



FIVE  
ESTUARIES  
OFFSHORE WIND FARM

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OFFSHORE WIND FARM  
PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL  
INFORMATION REPORT

VOLUME 5, ANNEX 4.4: GREAT CRESTED  
NEWT SURVEY REPORT: NORTH OF A120

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# FIVE ESTUARIES OFFSHORE WIND FARM

**Great Crested Newt (GCN) Survey Report: North of  
A120**

Prepared for: GoBe Consultants (on behalf of Five  
Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm Ltd)

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## DEFINITION OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
CEnv	Chartered Environmentalist
DCO	Development Consent Order
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment.
ES	Environmental Statement
GCN	Great crested newt
HSI	Habitat Suitability Index
NE	Natural England
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
RLB	Red Line Boundary
VE OWFL	Five Estuaries Offshore Windfarm Limited.

## 1.0 Introduction

Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm (VE OWF) is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is being undertaken, the findings of which will be presented within an Environmental Statement (ES), which will accompany a Development Consent Order (DCO) application under the Planning Act 2008.

SLR Consulting was commissioned by GoBe Consultants, on behalf of Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Ltd, to undertake a Great Crested Newt (GCN) survey of those relevant parts of the project site that may be affected by the construction and operation of the onshore aspects of the VE OWF project north of the A120. These comprise the installation of a cable within a working corridor and the construction of a substation (hereafter referred to as “onshore infrastructure”).

This report presents the findings of the GCN survey undertaken in spring 2022, in line with the recommendations in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.1 Survey Area

The GCN Survey Area comprised suitable waterbodies (e.g. ponds) within a 250 m zone around the draft Red Line Boundary (RLB) available at the time of survey, as indicated on Figure 1. In addition, habitat survey information gathered by SLR ecologists during fieldwork in 2022<sup>2</sup> has been used to identify locations most likely to be used by breeding, hibernating and foraging GCN within 100 m of the draft RLB at the time of survey.

### 1.2 Purpose of this Report

This report presents the findings of the 2022 GCN survey. The report seeks to establish baseline conditions and identify habitats that may be important for this species. The assessment of impacts resulting from the onshore elements of VE OWF is beyond the scope of this report and is covered in the Onshore Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Chapter of the PEIR (and ES in due course).

The main objectives of the work were to:

- undertake a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment of all ponds present within 250 m of the draft RLB at the time of survey;
- determine the presence/absence of GCN at all ponds within 250 m of the draft RLB at the time of survey;
- determine the GCN population size class in ponds within 250 m of permanent habitat loss associated with the proposed onshore substation;
- determine the size class of any GCN populations within all ponds within 100 m of temporary habitat loss associated with construction (ie within 100m of the RLB); and
- evaluate the importance of the GCN populations (if present) in a local, regional and national context.

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<sup>1</sup> Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Onshore), SLR Consulting, May 2022

<sup>2</sup> Contained within Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm Habitat and Hedgerow Survey N of A120, SLR Consulting, December 2022.

### 1.3 Evidence of Technical Competence and Experience

Surveys were undertaken by teams of staff from Thomson Ecology, details of lead surveyors are provided below.

**Table 1.1**  
**Survey Personnel**

Staff Name and Company	NE GCN Licence Reference
Sebastian Ashton – Thomson	2022-10149-CL08-GCN
Lisa Wood – Thomson	2021-53171-CLS-CLS
Abi Wain – Thomson	Accredited agent under the licence of Alice Samuel (2020-46334-CLS-CLS)
Jess Green - Thomson	2021-51495-CLS-CLS

Jess Colebrook is the lead author of this report, a Principal Ecologist at SLR Consulting with over 20 years' experience as a professional ecologist. She is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) and a full member of CIEEM (MCIEEM). Jess is leading the onshore ecological work necessary to inform the EIA for the project.

Andy Law MCIEEM CEnv conducted a review of the report. Andy is a Principal Ecologist at SLR Consulting Ltd with more than 20 years professional experience.



## 2.0 Methodology

### 2.1 Field Surveys

All surveys were undertaken in accordance with published good practice guidance (English Nature, 2001)<sup>3</sup>(Biggs et al, 2014)<sup>4</sup>, between April to June of 2022. Surveys teams comprised a lead (Natural England (NE) licence holder or accredited agent) and assistant. Full details in respect of the surveys undertaken at each pond are included in the table at Appendix 1, summary detail is provided below in Table 2.1.

