

Construction Environmental Management Plan – Biodiversity

Cable Route for Forest Gate Solar Farm, Chippenham, Wiltshire

Prepared for Eden FG Solar Ltd

by

Wychwood Biodiversity

11th November 2025



Report Date	Version	Authors	Reviewed
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Introduction

This Construction and Ecological Management Plan – Biodiversity (CEMP) has been prepared to discharge Condition 4 of the full planning permission (application number PL/2024/05649) for the cable route linking Forest Gate Solar Farm to Chippenham Substation.

Condition 4 states:

Prior to the commencement of works, including demolition, ground works/excavation, site clearance, vegetation clearance and boundary treatment works, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval in writing. The Plan shall provide details of the avoidance, mitigation and protective measures to be implemented before and during the construction phase, including but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- a) Identification of ecological protection areas/buffer zones and tree root protection areas and details of physical means of protection, e.g. exclusion fencing, specific working methods.
- b) Working method statements for protected/priority species, such as nesting birds and reptiles. Including how access to, from and within the working corridor will be achieved with minimal impact upon surrounding habitats.
- c) Mitigation strategies already agreed with the local planning authority prior to determination, such as for works in close proximity to water bodies and hedgerows.
- d) Work schedules for activities with specific timing requirements in order to avoid/reduce potential harm to ecological receptors; including details of when a licensed ecologist and/or ecological clerk of works (ECoW) shall be present on site.
- e) Key personnel, responsibilities and contact details (including Site Manager and ecologist/ECoW). Development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved CEMP.

REASON: To ensure adequate protection and mitigation for ecological receptors prior to and during construction, and that works are undertaken in line with current best practice and industry standards and are supervised by a suitably licensed and competent professional ecological consultant where applicable.

This document identifies all potential construction related impacts to the existing biodiversity on site during the construction phase, taking into account the limited extent and duration of the works. This CEMP has been devised in accordance with paragraph 7.3.6 of the Biodiversity Metric Guidance (Natural England/Defra Group, 2023) 'Accounting for temporary losses' which states that a temporary loss is where there is restoration of a habitat, to its baseline type and condition within 2 years of the date of initial habitat loss, delivered in the same location.

An assessment of baseline habitat conditions was presented in the PEA (Wychwood Biodiversity, 2024) using the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd, 2023) and detailed in the Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool Version 4.0 (Natural England, 2022). These baseline results are referred to here and also in the accompanying Habitat Monitoring Report (Wychwood Biodiversity, 2025).

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to describe measures to avoid and minimise impacts to biodiversity during construction of the cable route, and present a work plan to ensure the impact area is restored to its original habitat type and condition within 2 years.

The report begins with a summary of the proposed construction activities and the potential impacts to biodiversity. This is followed by a description of ecological protection areas outlined in the PEA (Wychwood Biodiversity, 2024), working method statements for protected species and mitigation strategies for hedgerows and other key habitats already agreed with the LPA. Finally, a work schedule is provided along with the listing of key responsibilities for the delivery of this programme.

