

## St Nicholas Site Location

### Ecological Assessment

#### **Introduction:**

UK Methane Ltd are proposing to drill a trial borehole near St Nicholas at grid reference SO08247164 in the Vale of Glamorgan. This will involve a mobile drilling rig and associated temporary infrastructure including site offices and storage. The operation is expected to take about 3 months to complete.

#### **Methods:**

An 'extended Phase 1' survey was undertaken at the site. This involved a qualified ecologist walking the site and recording details of habitat present and looking for signs of any protected species such as badger. The information gathered was then used to undertake a brief assessment of potential ecological impact.

#### **Results:**

A habitat walkover survey was undertaken on 14 March 2013 in fine weather.

The land on which the application is being made was to the north of a minor road running roughly east to west. It was in the corner of an arable field on which piles of manure had been tipped.

At the time of the visit the main habitats on the site were bare ground, two manure heaps and pools of nutrient-rich water. On the older heap some ruderal plant species were growing, notably Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*.

The proposed site was bordered to the south by a narrow lane and hedgerow although part of the hedgerow had been removed for access to the manure heaps. Another field boundary to the east of the site, almost at right angles to the road and running north to south, was a fence line with some long grass and brambles. The section of fence alongside the proposed site location near the road had been removed so that the adjacent field was easily accessible. Large pools in waterlogged ground lay in the gap between the proposed location and the field to the east.

No rare or protected plants were noted. The March visit was too early in the year to look for arable weeds but the farmland was intensively managed so is unlikely to hold important species.

No signs of protected species such as badger were seen.

Hedgerows are listed as a Habitat of Principle Importance in Wales under Section 42 of the NERC Act 2006.

There are no ecological concerns about the proposed development on this site.

#### **Mitigation**

As the site is a much disturbed area of farmland and the drilling will only involve minimum disturbance to the site for three months it is considered little mitigation is required. However, if possible the missing section of hedgerow could be re-created and a new hedge planted along the north to south field boundary.

#### **Conclusion**

The site at St Nicholas is much disturbed farmland. The proposed drilling will cause disturbance to small areas of the site for a maximum of three months. The remnant hedgerow to the south will be unaffected by the proposed works.

It is therefore concluded that the proposed works will have no long-term impact on the site, and the habitat should recover post disturbance.