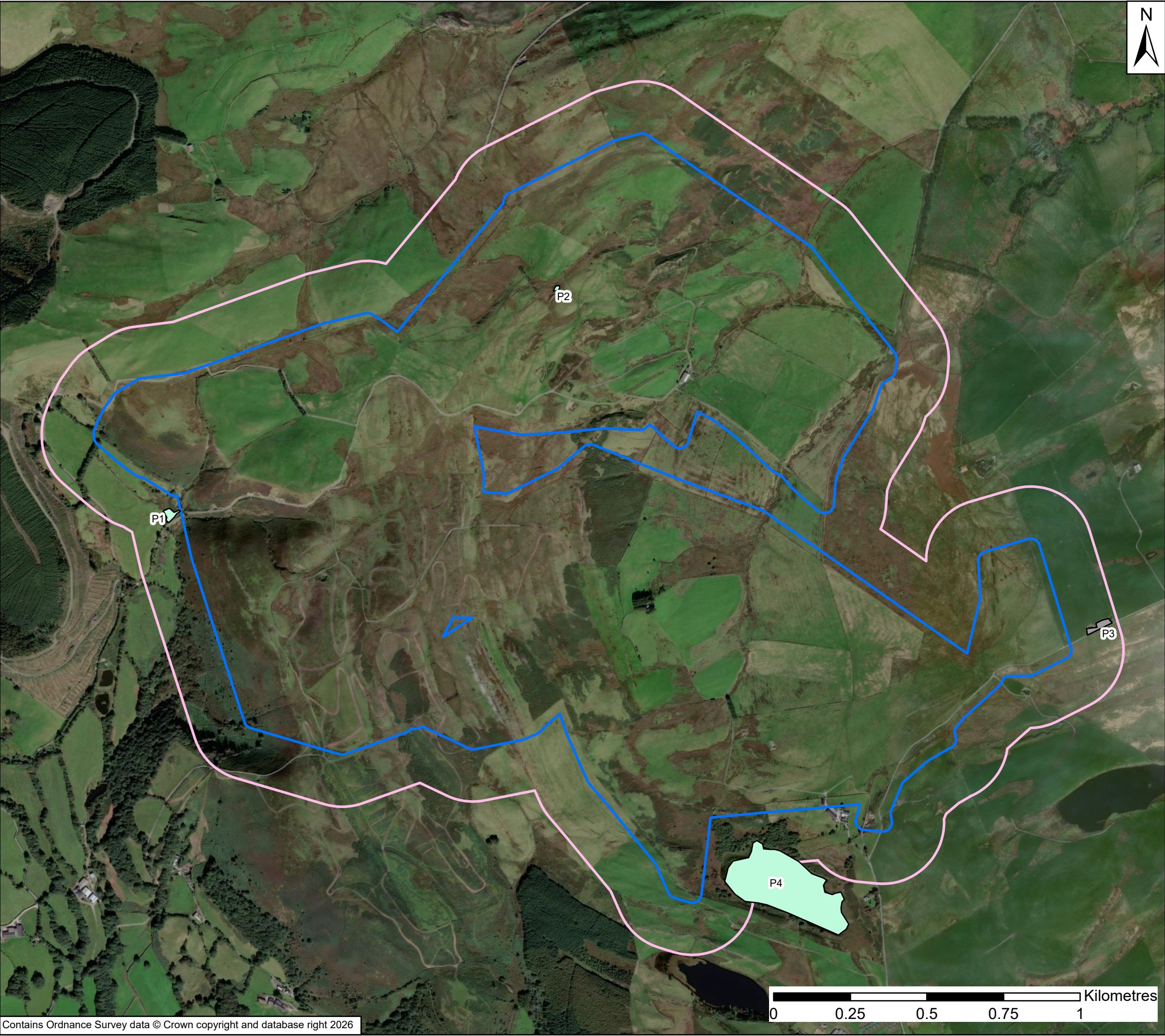
6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1. The results of the population size class assessment determined that GCN are present in one water body (P2) located 50 m away from the Access Track at NGR: SO 00123 9906. The peak adult counts indicate a small population size class is present, as less than 10 GCN were identified during each visit.
- 6.1.2. In the first instance it is recommended that where possible, habitat suitable to support GCN is retained within the Proposed Development. It is our understanding that the Proposed Development will not result in the removal of P2 within the Site. Connecting habitats such as the grassland within the Site should also be retained as far as possible, so a functioning population can be maintained on Site. P2 has been identified within the proximity (250 m) of an access track required to facilitate the Proposed Development. Although it was recommended that the access track was relocated to outside of 250 m of P2, in accordance with the stepwise approach, it is understood that it is not possible to amend the design due to other constraints.
- 6.1.3. Therefore, based on the current design, the Proposed Development will result in the disturbance and possibly death/injury of GCN. A licence granted by NRW will be required to permit the works to proceed lawfully. The licence will include a method statement detailing measure that will be taken to safely exclude GCN from the working area where they may be present, as well as detailing required mitigation. NRW GCN licences applications are processed year-round (typically allow 30 working days to complete). The mitigation measures may be required to be undertaken during the active season (March – October). Therefore, this time restriction should be factored into the works program.