Fourteen ponds have been identified as being present within 250 m of the RLB presented at PEIR of which four proved inaccessible for survey due to lack of landowner permission.

Presence/ absence survey was undertaken at each accessible pond, as described below and shown in Table 2.1:

- where ever possible, ponds were subject to presence/absence surveys using a minimum of three methods including trapping, netting, torching and egg search, plus Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment from April to June;
- if the above standard survey effort was not possible (for example due to late access) then ponds were subject to environmental DNA (eDNA) survey, egg search and HSI assessment;
- the welfare of GCN was an important consideration when undertaking surveys and deciding on the most appropriate survey methods; and
- biosecurity measures were implemented to ensure the risks of introducing disease or invasive species were minimised. This included cleaning and disinfection of surveyors boots before and after each pond survey, and cleaning/ disinfection of survey equipment (in particular bottle traps) before each use in a new pond.

**Table 2.1**  
**Ponds Subject to Survey**

Pond number	Presence/absence survey type	
	eDNA test conducted	Torch/trap/egg search
85	N	Y
86	N	Y
87	N	Y
88	N	Y

<sup>3</sup> English Nature (2001) Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines

<sup>4</sup> Biggs J, Ewald N, Valentini A, Gaboriaud C, Griffiths RA, Foster J, Wilkinson J, Arnett A, Williams P and Dunn F 2014. Analytical and methodological development for improved surveillance of the Great Crested Newt. Appendix 5. Technical advice note for field and laboratory sampling of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) environmental DNA. Freshwater Habitats Trust, Oxford.

Pond number	Presence/absence survey type	
	eDNA test conducted	Torch/trap/egg search
89	Not accessible	
90	N	Y
91	Y	N
92	Not accessible	
93	Not accessible	
96	Not accessible	
97	N	Y
98	Y	N
99	Y	N
101	Y	N

### 2.1.1 Torchlight survey

Torchlight surveys were undertaken at night and involved a slow walk around the pond perimeters with a 1,000,000 candlepower hand torch to help identify newts in the ponds.

### 2.1.2 Bottle trapping

Bottle traps were set around the edge of the ponds at accessible shorelines where the substrate allowed. The number of traps set varied depending on the size of the waterbody and accessibility to the water's edge. Traps were deployed then left overnight to be retrieved for assessment the following morning.

### 2.1.3 Egg searching

Egg-searching surveys involve inspecting pond vegetation for the presence of GCN eggs within folded leaves. Once a GCN egg was found, the presence of this species was confirmed (in a presence/absence sense) in that particular waterbody and no further eggs searches were undertaken to avoid un-necessary damage to aquatic habitats.

### 2.1.4 eDNA sampling

Environmental DNA sampling protocol<sup>4</sup> was followed for four water bodies surveyed and samples analysed by Nature Metrics Ltd, Bakeham Lane, TW20 9TY in accordance with published protocols. Samples were collected within the recommended timeframes (mid-April to end of June).

### 2.1.5 HSI assessment

HSI scores are calculated using ten parameters: site location; waterbody area; frequency of waterbody drying; water quality; shade; waterfowl; fish; presence of other waterbodies in the area; terrestrial habitat; and macrophyte communities. Each parameter scores a value of between 0.01 and 1. These scores are then multiplied and 'rooted' to produce a geometric mean score, of between 0 and 1. The following categorical scale is then used to estimate the overall suitability of the water body concerned.

**Table 2.2**  
**HSI Scores**

HSI Score	Waterbody Suitability for GCN
<0.5	Poor
0.5-0.59	Below Average
0.6-0.69	Average
0.7-0.79	Good
>0.8	Excellent

## 2.2 Limitations




Access permission was refused at four ponds (numbers 89, 92, 93 and 96), and an assessment of the likelihood of GCN presence at these is presented in section 4.0. This is not considered to be a significant limitation and it is considered that the objectives stated in section 1.2 have been met. However, specific instances where constraints were encountered at accessible ponds are included in the table at Appendix 1.




## 3.0 Results

### 3.1 Field Survey

No evidence of GCN was recorded at any pond. Raw data is included at Appendix 1, with lab results from eDNA analysis provided in Appendix 2. Refer to Figure 1 which identifies pond locations, GCN presence/absence and HSI scores for each pond. The table below provides summary details for each pond, including a photograph of each.

