

Rush Wall Solar Park

Environmental Statement

Appendix 5.6

Otter Survey

Otter Survey
Rush Wall Solar Park
April 2020

Report no: OTT-526.1

A report by

James Gilroy BSc (Hons), MSc



Report details

Site name: Rush Wall Solar Park
Site address: Redwick, Newport
Grid reference: ST 416 853
Report date: 30th April 2020
Report author: James Gilroy BSc (Hons), MSc
Checked by: Colin Hicks BSc (Hons), MCIEEM

Report no: OTT-526.1

Declaration of compliance

BS 42020:2013

This study has been undertaken in accordance with British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity, Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

Code of Professional Conduct

The information which we have prepared is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

Validity of survey data and report

The findings of this report are valid for 24 months from the date of survey. If work has not commenced within this period, an updated survey by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required.

Revisions

Date	Report no:	Comment
21/05/2020	OTT-526.1	Original report

Table of contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1. Survey aims.....	5
2. Methodology	6
2.1. Desktop survey.....	6
2.2. Field survey	6
2.3. Survey constraints.....	6
3. Results	7
3.1. Desktop survey.....	7
3.2. Habitat Assessment.....	7
3.3. Field survey.....	7
Map 1. Field survey results.....	8
4. Otter and the Law	9
5. Assessment of the site value for Otter	10
6. References.....	10

1. Introduction

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete an Otter survey on an area of land for the proposed Rush Wall Solar Park near Redwick.

1.1. Survey aims

The aim of this survey is to ascertain whether Otter are present within this site.

Where appropriate, the survey will provide the information required to determine the appropriate level of mitigation required to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation and relevant planning policy.

2. Methodology

2.1. Desktop survey

The data search collated existing biological records of Otter within 2km that are held by South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre.

This data was examined and an assessment was then made, based on known habitat preferences, as to whether these species may be present within the site and how they may be affected by the proposal

2.2. Field survey

Field signs of Otter were searched for by an ecologist who meets the required competency level for Otter surveys. This required an inspection of reed banks and channel features. Spraint, footprints, slides, and possible holts and couches were looked for and recorded.

The survey was completed on 8th April 2020 between 10:00 and 16:00 with an air temperature of 18°C, light winds, dry and 30% cloud cover.

2.3. Survey constraints

All areas of the immediate development site were readily accessible, and Otter can be surveyed for at any time of year. There are no significant constraints to the results of this survey.

3. Results

3.1. Desktop survey

The biological record search returned 495 records for Otter within 2km. With the exception of 56 records at the site boundaries for droppings/spraint or footprints largely associated with Mink monitoring rafts, all of these records are outside the proposed development footprint.

3.2. Habitat Assessment

The wider Site is predominantly comprised of agricultural grasslands with negligible value for Otter. However, the field margins comprise a network of reens (drainage ditches) that are fringed with semi-natural vegetation comprising Bulrush *Typha* sp., Common Reed *Phragmites australis*, Soft Rush *Juncus effusus*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, sedges and common grasses.

Water quality is good in most areas, with potential to support populations of common amphibians, small fish and Eel which are a key prey for Otter. However, discrete sections of the reens featured extensive algal cover, likely due to nutrification from associated agricultural run-off, and these areas are less likely to support important food sources such as small fish.