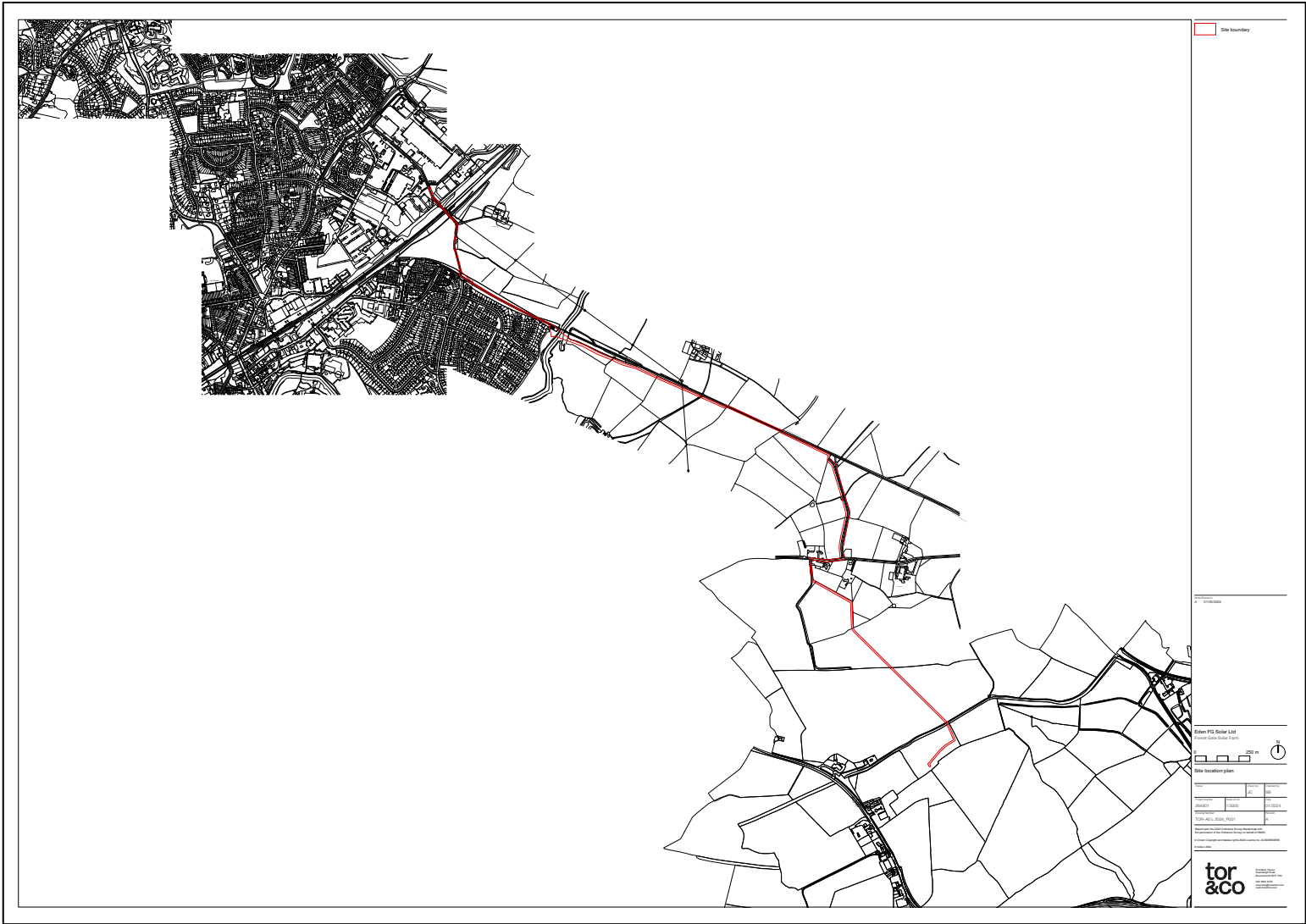
Project design

The connection for the Forest Gate solar farm is a 33kv cable approximately 4.28km long. It connects the substation on Cocklebury Lane on the north eastern side of Chippenham to the substation within the permitted Forest Gate solar farm (Figure 1). The route is approximately south easterly from Chippenham, initially along a short section of Cocklebury Lane and then along public byway CHIP44 including the bridge over the rail line, followed by public footpath CHIP45 and then alongside, within and under the National Cycle Network trail 403 (the majority of this section of the route will be alongside the cycle track, with the western wooded section being directionally drilled) which runs along a former railway line. There are two options at the section between Stanley Lane and the National Cycle Network trail 403, this include either locating the cable along the farm track itself (Hither Lane), which is considered an artificial surface; or within the adjacent verge or within the grassland in the fields to the west of the farm track, which are both classified as Modified Grassland under UK Habitat criteria (Wychwood Biodiversity, 2024). The route is then followed by a stretch along Stanley Lane, before the cable route crosses pastureland to connect with the solar farm.

The 33kv cable will be buried around 0.5-1m beneath the ground in a trench dug mechanically or by hand where necessary to a depth of 1.2-1.5m. Four sections totalling 1.3km will be directionally drilled. For the trenched sections, the cable will be laid on a bed of sand and then backfilled with the excavated material and restored to the original ground level. The trench footprint will be narrow (typically 0.5m) and trenching will be a rapid process, taking approximately 2-3 days from trench digging to backfilling of each section. Assuming a mean of 50m per day is installed, the total time to complete the cable installation will be in the order of 18 weeks.

The trenching process will likely involve a trenching machine and cable laying vehicle, as well as a tractor with a box tipper trailer and an excavator. Given this process will involve vehicles and human activities, a total disturbance width of 5m has been calculated for the construction works along the length of the cable route. This is the estimate for the actual area of habitat disturbance within the wider 9m cable route corridor. The directional drilling will involve a work area at each end of the drill section for the drill machine to work from. The duration of the drilling operation depends on the length of the section, but in total the directional drilling is not expected to take longer than 14 days.