**Table 3.1**  
**2022 Results summary for each pond (GCN absent from all)**

Pond #	Easting	Northing	Photo	Description	HSI
85	611071	227187		Reservoir, directly adjacent to farmland. A pipe inletting water sporadically present in SW corner. Small patch of reeds present on the North side. Grassland around the pond had been recently cut.	Good
86	611850	227529		Manmade reservoir with evidence of fishing pontoons and large fish see in the waterbody, emergent vegetation forming a 1-2m border from the pond edge into the water, covering approximately 95% of the perimeter.	Below average
87	611682	227851		Large waterbody (lake/reservoir) with 3 small cabins on the east side. Trees are also present along the east side along with some reeds. Grassland banks. Farmland surrounds. Fish believe to be stocked in the pond. Swans and grebes and some ducks present at the time of survey.	Good

Pond #	Easting	Northing	Photo	Description	HSI
88	611125	227620		Small pond at the edge of farmland. Partially shaded by trees on the north side. Reeds present mostly in the east of the pond, trees present along north side. Gently sloping grass banks.	Good
89			No access		
90	610698	227838		Small pond with 100% tree cover/shading. Attached to ditch from west. Surrounded by dense scrub and trees, directly surrounded by farmland with crops.	Poor
91	610195	228442		Agricultural and residential grey water run off pond, highly vegetated and high algal cover. Swans present.	Good
92			No access		
93			No access		
96			No access		

Pond #	Easting	Northing	Photo	Description	HSI
97	607188	228874		Large Pond in woodland, no access, well shaded, little emergent flora.	Good
98	607376	229616		Artificially lined pond on strawberry farm.	Good
99	607422	229616		Artificially Lined pond on strawberry farm.	Average
101	611658	228046		Recently built waterbody, clearly artificially filled and likely used as a second fishing pond, next to pond 87. No emergent vegetation around perimeter of pond or elsewhere visible, pond looks lined by sand.	Good



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## 4.0 Discussion & Evaluation of Results

The landscape north of the A120 contains widely dispersed ponds with no evidence of GCN presence at surveyed ponds, or from desk study data<sup>1</sup>. When considering the potential for a population to be present at the four ponds where survey access was denied, the following comments are made based upon publicly available imagery and OS maps:

- Pond 89 – agricultural reservoir, more than 500 m from other mapped ponds;
- Pond 92 – pond in scrub in field corner, more than 500 m from other mapped ponds;
- Pond 93 – pond with scrub in field corner, more than 500 m from other mapped ponds; and
- Pond 96 – pond with scrub at field edge. One other pond within 500 m, located 470 m distant (outside of survey area).

On balance, it is considered highly unlikely that a population of GCN is present in any of the unsurveyed ponds, due to their isolation from a pond network and lack of evidence of GCN at nearby ponds or in desk study data.

GCN are considered absent within the study area.

### 4.1 Terrestrial Habitat Assessment

Based on a lack of evidence of GCN from field survey and desk study information, terrestrial habitats north of the A120 are not considered to be used by GCN, but may be used by other amphibian species, if present locally.

