



Llandyfaelog Substation

Protected Species Walkover Report

On behalf of **National Grid**
nationalgrid



Protected Species Walkover Report

Llandyfaelog

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Protected Species Walkover Report

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Protected Species Walkover Report

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 Stantec UK Ltd. were instructed by National Grid Electricity Transmission to undertake a protected species walkover of land at Llandyfaelog, Carmarthenshire (Ordnance Survey grid reference SN 419 132) (hereafter 'the Site').
- 1.1.2 As early site investigations identified the potential for hazel dormice presence, a nest-tube survey was carried out by Stantec in 2024 which identified the presence of hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* (Stantec 2025c).
- 1.1.3 The purpose of this report is to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment of proposals to construct a new substation and associated infrastructure.

1.2 The Site and Survey Area

- 1.2.1 The Site for the proposed Llandyfaelog substation comprises agricultural grassland fields bound by hedgerows with an area of ancient woodland to the south of the Site.
- 1.2.2 The Survey Area for the field surveys encompassed the Site, as well as the wider area assessed to inform the Environmental Impact Assessment Screening (Stantec 2025). In addition to agricultural grassland fields the Survey Area comprises marshy ground to the west and an area of immature plantation forestry in the south-west. The Survey Area is bordered to the north by the C2074, to the west by the A484, the Crugan Fawr Road and farm tracks to the south, and by open countryside to the east. A tributary of the Gwendraeth Fach runs through woodland along part of the eastern boundary and the headwaters of a stream (Nant Morlais) run from the centre of the Survey Area in the form of drainage ditches.
- 1.2.3 Appendix A, Figure 1 shows the boundaries of the Site and the Survey Area.

1.3 Proposed Development

- 1.3.1 The proposed development is comprised of the following principal elements:
- Construction of a single level platform (260 metres (m) by 640 m) on which an Air Insulated Substation (AIS) is sited measuring 155 m by 602 m.
 - Bellmouth access to the A484 with an operational access road to connect the platform to the A484.
 - Modification works to the existing 400kV Overhead Line (OHL) to connect the substation to the existing OHL involving the installation of two new towers (pylons) and one replacement tower (pylon) circa 18 m and 62 m.
 - Associated drainage, and hard and soft landscaping.

1.4 Legislation

- 1.4.1 Species within Wales are protected under the following legislation:
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
 - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); and
 - Environment (Wales) Act 2016.



1.4.2 Please see Appendix B for a summary of the protection each species receives.

1.5 Aims and Objectives

1.5.1 The aim of the protected species walkover was to ascertain the following:

- presence of protected species and species of principal importance (SPIs) and field signs, including resting places, feeding remains, footprints etc. of other protected species that could signal the presence of those species within the Site; and,
- requirement for further surveys to confirm the presence/likely absence of protected species.



2 Methods

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 This report has been produced with reference to BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of Practice for Planning, Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), 2017a) and with CIEEM Report Writing Guidelines (CIEEM, 2017b).

2.2 Desk Study

- 2.2.1 An ecology desk study was undertaken to obtain historic records of protected and otherwise notable species from the Local Environmental Records Centre, which in this case was West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre (WWBIC). Records were requested on 6th May 2025.
- 2.2.2 The Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017a) do not include prescriptions for desk study search areas; however, it is advised that study areas should be based on professional judgement. Therefore, considering the extent and nature of the proposals for the Site, the potential value of a feature, and the mobility of species, the desk study search area encompassed an area with a radius of 2 km from the Survey Area.
- 2.2.3 Species records requested from WWBIC were limited to those reported within the last ten years and with 6-figure grid reference resolutions or higher, since locations given at a lower resolution do not allow for the accurate calculation of distance from the Site.