Figure 1. Route of cable connecting Forest Gate solar farm and the substation at Chippenham.



Potential impacts of the cable route

The key potential impacts to ecological features as identified in the PEA (Wychwood Biodiversity, 2024) are as follows:

- 1. Direct disturbance to ecological features, e.g., where the cable trench crosses hedgerows or intersects with priority habitats, UK Habitats, and designated sites; and
- 2. Temporary disturbance from noise and dust during the construction process, and potentially artificial lighting during work hours, if conducted in winter.

Key ecological features, predicted impacts and proposed mitigations

The following key ecological features were identified in the PEA (Wychwood Biodiversity, 2024) as being potentially impacted by the cable run works. Any features deemed to have negligible impact pre-mitigation have been screened out. Proposed mitigations are summarised within the table and presented in detail in the following sections.

Table 1. Key ecological features, predicted impacts and proposed mitigations

Category	Ecological feature	Potential impact	Proposed mitigations	Residual impact
Ponds and waterways	River Avon	Direct disturbance	Directional drilling to avoid impacts	Negligible
	Field drains x 3	Direct disturbance	Directional drilling to avoid impacts	Negligible
	Disused canal	Direct disturbance	Directional drilling to avoid impacts	Negligible
Protected habitats	Deciduous woodland, hedgerows	Impacts to root systems	Root protection areas; directional drilling where space is constrained (western end of cycle track)	Negligible
Protected species	Breeding birds, reptiles, badgers	Direct disturbance, Temporary disturbance from noise, light and dust during the construction process.	RAMS to minimise light spill, open trenches overnight and chemicals.	Negligible
UK Habitat (options 1 and 2)	Modified grassland, poor condition	Direct disturbance	Reseeding with appropriate grassland, weed control	Negligible

Ecological protection areas

The Wychwood team worked with Eden's engineering and technical consultant team to ensure the following ecological protection areas (buffer zones) are inherent to the site design.

Ponds and waterways

The cable route crosses waterways at five locations as follows (see Figure 2 below):

- point E where the cable way crosses the River Avon
- points D, C and B where the cable crosses field drains, and
- point A where the cable crosses the disused canal

Disturbance to the waterway will be mitigated by use of existing crossings wherever possible, and the use of directional drilling where this is not possible.

Where directional drilling is employed, there will be a buffer of minimum 15m between the bank of the waterway and the entry / exit pits to avoid sediment entering the waterway from the drilling site.

Root protection areas

The cable route follows a cycle route through predominantly Oak and Ash woodland at its western end and is bordered by hedgerows and trees at various locations along its length.

In accordance with BS 5837: 2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition, and Construction, Root Protection Areas (RPAs) have been identified along the length of the cable route (ACD Environmental 2024a & 2024b). The size of these areas will vary depending on the size and age of the trees. RPAs are displayed in Appendices 1a and 1b.

Where the cable route has been deemed to intersect with the RPA of trees or hedgerows, a trenchless insertion solution has been identified, as described in greater detail in 'Mitigation Strategies'. This is designed to avoid impacts to the root structures of trees, especially those fine, non-woody roots found within the uppermost 600mm of rooting environment.

Where all activity can be excluded from the RPA, vertical barriers should be erected to create a construction exclusion zone. Given the length of cycleway, a rolling tree protection methodology is proposed for the entirety of the cable installation works. This involves fencing being installed in the immediate vicinity of excavation works, and being adjusted as works proceed along the cycleway. The fencing should be a weld mesh panel design, mounted within rubber boots and pinned to the ground. This will allow for prompt and easy installation and realignment (ACD, 2024a).

All operatives undertaking works on site will be briefed prior to the works commencing on the location, status and protection requirements for all retained vegetation and other features prior to works commencing.

Method statements: protected species

This section presents the working method statements for protected and priority species, such as nesting birds and reptiles from disturbance during construction.

With the above ecological protection areas in place, impacts to the majority of ecological features will be avoided or minimised. However, there is still potential for temporary disturbance from noise, vibration and human activity to affect protected species during the construction process.

To minimise these impacts, the following reasonable avoidance measures (RAMS) will be put in place:

- A walkover search will be undertaken throughout the entire route in the four weeks prior to construction to avoid impacts to protected species including badgers, reptiles, amphibians, and breeding birds, among other species.
- Open trenches and excavations will be covered overnight where possible, or wildlife ramps will be placed within the excavations to enable trapped wildlife to escape.
- Any lighting required in the construction period will be directional and pointed away from woodland and hedgerows to minimise light spill and will only be in use during working hours.

