

Llancarfan Site Location

Ecological Assessment

Introduction:

UK Methane Ltd are proposing to drill a trial borehole near Llancarfan at grid reference SO05257297 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 the corner of a bare ploughed arable field just to the west of a minor road running south and south west. There was no nearby access into the field from the road.

The roadside hedge between this minor road and the proposed site location was very wide and maintained at less than 2m in height and there were no trees at the section by the site location. Another hedgerow runs from the roadside hedge to the west south west alongside the southern edge of the site location. This was a tall, mainly Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* hedge line.

It is unclear whether new access will be needed and whether part of the roadside hedge is to be removed. If this is the case work should be carried out in the late autumn or winter months to avoid disturbing any breeding birds in the hedges.

At the time of the visit the main habitat on the site was bare ground..

The proposed site was bordered by a narrow lane and hedgerow on the south side. Another field boundary, almost at right angles to the road and running north to south, was a tall hedge-line.

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.

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 unless there is removal of any section of hedgerows.

Conclusion

The site at Llancarfan is ploughed farmland. The proposed drilling will again cause disturbance to small areas of the site for a maximum of three months. The hedgerow to the south and east should be safeguarded but it is unclear where access to the site will be made.

It is concluded that provided there is no damage to any hedgerow, the proposed works will have no long-term impact on the site, and the habitat should recover post disturbance.