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## Technical note:

# Ecological Survey report- 2022 Water vole Survey

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Wood Group UK Ltd (Wood<sup>1</sup>) was commissioned by Pennant Walters to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of an area known as Mynydd y Glyn (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'), which is located at National Grid Reference (NGR) SO 20347 04330. Following the Scoping response from the Rhondda Cynon Taf county ecologist, additional surveys were carried out to conduct detailed habitat assessment and survey of the Site for water vole.

### 1.2 Purpose of this document

The purpose of this Technical Note is to detail the methods adopted for, and results of the survey visits carried out on 12 July 2022 and 22 August 2022 to assess the suitability of the Site for water vole.

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## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Survey

A survey of the Site was conducted by two suitably qualified ecologists<sup>2</sup> on 12 July 2022 and 22 August 2022. The survey area is shown on **Figure 1.1, Appendix A**.

The edges of the ditches, water bodies and blanket bog present on Site were inspected, to firstly assess habitat suitability and to also record field signs of water vole. Survey methods followed guidance set out in the Water Vole Conservation Handbook<sup>3</sup>.

Surveys included a search for water voles field signs which include:

- presence of latrines;
- presence of burrows (both active and inactive);

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<sup>1</sup> Now WSP Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Ltd

<sup>2</sup> Gary Lindsay, Senior Ecological Consultant; Katie Watkins, Consultant Ecologist

<sup>3</sup> Strachan, R., Moorhouse, T. and Gelling, M. (2011) *Water Vole Conservation Handbook*. Third Edition. WCRU, Oxford.

- presence of runs;
- presence of footprints;
- presence of feeding remains;
- individual droppings; and
- sightings or sounds (characteristic sound entering the water) of individuals.

Any other species identified through presence or evidence (for example bank vole, field vole, mink, or brown rat) were also recorded. While latrines provide conclusive evidence of water vole presence, all other signs can be created by other animals and therefore, cannot confirm presence unless they are found alongside latrines and several other signs.

## 2.2 Limitations

No limitations were identified during these surveys. Surveys were carried out within the optimum survey period for water vole and there were no access constraints.

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# 3. Results

## 3.1 Habitat assessment

The habitat assessment identified the Site predominantly consisted of short, sheep grazed grassland with some areas of dominant rush, wet heathland and indicators of acidic conditions. Descriptions of the broad habitat types that survey effort focused on are provided below. All habitats were assessed as having low or negligible potential for water vole. Photographs to support habitat descriptions are provided in **Appendix B**.

### Ditches

The ditches on Site were found to be dry during surveys with high levels of disturbance by cattle and sheep recorded (**Images 1-2, Appendix B**). Poaching was evident in many places reducing the suitability of banks for burrow creation. Shade was largely absent which encourages the growth of vegetation however grazing by livestock ensured that in many places vegetation remained short.

Plant species present within ditches was found to be consistent with the surrounding fields<sup>4</sup> with a lack of aquatic vegetation suggesting these ditches are dry throughout much of the year. Although some ditches may potentially hold standing water during wetter winter months this is also when water voles are less active and largely confined to the areas directly surrounding their burrows.

### Pond

A pond at ST 03839 88816 was identified as having low potential for water vole with suitable vegetation for foraging (**Image 3, Appendix B**). This pond likely holds water throughout the year and still contained water unlike the surrounding ditches. There is some potential for burrow creation in nearby banks amongst bracken although there remains a high level of disturbance from sheep and cattle.

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<sup>4</sup> Species include soft rush, marsh thistle, sweet vernal, creeping bent, marsh bedstraw, Yorkshire fog

## Blanket Bog

Despite being isolated with no connectivity to nearby watercourses the blanket bog on Site was surveyed for water vole. This is based on evidence of water vole traveling large distances between isolated pockets of suitable habitat in upland areas<sup>5</sup>. No evidence of water vole was recorded in and around the bog. Although no banks were available for burrow creation there is potential to create nests above the water level using vegetation (**Image 4, Appendix B**). The bog area was largely dominated by tussocky purple moor grass, with vegetation thinner in areas of standing water with cottontail grass and deergrass prevalent.

## Rivers and streams

Flowing watercourses recorded on site were fast flowing and shallow on rocky substrates, with vegetation typical of the wider site (**Images 5-6, Appendix B**). Some potential was available for burrows within steep banks which flanked the running watercourse through much of its length. Rivers with high potential for water vole are typically slow flowing with wide margins of vegetation which was not recorded on site.

### 3.2 Water vole survey

No water voles, or evidence of their presence, was identified within the Site during the surveys.

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## 4. Conclusions

Due to the lack of evidence recorded in 2022 and low suitability of the habitats present on Site, water vole are not considered to be present on Site and no further survey work is considered necessary for water vole.