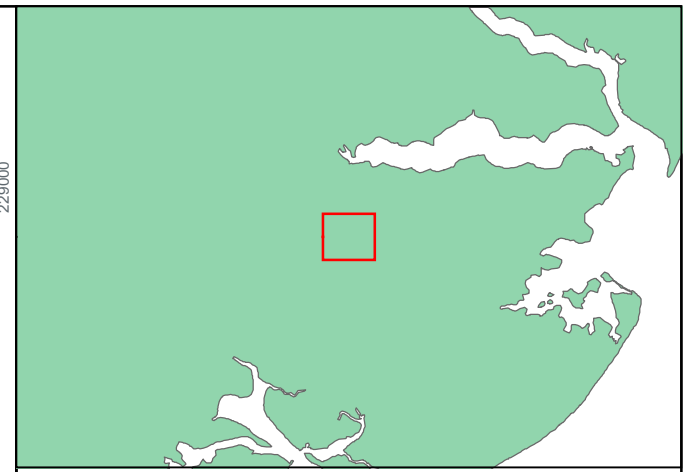
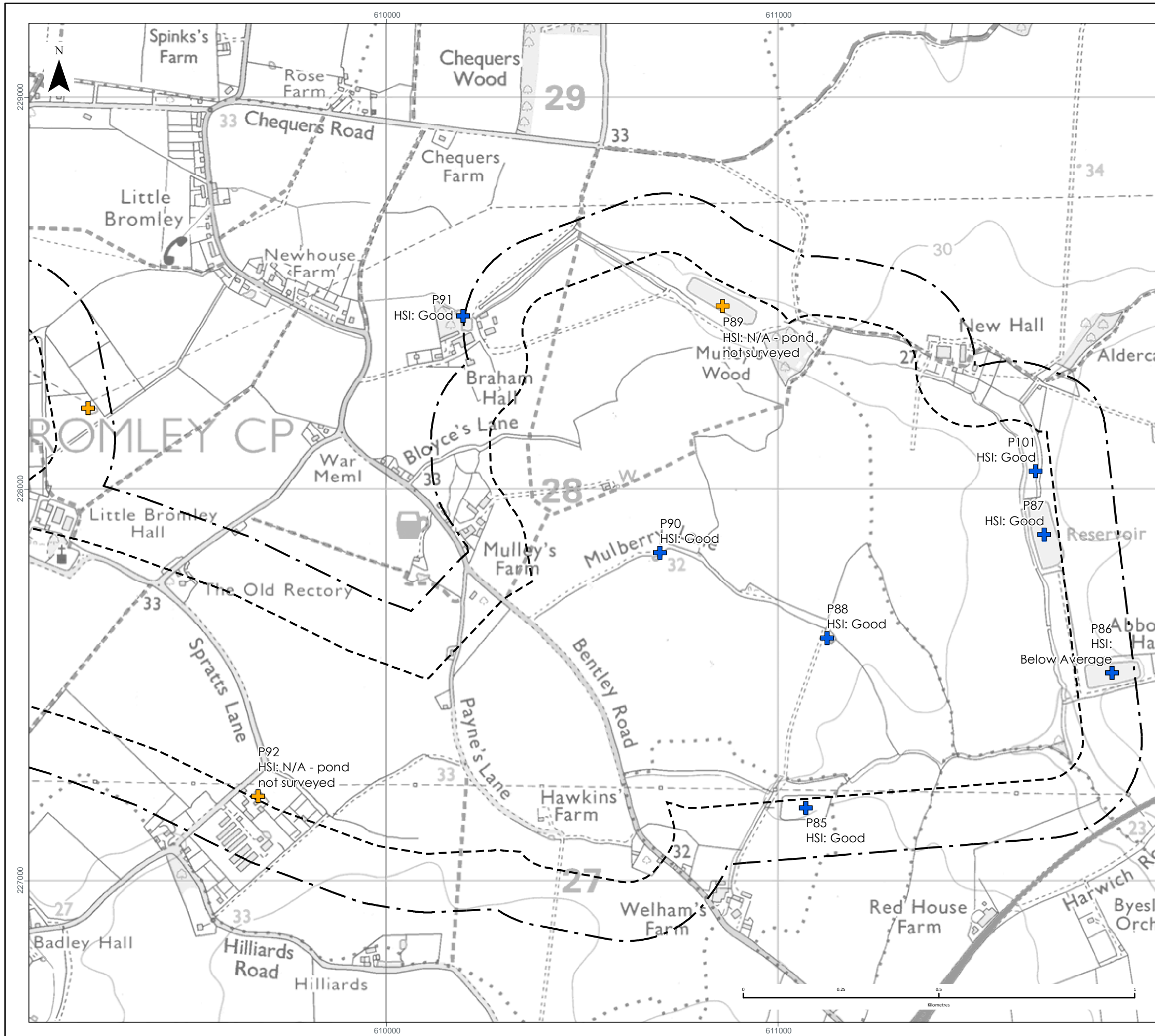
Urban (with the exception of private gardens), cropland and short sward modified grassland habitats are considered to be of low value to amphibians at all life cycle stages. Gardens, woodlands, hedgerows, scrub and wetlands are considered to be of high value to sheltering, hibernating and foraging amphibians (if present locally), as well as providing routes between ponds and foraging areas. Grassland (excluding modified grassland) and other vegetated habitat is considered to be of moderate value to sheltering and foraging amphibians (if present locally).

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**FIGURE 01**

Great Crested Newt Pre-existing Records and 2022 Survey Results





**LEGEND**

- [Dashed Line] Great Crested Newt Survey Area (2022)
- [Dotted Line] Habitat Survey Area (2022)
- [Blue Cross] GCN Not Present
- [Orange Cross] N/A - Pond Not Surveyed

Note:  
No pre-existing records found within the Great Crested Newt survey area (2022).