2.3 Walkover Survey

- 2.3.1 The survey was undertaken by suitably experienced ecologists, who are trained in the assessment of habitat suitability for protected species and satisfy all necessary field survey competencies as stipulated by CIEEM.
- 2.3.2 Survey visits were carried out on 1, 2 and 13 May 2025 within the Survey Area (shown in Appendix A, Figure 1) and included an assessment of the suitability of habitats to support, hazel dormouse, otter *Lutra lutra*, water vole *Arvicola amphibius*, reptiles, great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* and SPIs, noting the presence and condition. These included less intensively managed, species-rich hedgerows with good structural diversity; areas of deciduous woodland and scrub providing potential shelter and foraging habitat for hazel dormice; and patches of rough or tussocky grassland offering suitable conditions for reptiles and small mammals.
- 2.3.3 Watercourses, where present, were assessed for suitability to support otters and water voles, with attention paid to bank structure, vegetative cover, and connectivity. Waterbodies were also identified and assessed for their potential to support amphibians, including great crested newt. The presence of suitable habitat was recorded even in the absence of direct field signs, to inform future recommendations and any need for targeted follow-up surveys.
- 2.3.4 Although features of particular note were recorded, a full assessment of hedgerows, scrub and woodland for dormouse habitat suitability can be found in the Hazel Dormouse Habitat Quality Assessment (Stantec 2025a).
- 2.3.5 Features suitable for roosting bats have been surveyed independently and details of trees with potential to support roosting bats can be found in the Bat Roost Resource report (Stantec 2025b).
- 2.3.6 Surveyors recorded field signs and habitat features directly onto aerial imagery using a Samsung Galaxy Active Tab 3 running the Coreo app by Natural Apptitude. This setup enabled accurate georeferencing of features using the tablet's inbuilt GPS capabilities.



2.4 Limitations

Desk Study

- 2.4.1 The accuracy of data held by consultees varies due to the quality and scale that they were digitised to, the supporting information used to define locations/boundaries, and the sensitivity of the data itself. The data held by consultees may not be exhaustive. The absence of records does not necessarily indicate the absence of a species from a site, but rather that these have not been recorded or are perhaps under-recorded in the area. Therefore, when assessing the potential value of the area for notable species and habitats, the desk study data has been considered as evidence of potential presence only.

Field Survey

- 2.4.2 The results of the survey and assessment work undertaken are representative at the time of surveying.
- 2.4.3 Up-to-date standard methodologies were used, which are accepted by Natural Resources Wales and other statutory conservation bodies. No responsibility will be accepted where these methodologies fail to identify all species on the Site.
- 2.4.4 The locations of field signs have been recorded as accurately as practicable; however, should be considered relatively indicative, e.g. due to the limited accuracy of the GPS receiver (particularly where beneath tree canopy, on steep terrain or in other enclosed environments). This limitation has been taken into account in the assessment of survey results and advice provided in this report.
- 2.4.5 Because the survey was undertaken during spring, when vegetation was growing rapidly, some features may have been obscured and therefore missed.



3 Results

- 3.1.1 Evidence of reptiles and breeding birds were recorded during the survey and potential habitat for other species, including dormice, water vole and otter, SPIs and notable invertebrates were also noted. Observations are set out on Appendix A, Figure 2. A description of each species, and a description of potential habitat or evidence of that species are provided in Table 1. Representative photographs of habitats with suitability for protected and notable species are provided in Appendix B.
- 3.1.2 Given the large number of SPIs, these have only been included in Table 1 if the species were included in the desk study records.

Table 3-1 Summary of Protected Species Interest within Survey Area

Species / Species Group	Desk Study Results Summary	Suitable habitat / field signs recorded
Hazel dormouse	Two records were returned with the closest located 2 km from the Site boundary with habitat connectivity to the Site.	The majority of hedgerows (Appendix B, Photograph 1), scrub and woodland across the Site and Survey Area are suitable for dormice and surveys undertaken in 2024 by Stantec recorded two confirmed dormouse nests and two possible dormouse nests within nesting tubes (Stantec 2025c). Under the survey guidelines, published within the Hazel Dormouse Mitigation Handbook (Mammal Society, 2025), if there is a recent record of dormice nearby and habitat within the Site is suitable, presence can be assumed. Given dormouse nests were recorded in 2024 within the Site, and suitable, connected habitat is present across the Site, presence is assumed in every hedgerow, block of scrub and woodland. A detailed assessment of habitat suitability will be carried out in order to estimate population size within the Site and will form the basis of a separate report focused on dormice.
Water vole	No records within search parameters	Ditch 1, running the length of the hedgerow along the southern edge of the C2074 road had recently been dredged at the time of survey, with arisings left at the top of the bank (Appendix B, Photograph 2). During subsequent surveys in late-May and early-June, the water had dried completely. This ditch is not considered suitable to support any permanent populations of water vole. It is not connected directly to any significant watercourses and is therefore also not considered suitable for foraging or commuting otter. Ditch 2 was a heavily canalised stream that originates in the centre of the Site. Much of its length was shaded by dense vegetation, including hedgerows and overhanging scrub. These areas were deemed unlikely to support water voles. More open areas were densely vegetated with hemlock water-dropwort, meadowsweet, great willowherb, watercress, fools watercress and bramble. These areas were suitable for water vole but are isolated from other