Method statements for specific protected species and species groups identified as being potentially impacted in the PEA (Wychwood Biodiversity, 2024) are described below.

Badgers

Potential impacts

Disturbance to setts or burrows

If an active Badger sett or burrow is present on or adjacent to the site, construction activities including trenching could disturb breeding or hibernating individuals.

Risks from pits and entrapment

Trenches and pits excavated during the installation of the cable could pose a threat to Badgers or other terrestrial animals that may become trapped overnight, or during breaks in work. Trapped individuals will have limited access to food, may suffer exposure, or drown during periods of heavy rainfall.

Impacts to foraging activities

Construction activities may have a minor temporary impact on Badgers due to disturbances to their foraging habitat caused by excavations and vehicle movements

Method statement

To assess the status of existing Badger setts/burrows on site, or presence of any new or undetected setts that could be impacted by construction, a pre-construction Badger survey will be undertaken a maximum of 1 month prior to construction commencing.

An ecologist of suitable qualifications and experience will be appointed to provide all construction workers with a “toolbox talk”, to notify them of the possible presence of protected species and will explain the protocol for stopping works if any Badger setts or burrows are discovered during works.

Disturbance to setts or burrows

All contractors are to be briefed regarding the potential for Badgers on site. If Badgers or active setts are found to be present at any stage during the works, all works must cease, and further steps are to be advised by the ecologist.

If active setts or burrows are found within 50m of the proposed development, protective buffers would be instated; and no construction activities or habitat removal would take place within these buffers. The precise width of the buffers will be assessed on a site-by-site basis, in agreement with the LPA.

Risks from pits and entrapment

To prevent Badgers and other terrestrial animals from being trapped in ground works, any trenches or deep pits should either be covered overnight or have a rough sawn plank placed in them to act as a ramp. Further, any trenches or pits should be inspected each morning to ensure no animals have become trapped overnight. If a trapped animal is encountered and the animal does not escape after the insertion of an escape plank, the ecologist should be contacted immediately to discuss an appropriate manner in which to proceed.

Preventing foraging accessibility

There may be temporary access limitations to Badgers foraging on site during the construction period, however, immediately following the construction period, the site will be fully accessible to badgers.

Hedgerow or tree nesting birds

Potential impacts

Disturbance or destruction of active nests

Hedgerow or tree nesting birds may be disturbed by construction noise, vibration, dust and artificial lighting if this disturbance occurs in close proximity to nesting habitat.

Method statement

Ideally construction would take place outside the bird breeding season (i.e. avoiding the period 1st March – 31st July inclusive). If construction occurs within the bird breeding season, then the following RAMS must be followed:

- a) The ecologist will provide all construction workers with a “toolbox talk”, to notify them of the possible presence of breeding birds and their protection.
- b) Works will take place more than 5m from hedgerows, as a general rule, unless there is no alternative, further decreasing any possible interference with hedgerow nesting birds.
- c) If works will occur within 5m of a hedgerow then an ecologist will search the hedgerow for nesting birds. If an occupied nest is found then no works can continue within 5m of the nest until the chicks have fledged and then nest is no longer a breeding site.

Reptiles

Potential impacts

Disturbance to terrestrial habitats

Reptiles may be disturbed by construction noise, vibration, dust and artificial lighting if this disturbance occurs in close proximity to hedgerows or other suitable habitats. Reptiles crossing the

construction area may be killed or injured by construction activities occurring close to terrestrial habitats.

Risks from pits and entrapment

Trenches and pits excavated during the installation of the cable could pose a threat to reptiles or other herpetiles that may become trapped overnight, or during breaks in work. Trapped individuals will have limited access to food, may suffer exposure, or drown during periods of heavy rainfall.

Method statement

All construction works will adhere to the RAMs prepared for reptiles as follows.

Disturbance to terrestrial habitats

The ecologist will provide all construction workers with a “toolbox talk”, to notify them of the possible presence of reptiles and their protection.

Works will take place more than 5m from hedgerows, as a general rule, unless there is no alternative, further decreasing any possible interference with reptiles.

If works will occur within 5m of a hedgerow then an ecologist will search the hedgerow for reptiles. If a reptile is found, then construction will stop and an assessment will be made of potential impacts. Works will only recommence once the ecologist is satisfied the risk of harm to the reptiles is negligible.