Data Source:  
© Crown copyright (and database rights) (2022) 0100031673 OS OpenData.

PROJECT TITLE:  
**FIVE ESTUARIES OFFSHORE WINDFARM**

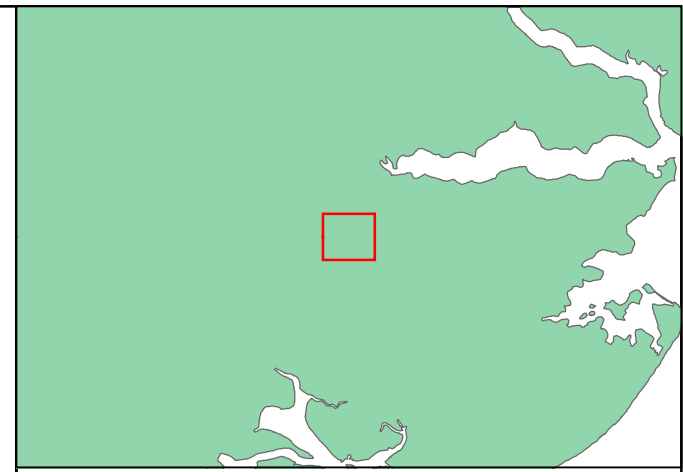
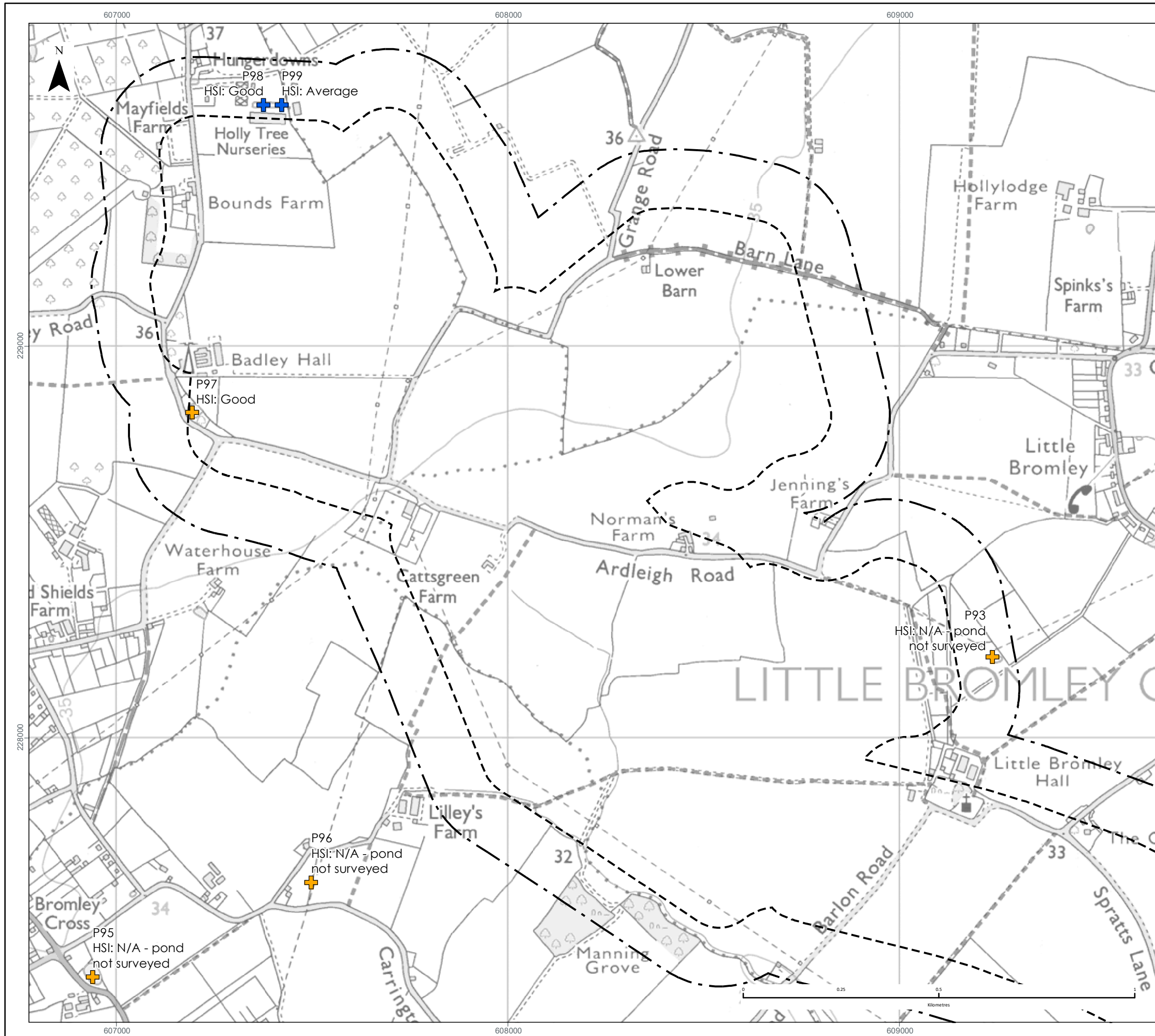
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**FIGURE 1**  
Page 1 of 2