Species / Species Group	Desk Study Results Summary	Suitable habitat / field signs recorded
Otter	Two records were returned with the closest record from the Gwendraeth Fach located 900 m south of the Site	suitable habitat downstream. There is potential for this ditch to form part of the territory of an otter, although no evidence was found. Ditch 3 was shallow, wide and heavily poached by cattle. It was also shaded by willow scrub overhead. Vegetation was characteristic of the surrounding purple moor grass and rush pasture. Its profile rendered it unsuitable for water vole. Ditch 4 was considered suitable for water vole but is isolated from the wider stream network by heavily shaded ditches to the west. It is the only ditch not associated with a hedgerow or scrub (Appendix B, Photograph 3). Being connected to the stream and ditch network further west, there is a possibility that otter use this ditch for commuting, although no evidence of their presence was recorded. Where ditch 5 passes along the Site's boundary, it is mostly dry, although vegetation suggests that it holds some water most of the year. This ditch was not deemed suitable for water vole, and the presence of otter is very unlikely. Ditch 6 was associated with a boundary hedgerow and was heavily shaded for most of its length. Where the ditch widened and was not shaded by the hedge canopy there were some aquatic plants growing, although the area of suitable habitat was much too small to support a viable water vole population. A small woodland stream feeds into the wider ditch network on the western edge of a large area of purple moor grass and rush pasture in the west of the Survey Area. The stream has some potential to support commuting otter, although no evidence was recorded. It was considered unsuitable for water voles as the surrounding land is waterlogged and unsuitable for burrow construction. Water vole are known to inhabit purple moor-grass and rush pasture in the Pen y Cymoedd and the Rhondda Cynon Taff/Neath Port Talbot upland. Although given the agricultural management of the purple moor grass and rush pasture on the Site and its limited extent it is not considered suitable to support water vole.
Pine marten <i>Martes martes</i>	No records within search parameters	Given recent reintroductions of pine marten to mid Wales and the Forest of Dean and their subsequent distribution to suitable habitats within Wales, there is a possibility that this species is also present in the area. However, the woodland blocks within the Survey Area itself are relatively small and consist mainly of willow and alder woodland without the veteran features required to support this species.
Species of Principal Importance	Ten records for hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i> and one record of common toad <i>Bufo bufo</i> were returned.	The habitats within the Site and Survey Area including tussocky grassland and hedgerows are suitable for hedgehog, polecat <i>Mustela putorius</i>, brown hare <i>Lepus europaeus</i> and <i>Micromys minutus</i> harvest mouse. No permanent waterbodies are present within the Survey Area, meaning that there is no suitable breeding habitat for toads
Reptiles	Two records of slow worm <i>Anguis fragilis</i> were returned.	The purple moor grass and rush pasture (Appendix B, Photograph 4) and all hedgerows (Appendix B, Photograph 1) were considered suitable to support common and widespread reptiles. Areas with particular suitability have been marked in Appendix A, Figure 2. A common lizard <i>Zootoca vivipara</i> was recorded during the survey in the north-west corner of the Site, on the hedge bank on the northern edge of the purple moor grass and rush pasture (see Appendix A, Figure 2).



Species / Species Group	Desk Study Results Summary	Suitable habitat / field signs recorded
Great crested newt	No records within search parameters	All waterbodies on the Site are either seasonal or contain running water, meaning that there are no suitable breeding ponds within the Survey Area itself. However, there are three ponds within 250 m of the Site boundary at Crugan Fach and within 250 m of the Survey Area at Penymaes. These were not surveyed as part of the protected species walkover survey as they lay outside of the Survey Area. Subsequent eDNA surveys for great crested newt were undertaken as reported within the Great Crested Newt Report (Stantec 2025) The hedgerows and purple moor grass and rush pasture within the Survey Area has suitability as terrestrial habitat for foraging or dispersing newts where located within 250 m of a pond.
Breeding birds	Records of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Wales Red and Amber List species were returned including willow warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> (Red), bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i> (Amber) and song thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i> (Amber).	All hedgerows, scrub and woodland are considered suitable for breeding farmland, scrubland and woodland birds, as well as generalist species. Larger trees also have the potential to support breeding raptors. Red kite <i>Milvus milvus</i>, buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i> and sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i> were all recorded within the Site during the survey. Suitability for ground nesting species is limited by the presence of livestock and regular trees, hedge banks and pylons. However, singing skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i> were recorded over two of the large hay fields in the south and east of the Survey Area. The ancient woodland in the south of the Site and the area of woodland east of the Survey Area has suitability to support rare or declining woodland birds, including pied flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>, common redstart <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i> and spotted flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>. Although given the small size of this area of woodland the suitability is considered limited.
Wintering birds	Records of WCA 1981 Schedule 1 species were returned including green sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i> and redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i> .	Wetter fields are likely to support wintering snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>. Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> may also be present, although likely in low numbers if present. Purple moor grass and rush pastures may also support foraging raptors during winter, notably short-eared owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>. Bae Caerfyrddin / Carmarthen Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) designed for common scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i> is located 9.7 km south west of the Survey Area, although common scoter primarily feeds on molluscs so would not forage within the Site Hedgerows and woodland within the Site provide a suitable foraging resource for wintering birds, although the Site is unlikely to support a significant wintering bird assemblage due to the absence of large areas of arable land (apart from a small area in the north of the Survey Area) or large waterbodies.
Invertebrates	Records of invertebrate SPIs were returned including black oil-beetle <i>Meloe proscarabaeus</i> and dingy skipper <i>Erynnis tages</i> NB: species included as a SPI for research only have been removed.	Purple moor grass and rush pasture, a species-rich wet grassland habitat, can support nationally scarce invertebrates reliant on specific hydrological and vegetation conditions, although the purple moor grass and rush pastures on the Site are of lower value due to their relatively low plant species diversity and current management for grazing livestock and silage/hay. One area of purple moor grass and rush pasture in the north-west of the Site had devil's-bit scabious in the sward, which is the larval food plant of the marsh fritillary butterfly. The ancient woodland to the south of the Site has suitability for saproxylic invertebrates as well as a range of other invertebrate species. Old, species-rich hedgerows often act as key foraging and dispersal corridors.