Risks from pits and entrapment

Any trenches or excavations made during construction works will be either covered over at night or provided with adequate escape routes if left open and will be checked prior to infilling.

In the unlikely event than Great Crested Newts are discovered during works, all works will cease and the ecologist will determine a suitable course of action to minimise risk and will assess whether licensing is required.

Mitigation strategies

In this section those mitigation strategies already agreed with the local planning authority prior to determination, such as for works near water bodies and hedgerows, are presented.

Directional drilling

Directional drilling will be undertaken where the cable route intersects with a tree or hedgerow RPA, for example, along the western extent of the cycle path where the route passes through the RPA of multiple mature trees.

Five sections totalling 1.3km will be directionally drilled. The directional drilling will involve a work area at each end of the drill section for the drill machine to work from. This typically takes the form of a pit 2 x 2m and 1m deep from which the drill and pipes are inserted into the ground. A similar pit at the other end of the drilling section is used to retrieve the drill. The duration of the drilling operation depends on the length of the section, but in total the directional drilling is not expected to take longer than 14 days.

Directional drilling will avoid impacts to the sensitive non-woody roots within the uppermost 600mm of soil. In addition, there will be no surface impacts from trenching along these sections, as all the

excavations will be underground. Therefore, surface impacts will be limited to the movement of vehicles and people between the drill pits. As a result, impacts to protected wildlife from noise, vibration and lighting should be reduced along the drilled sections of the cable run.

Directional drilling will also be used to pass beneath waterways, including the Avon River, three field drains and a section of the disused Wilts and Berks Canal. The drilling route will pass under the waterway in each case without intersecting with, or disturbing, the riverbed. As stated previously, a minimum buffer of 15m will be established between the drilling activity and the bank of the waterway to mitigate the risk of sediment entering the waterway.

Figure 2. Five crossing points of waterways along the cable route.



Table 2. Location for 5 crossing points of waterways.

Waterway ref.	Waterway type	Grid Ref.
A	Disused canal	ST95087191
B	Drain	ST94817217
C	Drain	ST94587295
D	Drain	ST93547358
E	Avon River	ST93327371

Restoration of trench and construction impacts

To address any residual impacts post-construction, the following restoration measures will be undertaken. These measures are designed specifically to restore each impacted habitat to its baseline type and condition:

- The trench will be refilled according to good practice in soil management, with subsoil covering the aggregate around the cables, and topsoil being replaced in the uppermost section of the trench to bring it up to ground level.
- The footprint will be reinstated using appropriate seeding on any damaged areas and monitored for invasive plant species for 2 years. Any invasive plant species will be suitably controlled.
- Any damage to vegetation will be reinstated in the next suitable season following construction using an appropriate seed mix and seeding methodology (**see Appendix 2**) as follows: The sections running through the south field (between the site and Stanley Lane) will be Modified Grassland - poor condition. These areas will be seeded with a grazing seed mix and managed as agricultural grassland, as per the rest of the field area.
- The sections running through the field edges adjacent to the cycle route will be Modified Grassland - poor condition. These areas will be seeded with a grazing seed mix and managed as agricultural grassland, as per the rest of the field area.
- If option 2 is used for Hither Lane, the cable route will be seeded with a grazing seed mix and managed as agricultural grassland, as per the rest of the field area.
- The margins astride the short section of footpath that leads up to Cocklebury Lane will be reinstated as Modified Grassland, good condition. Directional drilling will take place along the entire length of this of footpath and byway.
- All restoration areas will be monitored twice annually in the growing season to a) identify any weed problems and b) track progress towards the target habitat type and condition.

General mitigations

The following section includes potential construction threats to the ecological resilience of the entire site. The potential construction impacts are presented, followed by the applicable avoidance, mitigation, or protection measures.

Potential impacts

Hazardous chemicals

Hazardous chemicals can have devastating impacts on local ecosystems, particularly if the chemicals seep into nearby water systems. Impacts can include destruction of plants and animal communities, or impacts to natural processes such as reproduction, growth, and dispersal. This will be mitigated as follows:

- a) Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development will be strictly stored and disposed of correctly according to 'The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002' (COSHH) (UK Government, 2002).

- b) A COSHH risk assessment will be carried out by the site manager prior to construction and workers will follow the strict protocols at all times. Adhering to the protocols will prevent accidental spillage or run off into terrestrial habitats, ponds, and watercourses; thus averting ecological impacts.