SCALE: 1:10,000 | PLOT SIZE: A3 | DATUM: ODN | PROJECTION: British National Grid





**LEGEND**

- Great Crested Newt Survey Area (2022)
- Habitat Survey Area (2022)
- GCN Not Present
- N/A - Pond Not Surveyed

Note:  
No pre-existing records found within the Great Crested Newt survey area (2022).

Data Source:  
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DRAWING TITLE:  
**Pre-Existing Records and GCN Survey Results**

VER	DATE	REMARKS	Drawn	Checked
1	20/01/2023	For Issue	DB	JO

DRAWING NUMBER:  
**FIGURE 1**  
Page 2 of 2

SCALE: 1:10,000    PLOT SIZE: A3    DATUM: ODN    PROJECTION: British National Grid



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## APPENDIX 1

### Survey Raw Data

## HSI RAW DATA

Pond No	Easting	Northing	Lead Surveyor	HSI Date	SI1 Location	SI2 Area	SI3 Permanence	SI4 Water Quality	SI5 Shade	SI6 Waterfowl	SI7 Fish	SI8 Pond Count	SI9 Habitat	SI10 Macrophytes	HSI Score	HSI Result
85	611071	227187	LW, AW	10/05/2022	1	0.8	0.9	0.67	1	0.67	0.67	1	0.67	0.3	0.73	Good
86	611853	227531	LW, AW	12/05/2022	1	0.8	0.9	0.67	1	0.67	0.01	1	0.67	0.4	0.49	Below Average
87	611680	227884	LW, AW	09/05/2022	1	0.8	0.9	0.67	1	0.67	0.33	1	0.67	0.4	0.70	Good
88	611125	227620	LW, AW	10/05/2022	1	0.9	1	1	1	0.67	0.33	0.825	0.67	0.9	0.79	Good
90	610698	227838	LW, AW	11/05/2022	1	0.2	0.1	0.01	0.2	1	0.67	1	0.67	0.3	0.30	Poor
91	610195	228442	JG, SA, LW	09/06/2022	1	0.817	0.9	0.33	1	0.67	0.67	1	0.67	1	0.77	Good
97	607188	228874	JG, SA, LW	09/06/2022	1	0.8	0.9	0.67	1	0.67	0.67	0.825	0.67	0.5	0.75	Good
98	607376	229616	JG, SA, LW	09/06/2022	1	1	0.9	0.67	1	1	0.33	0.975	0.67	0.3	0.72	Good
99	607422	229616	JG, SA, LW	09/06/2022	1	0.5	0.9	0.67	1	1	0.33	0.975	0.67	0.3	0.67	Average
101	611658	228046	LW, AW	13/05/2022	1	0.8	0.9	0.67	1	0.67	0.67	1	0.67	0.3	0.73	Good