7. FIGURES

Figure5I 1 - Site Location Plan

Document Path: \\uk.wspgroup.com\central_data\Discipline Management\Environmental\1. Service Lines\Ecology\9. Marketing & Bidding\4. Submitted Bids\5. Cardiff\2023\Calon Y Gwynt Wind Farm\IT\GIS\mxdl\CalonYGwent_ArcPro\CalonYGwent\Main\AS06\PEZ\CalonYGwent_07122026\PEZ\54\PM



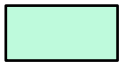
Legend



Site



200 m buffer



Accessible ponds
within 200 m



Not accessible ponds
within 200 m



Client:

WIND2

Project:

CALON Y GWYNT - MAIN SITE
GREAT CRESTED NEWT SURVEY
REPORT

Title

SITE LOCATION PLAN

Drawing No: Figure 5I.1

Drawn: AM

Date: 6/12/2026

Checked: MB

Scale: 1:12,000 @ A3

Approved: MC

Annex 5I.1

PHOTOGRAPH OF P2



Table 2 - Photograph of P2



Annex 5I.2

EDNA RESULTS



GCN Detection Results

Pond ID	Inhibition	Degradation	GCN Score	Result
CYG- P4	No	No	0	Negative
CYG-P1	No	No	0	Negative
CYG-P2	No	No	6	Positive

Sample Information

Pond ID	Kit ID	Sampling Date	Received Date
CYG- P4	GCN-24-01810	2024/06/13	2024/06/25
CYG-P1	GCN-24-01809	2024/06/16	2024/06/25
CYG-P2	GCN-24-01812	2024/06/12	2024/06/25

Annex 5I.3

POPULATION SIZE CLASS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

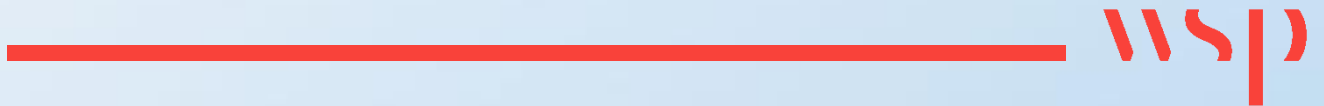


Table 3 - Pond 2 Population Size Class Assessment Results

Survey Number	Date	Pond Temp (°C)	Wind (mph)	Cloud	Rain	Palmate newt	Great crested newt	(male:female)	Notes
1	24/03/26	8	2	4	0	7	1	0:1	
2	15/04/26	10	2	3	0	13	2	1:1	One GCN egg discovered
3	29/04/26	8	3	3	0	2	0	N/A	
4	06/05/26	10	1	2	0	~75	0	N/A	
5	12/05/26	8.5	2	6	0	~100	4	0:4	
6	13/05/26	8	2	7	0	~60	4	4:0	Heavy rain all day up until the survey



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