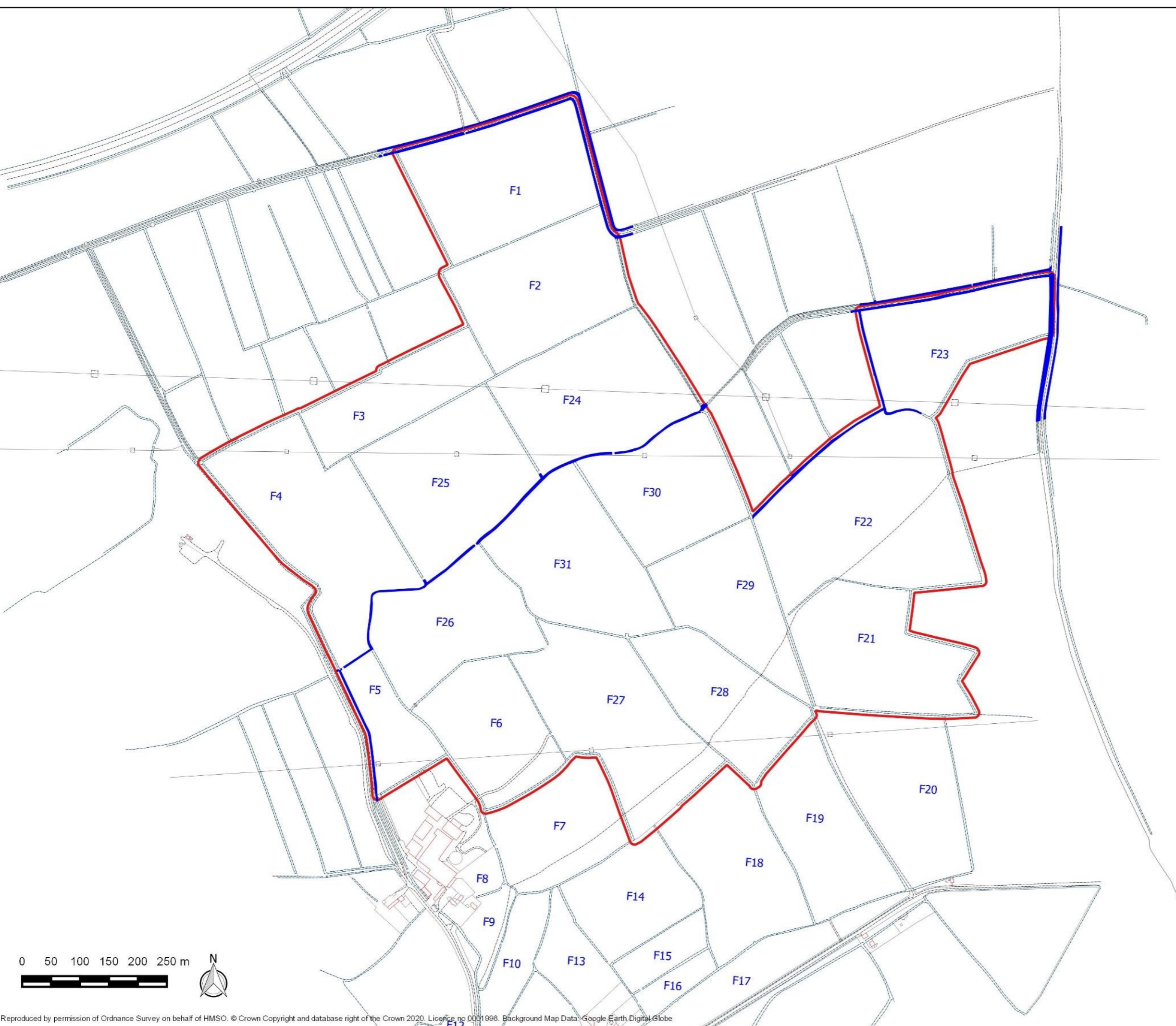
Significant areas of dense scrub suitable for natal holts is lacking.

3.3. Field survey

The extent of the Otter survey is shown on Map 1. During this survey, no evidence of Otter, such as actual sightings, holts, spraints, couches or slides were recorded associated with the reens within the survey area.

Legend

- Development footprint
- Reens surveyed for Otter



Title: Map 1. Field survey results

Project: Rush Wall Solar Park

Checked by: CDH Version: 01
Date: 21/05/2020

4. Otter and the Law

Otter, and their breeding or resting places (holts and couches), are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. They are identified as European Protected Species. Under these laws, it is an offence to:

- Capture, kill, disturb or injure otters (deliberately or by not taking enough care)
- Damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (deliberately or by not taking enough care)
- Obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places (deliberately or by not taking enough care)
- Possess, sell, control or transport live or dead otters, or parts of otters.

Otter are listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

5. Assessment of the site value for Otter

Although no evidence of Otter was recorded associated with the reens, the records search strongly suggests they are present in the general area. However, the site has no evidence of holts or couches and it is extremely unlikely that Otter are resting here.

The proposed development site is of Site value for Otter.

6. References

BSI, 2013. *British Standard 42020: 2013. Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development*. British Standards Institution, London.