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<sup>5</sup> Jon *et al* (2001) Water vole in the Scottish uplands: Distribution patterns of disturbed and pristine populations ahead and behind the American mink invasion front. *Animal Conservation*

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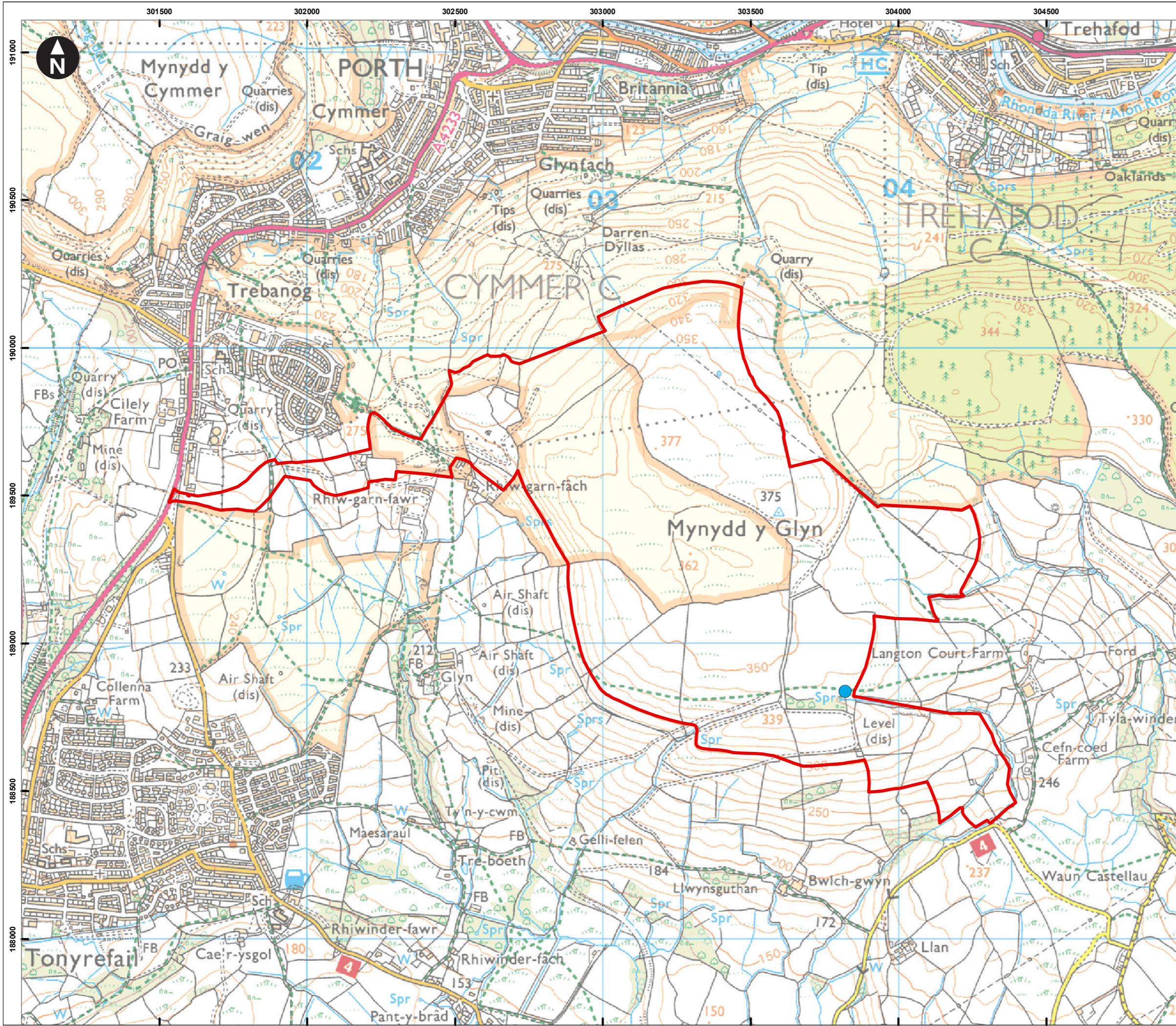
**Document revisions**

No.	Details	Date
1	Final	October 2022

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# Appendix A - Figures

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- Key
- Site boundary
  - Waterbody

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 m  
 Scale at A3: 1:12,500  
 © Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey  
 0100031673

Pennant Walters  
 Mynydd y Glyn Wind Farm  
 Water Vole Report

**Figure 1.1**  
**Site boundary and waterbodies**

October 2022



## Appendix B – Photographs

Photograph number    Image

1 – Typical ditch present on site



**Photograph number**   **Image**

**2 - Typical ditch present on site**



**3 - Pond**





**Photograph number**   **Image**

**4 - Bog**



**5 – Typical stream present on site**



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**Photograph number**    **Image**

**6 – Typical stream present on site**