Invasive plants

Non-native invasive plant species can change the habitat structure of an area, making it unsuitable for the other organisms that live there. Particularly pernicious species such as Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) can overrun localised areas, preventing native plants from growing, thus reducing the overall biodiversity value of the site.

This risk will be managed as follows:

If any non-native invasive plant species identified by DEFRA as special concern are discovered on site, appropriate measures will be undertaken to avoid their spread. Such measures should include physical clearance of invasive plants from the site and disposing of the waste correctly. Finally, to prevent the spread of invasive plant species on or off site, all vehicles and plant should arrive clean and be cleaned before transfer to a different site following best practice, to avoid transport of vegetation or seeds.

Other protected species

Should any evidence of protected species not included in this report, such as Water Vole, Otter, or any Schedule 1. Listed breeding birds (March to August, inclusive), all works must cease, and the advice of a suitably qualified ecologist sought.

With the above mitigations in place, it is considered the potential effects to ecological features from the installation of a grid connection cable along the proposed cable route will be negligible, and it will be possible to restore the habitats to pre-construction conditions within two years.

Please refer to the accompanying Habitat Monitoring Plan (Wychwood Biodiversity, 2025) for details of monitoring the habitats to their original target habitat type and condition within 2 years.

Work schedules

Construction activities will be timed wherever possible to avoid potential disturbance to fauna and flora onsite.

The sensitive periods for relevant protected and vulnerable species are set out below and summarised in Table 3. Months in yellow denote sensitive periods in the natural cycles of each habitat or species, during which they are more likely to be subject to harm or disturbance. Months highlighted in green denote less critical periods, where construction work is less likely to have a negative impact.

Table 3. Recommended construction timings to avoid impacting sensitive species

Sensitive species	Rational for avoidance	Recommended construction times to avoid disturbance											
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Badgers	Badgers are inactive during hibernation and are at risk of disturbance during this period (November - February, inclusive)	NR	NR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NR	NR
Dormice	Dormice are inactive during hibernation and are at risk of disturbance during this period (November - February, inclusive)	NR	NR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NR	NR
Breeding birds	Breeding birds and offspring, particularly curlew and those that nest on the ground, are at risk of harm or disturbance during the breeding season (March - September, inclusive).	✓	✓	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	✓	✓	✓
Reptiles and amphibians	Reptiles are inactive during hibernation and are at risk of disturbance during this period (November - February, inclusive).	NR	NR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NR	NR
Great crested newts	During the breeding period, newts may be moving between refuge habitats such as hedgerows, and ponds and subject to harm or disturbance (March - May, inclusive)	✓	✓	NR	NR	NR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key personnel and responsibilities

The following section identifies the persons responsible for ensuring the scheme is delivered in accordance with the policy and legislation safeguarding UK wildlife; complies with planning permission commitments; and adheres to the measures, timings and protocols outlined in this CEMP.

Ecologist

The ecologist is appointed to identify the majority of protected or notable species within the construction area.

The ecologist is responsible for monitoring site-based construction activities, to ensure the scheme is delivered in accordance with the policy and legislation safeguarding UK wildlife; complies with planning permission commitments; and adheres to the measures, timings and protocols outlined in this CEMP. The ecologist must also be available to identify and resolve any ecological related issues that may arise during the construction phase of the project and will be responsible for providing guidance and information to the construction work force, to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities.

The ecologist will be on site a minimum of one day per week throughout the construction period, and on call at all times. In particular, they will be present for works in more sensitive parts of the site (such as those highlighted in this report).

The ecologist will be appointed by the construction company and Eden FG Solar Ltd to carry out the required biodiversity monitoring during the construction phase.

Ecologist required qualifications/experience

The qualifications and experience required for the ecologist may vary depending on the specific job requirements. Though at a minimum such persons should meet the following criteria:

- At a minimum, a Bachelor's degree in ecology, environmental science, or related field.
- Knowledge of UK ecological principles and biodiversity conservation.
- Field experience in ecological surveys in the UK and data collection.

- Familiarity with UK environmental regulations and policies.
- Proficiency in ecological survey equipment and data analysis tools.
- Strong communication and reporting skills.

Site manager

The site manager is responsible for ensuring the CEMP is understood and complied with by all contractors throughout the construction period.

The site manager will be employed by the construction company engaged to undertake the construction works.

Construction manager

The construction manager will be employed by Eden FG Solar Ltd to oversee the entire process of installing the cable along the cable route, ensuring legal compliance is met and the project is delivered within the timeframes and to agreed specifications.