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Species / Species Group	Desk Study Results Summary	Suitable habitat / field signs recorded
		The black oil-beetle is most commonly found on wildflower-rich coastal cliff tops and lowland, unimproved grasslands (Buglife, undated), as such, is considered unlikely to be present on the Site. The larval food plants for dingy skipper (common bird's-foot-trefoil <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> horseshoe vetch <i>Hippocrepis comosa</i> greater bird's-foot-trefoil <i>L. pedunculatus</i>) weren't recorded within the Survey Area (Butterfly Conservation, undated), as such, it is considered unlikely to be present on the Site.



4 Summary and Recommendations

- 4.1.1 Table 4-1 summarises the species/ species groups that have been confirmed or are potentially present within the Site due the presence of suitable habitat to support the species. The table also provides a summary of the recommendations for further survey and if these surveys have been completed to date.

Table 4-1: Summary of Species/Species Groups Confirmed or Potentially Present within the Site and Recommendations for Further Survey

Species/Species Group	Recommendations for Further Survey	Survey Completed
Bats	Bat roost surveys. Bat activity surveys within the Site should be undertaken to identify important areas for foraging and commuting bat species as well species diversity and assemblage.	Yes Yes
Hazel dormouse	Dormouse habitat quality assessment to be undertaken of all hedgerows, woodland and scrub within the Site.	Yes
Species of Principal Importance	Habitat with suitability for hedgehog, polecat, brown hare and harvest mouse were recorded within in the Site, although no further surveys will be required.	N/A
Reptiles	A refugia based reptile survey of the Site is not considered practical given the primary land use of cattle/ sheep farming. Presence of common lizard has been confirmed, and presence of other common reptile species is likely Site proposals should take this into account, and any CEMP should include measures to ensure that reptiles are not harmed during construction	N/A
Farmland and woodland bird assemblage	All hedgerows, scrub and woodland are considered suitable for breeding farmland, scrubland and woodland birds, as well as generalist species. Given the likely common assemblage of bird species within the Site further surveys will not be required.	N/A
Great crested newt	An eDNA survey should be undertaken of waterbodies within 250m of the Site.	Yes
Invertebrate assemblage including habitat with suitability for marsh fritillary	As purple moor grass and rush pasture with suitability for marsh fritillary was recorded within the Site it is recommended that marsh fritillary surveys are undertaken.	Yes



5 References

- CIEEM (2017a) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- CIEEM (2017b) Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester
- British Standards Institute (2013) BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of Practice for Planning
- Harris, S., Cresswell, P., Jefferies, D., (1989) Surveying Badgers, The Mammal Society
- Natural England (2009) Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended) Interpretation1 of 'Disturbance' in relation to badgers occupying a sett.
- Stantec (2025a) Hazel Dormouse Habitat Suitability Assessment Report Llandyfaelog
- Stantec (2025b) Bat Roost Resource Report Llandyfaelog
- Stantec (2025c) Hazel Dormouse 2024 Surveys Llandyfaelog
- Butterfly Conservation (undated) Dingy Skipper [Online] Available at: <https://butterfly-conservation.org/butterflies/dingy-skipper>
- Buglife (undated) Black Oil Beetle [Online] Available at: <https://www.buglife.org.uk/bugs/bug-directory/black-oil-beetle/>



Appendix A Figures

Figure 1 Site and Survey Area



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Figure 2 Protected Species Walkover Results



Appendix B Legislation

- B.1.1 Please note that this legal information is a summary and intended for general guidance only. The original legal documents should be consulted for definitive information. Web addresses providing access to the full text of these documents are given in the References Section.