## POND TORCH/TRAP/NETTING RAW DATA

Pond No	Survey date	Visit No (B=bottle trap and egg search, T= torch)	Surveyor	Temp	No traps	% shoreline accessible	Why inaccessible	GCN	Smooth	Other amphibians
85	09/05/22	B1	LW, AW	16	20	100	N/A	0	0	0
85	12/05/22	B2	LW, AW, SA	16	20	100	N/A	0	4	tadpoles
85	16/05/22	B3	LW, AW, SA	15	15	100	N/A	0	1	0
85	31/05/22	B4	LW, JG	15	15	100	N/A	0	3	0
85	11/05/22	T1	LW, AW	11	N/A	100	N/A	0	3	0
85	16/05/22	T2	LW, AW, SA	15	N/A	100	N/A	0	2	tadpoles
85	23/05/22	T3	SA, LW	14	N/A	100	N/A	0	0	0
85	31/05/22	T4	LW, JG	14	N/A	100	N/A	0	0	0
86	12/05/22	B1	LW, AW	16	30	70	Dense Scrub	0	0	tadpoles
86	17/05/22	B2	LW, AW, SA	19	30	70	Dense Scrub	0	2	tadpoles
86	23/05/22	B3	SA, LW	15	30	50	Steep Bank	0	2	0
86	30/05/22	B4	LW, JG	15	30	80	Dense Scrub	0	1	0
86	12/05/22	T1	LW, AW	14	N/A	70	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
86	17/05/22	T2	LW, AW, SA	15	N/A	70	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
86	24/05/22	T3	SA, LW	11	N/A	50	Steep Bank	0	0	0
86	30/05/22	T4	LW, JG	14	N/A	80	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
87	12/05/22	B1	LW, AW	15	25	90	Dense Scrub	0	1	0
87	17/05/22	B2	LW, AW, SA	19	25	90	N/A	0	0	0
87	23/05/22	B3	SA, LW	14	25	90	N/A	0	0	0
87	30/05/22	B4	LW, JG	15	20	70	Dense Scrub	0	0	0

Pond No	Survey date	Visit No (B=bottle trap and egg search, T= torch)	Surveyor	Temp	No traps	% shoreline accessible	Why inaccessible	GCN	Smooth	Other amphibians
87	12/05/22	T1	LW, AW	15	N/A	90	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
87	17/05/22	T2	LW, AW, SA	18	N/A	90	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
87	24/05/22	T3	SA, LW	11	N/A	90	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
87	30/05/22	T4	LW, JG	14	N/A	70	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
88	09/05/22	B1	LW, AW	17	20	70	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
88	16/05/22	B2	LW, AW, SA	16	20	70	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
88	25/05/22	B3	SA, LW	17	20	50	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
88	31/05/22	B4	LW, JG	15	20	50	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
88	09/05/22	T1	LW, AW	16	N/A	70	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
88	16/05/22	T2	LW, AW, SA	15	N/A	70	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
88	25/05/22	T3	SA, LW	15	N/A	50	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
88	31/05/22	T4	LW, JG	14	N/A	50	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
90	11/05/22	B1	LW, AW	11	10	50	N/A	0	0	0
90	16/05/22	B2	LW, AW, SA	18	10	50	N/A	0	0	0
90	25/05/22	B3	SA, LW	16	10	50	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
90	31/05/22	B4	LW, JG	15	10	50	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
90	11/05/22	T1	LW, AW	11	N/A	50	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
90	16/05/22	T2	LW, AW, SA	15	N/A	50	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
90	25/05/22	T3	SA, LW	16	N/A	50	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
90	31/05/22	T4	LW, JG	14	N/A	50	Dense Scrub	0	0	0
101	24/05/22	B1	LW, AW	11	20	100	N/A	0	0	0



Pond No	Survey date	Visit No (B=bottle trap and egg search, T= torch)	Surveyor	Temp	No traps	% shoreline accessible	Why inaccessible	GCN	Smooth	Other amphibians
101	30/05/22	B2	LW, JG	15	10	100	N/A	0	0	0
101	08/06/22	B3	JG, SA	16	15	50	Steep Bank	0	0	0
101	06/06/22	B4	JG, SA	13	15	40	Steep Bank	0	0	0
101	24/05/22	T1	LW, AW	11	N/A	100	N/A	0	0	0
101	30/05/22	T2	LW, JG	14	N/A	100	N/A	0	0	0
101	06/06/22	T3	JG, SA	14	N/A	100	N/A	0	0	0
101	08/06/22	T4	JG, SA	14	N/A	100	N/A	0	0	0

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## EDNA RAW DATA AND LAB RESULTS

Pond No	Easting	Northing	eDNA sample date	Surveyor	EDNA Reference	EDNA Result	Edna Limits
91	610199	228435	06/05/2022	JG & SA	GCN2201322	Negative	Limited access to pond side
98	607378	229615	09/06/2022	SA	GCN-22-01324	Negative	
99	607421	229615	09/06/2022	SA	GCN-22-01320	Negative	
101	611676	228109	16/06/2022	JG and SA and LW	GCN-22-01318	Negative	



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