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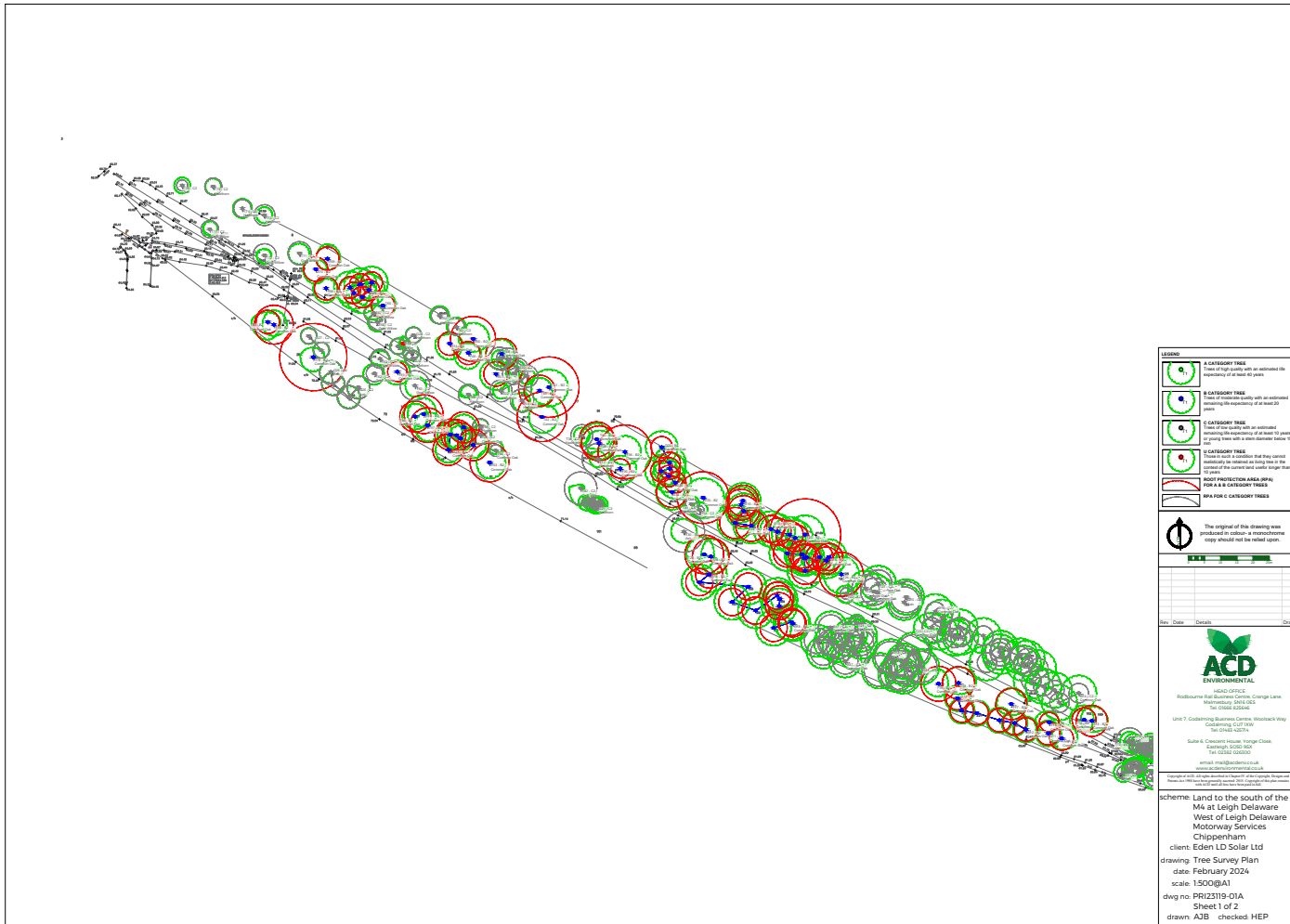
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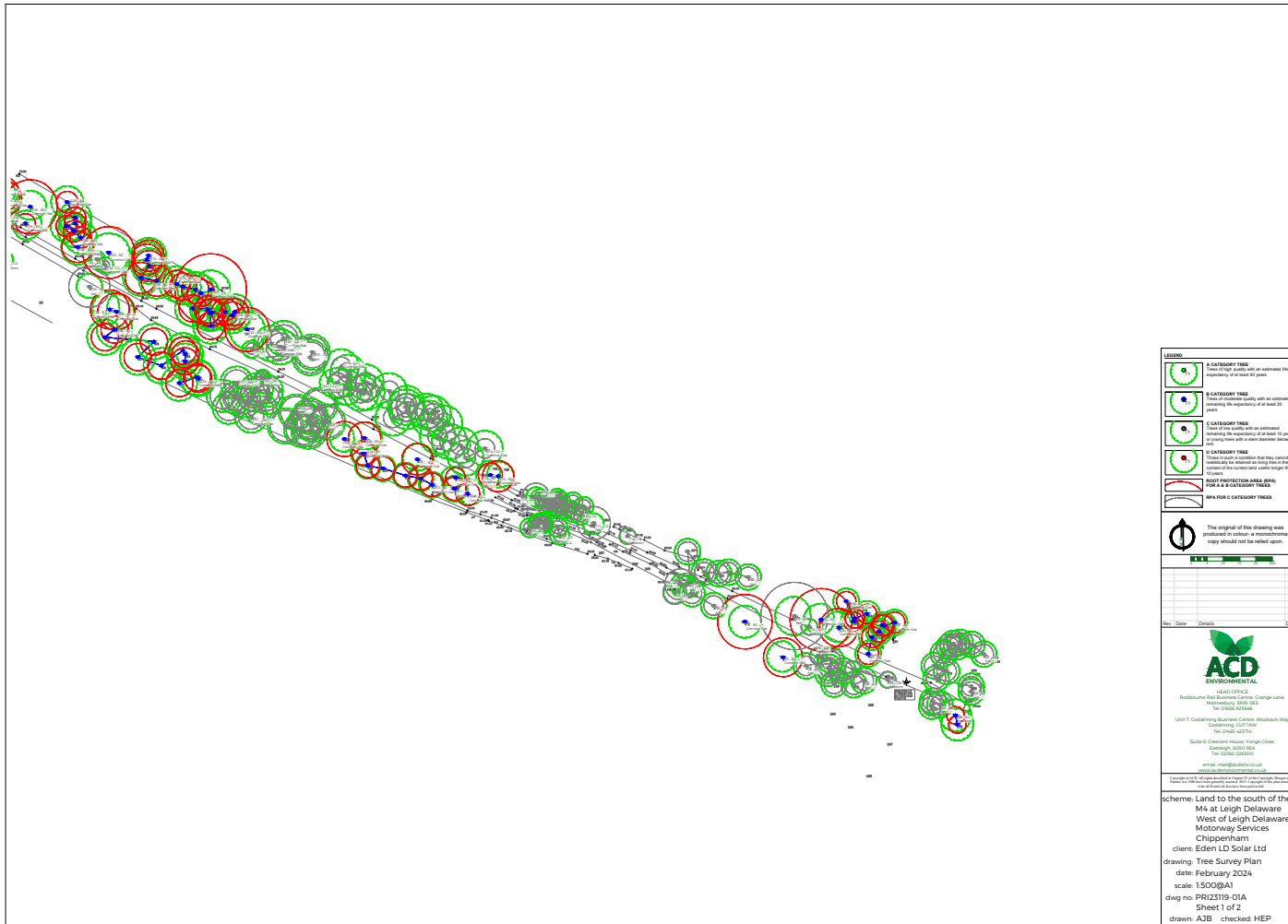
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Appendix Ia. Tree and hedgerow Root Protection Areas on western section of cable run (sheet 1)



Appendix Ib. Tree and hedgerow Root Protection Areas on western section of cable run (sheet 2)



Appendix 2. Appropriate seeding methodology for reseeding cable route

Grassland creation will take place as soon as possible post-cable installation once all construction vehicle movements have ceased.

Sowing of grassland seed is best undertaken in early autumn, whilst soil temperatures remain high and there is moisture in the soil. Sowing can also take place in spring, but seedling development success will be lower if the weather is dry for a prolonged period.

The reinstated cable route should be mechanically worked to a fine tilth prior to seeding. The seed should be sown at the desired rate using a tractor mounted broadcaster or by hand where machines cannot access. On bare ground approximately 40kg of seed is required per hectare. The seed should be rolled in using a Cambridge roller or similar, wherever possible.

Seeding must be protected from vehicle, human and livestock traffic for at least 6 months and inspected for weeds and controlled using hand pulling (or spot treatment with a selective herbicide where weeds occur at high density) for 2 years.