B.2 Hazel Dormouse

- B.2.1 Hazel dormouse is fully protected under the WCA 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It is an offence to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or injure dormice, or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place. Possession, transport, sale, or exchange is also prohibited. Any work potentially affecting hazel dormouse or their habitats typically requires a European Protected Species (EPS) licence issued by NRW.

B.3 Otter

- B.3.1 Eurasian otter is fully protected under both the WCA 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It is an offence to deliberately capture, kill, injure, or disturb an otter, or to damage, destroy, or obstruct access to a breeding or resting site. These offences apply regardless of whether the animal is present at the time of the activity. Otters are also listed under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981, offering additional protection against possession, trade, and certain methods of killing. Any work potentially affecting otters or their habitats typically requires a EPS licence issued by NRW.

B.4 Water Vole

- B.4.1 Water vole is protected under Section 9 of the WCA 1981 (as amended), making it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take a water vole, or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection. It is also an offence to disturb a water vole while it is occupying such a place. Although not protected under the Habitats Regulations, water voles are listed as a species of principal importance (SPI) under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Development activities that may affect water voles or their burrows require careful assessment and, where necessary, mitigation under a licenced method statement in line with NRW guidance.

B.5 Reptiles

- B.5.1 Widespread reptile species (all native species excluding sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* and smooth snake *Coronella austriaca*) are protected under Section 9(1) and 9(5) of the WCA 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to intentionally kill or injure these species, or to sell or offer them for sale. Their habitats are not protected per se, but best practice guidance encourages avoidance of harm during development and land management works. These species are also listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 as species of principal importance.

B.6 Great Crested Newt

- B.6.1 The great crested newt receives full protection under the WCA 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It is an offence to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or injure great crested newts, or to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place. Possession, transport, sale, or exchange of this species is also prohibited. Any work potentially affecting great crested newts or their habitats typically requires a EPS licence issued by NRW.



B.7 Birds

- B.7.1 All wild birds are protected under the WCA 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure, or take any wild bird, or to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built. Eggs are also protected, and it is illegal to take or destroy the egg of any wild bird. Additional protections apply to species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, which includes offences for intentional or reckless disturbance while nesting or at the nest with dependent young.

B.8 Invertebrates

- B.8.1 Many invertebrate species associated with pastoral farmland in west Wales, particularly in areas containing ancient hedgerows and purple moor grass and rush pasture, are of high conservation value and may receive protection under UK and Welsh legislation. Species such as the marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia*, certain soldier flies, hoverflies, and beetles may be listed as SPI under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, requiring public authorities to consider their conservation in decision-making. Invertebrates listed under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended) are protected from sale, and in some cases from deliberate killing, injury, or disturbance.
- B.8.2 The marsh fritillary butterfly is protected under the WCA 1981 (as amended), where it is listed on Schedule 5 in relation to sale only. It is an offence to sell, offer for sale, or possess this species for commercial purposes without an appropriate licence. While the Act does not currently prohibit capture, killing, or disturbance of marsh fritillaries in Wales, the species is a designated conservation priority under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, requiring public bodies to take reasonable steps to maintain and enhance its populations and habitats. The marsh fritillary is also listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive, meaning it is a qualifying feature for certain Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Activities likely to impact marsh fritillary populations or their habitats within SACs are subject to assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

B.9 Other Species of Principal Importance

- B.9.1 Species such as hedgehog, brown hare, harvest mouse, common toad *Bufo bufo* and polecat are not generally protected under the WCA 1981 but are listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 as species of principal importance. This status places a duty on public bodies to consider their conservation in decision-making. Some species, such as otters and water voles, benefit from stronger protection under both the WCA 1981 and the Habitats Regulations, but general priority mammals typically receive protection through planning policy and biodiversity strategies rather than direct legal prohibition on killing or disturbance.



Appendix C Representative Photographs



Photograph 1: Hedgerow with suitability for reptiles and hazel dormouse



Photograph 2: Ditch 1



Photograph 3: Ditch 4



Photograph 4: Purple moor grass and rush pasture with suitability for reptiles