

**PROPOSED WIND FARM  
AT TIRAWLEY, CO. MAYO**

**NOTE ON LIFESPAN OF  
BASELINE ECOLOGICAL SURVEY DATA**

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*Prepared for*

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## 1 Introduction

The ecological baseline surveys for the proposed Tirawley Wind Farm commenced in 2021 and continued into 2023, with some surveys into 2024 (see below for details of dates for the various surveys). The design of the proposed development was over several years, with a submission date of April 2026 for the planning application. As 3 years, or close to 3 years, will have passed since most of the site surveys were completed (and longer since the commencement dates), consideration is given to the validity of the baseline data for carrying out impact assessment. This is based on the following:

- A review of CIEEM Advice
- A site visit by Dr Brian Madden (principal ecologist, BioSphere Environmental Services) on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026 to review possible habitat changes since 2023-2024
- A repeat early bat survey by John Curtin (principal ecologist, Eire Ecology) in April 2026 to compare results with those from 2022 baseline survey and to evaluate the likelihood of population changes in the study area in intervening period.

## 2 Summary of Baseline Survey Dates

### Habitats

Main survey - summers 2022 and 2023, with checks for amendments in February 2024

### Ground mammals

Main surveys from October 2023 to February 2024

### Bats

Main surveys from May 2022 to October 2022, March 2023, February 2024 and June 2024

### Birds

Vantage Point surveys & Lackan Bay surveys – April 2021 to March 2023

Transect surveys – summer 2022 and winter 2022/23

Breeding Merlin, Woodcock & Wader surveys – summer 2023

Winter Hen Harrier roost surveys – Winter 2022/23

## 3 CIEEM Advice Note “On the Lifespan of Ecological Reports & Surveys”, April 2019

The CIEEM Advice Note (attached at end of this document) appears to be the principal published Guidance on the issue of the lifespan of survey data. The Advice Note states that *“It is difficult to set a specific timeframe over which reports or survey data should be considered valid, as this will vary in different circumstances.”*

Four age classes for data are given, as follows:

- Less than 12 months
- 12-18 months
- 18 months to 3 years
- More than 3 years

Much of the baseline survey data for the present project is approaching the 3 year mark (or will be 3 years in summer 2026) or has already exceeded 3 years.

In assessing the validity of data for the category 18 months to 3 years, the Guidance notes the following: *The likelihood of surveys needing to be updated increases with time, and is greater for mobile species or in circumstances where the habitat or its management has changed significantly since the surveys were undertaken. Factors to be considered include (but are not limited to):*

- *Whether the site supports, or may support, a mobile species which could have moved on to site, or changed its distribution within a site;*
- *Whether there have been significant changes to the habitats present (and/or the ecological conditions/functions/ecosystem functioning upon which they are dependent) since the surveys were undertaken, including through changes to site management;*
- *Whether the local distribution of a species in the wider area around a site has changed (or knowledge of it increased), increasing the likelihood of its presence.*

The guidance notes that a professional ecologist will need to undertake a site visit in a review of the validity of survey data and reports.

For data more than 3 years of age, the Guidance notes:

*“The report is unlikely to still be valid and most, if not all, of the surveys are likely to need to be updated (subject to an assessment by a professional ecologist, as described above).”*

#### **4 Review of Habitat Survey Data**

The habitat assessment was carried out in summers 2022 and 2023, with some final checks in February 2024, and thus the survey data will be 3 years of age in summer 2026.

Apart from one area of blanket bog and an abandoned quarry, all the project infrastructure is within grassland fields (varying from wet to improved) and conifer plantation. No protected or regionally scarce plant species were recorded or are known from the study area.

A site visit in April 2026 indicated that there have been no significant landuse changes since the 2022/2024 period, with farming and forestry still practiced throughout the study area. The blanket bog at AT13 has not been disturbed since the survey in 2023, and the abandoned quarry is still much the same (other than some additional scrub growth). The only significant change observed is a field through which the new road leading to AT13 will pass – in September 2023, this was a local playing field (classified as amenity grassland) but has been abandoned since then and is now (April 2026) dominated by wet rushy grassland.

Photographic examples which illustrate the absence of any significant changes between the two periods are presented for the following locations:

- AT02 location in Wet grassland and Conifer plantation in February 2024 and April 2026
- AT01 and Substation location in Improved grassland in February 2024 and April 2026
- A13 location in Blanket bog in September 2023 and April 2026
- AT16 location in Abandoned quarry at Castlelackan Demesne in February 2024 and April 2026

#### **4.1 Habitat Survey Data Lifespan Conclusion**

Taking into account the dominance of agricultural and commercial forestry lands within the study area, and with no significant landuse changes in the general area since 2022-2024, it is considered that the baseline survey data for habitats and flora is still valid for evaluating impacts and effects from the proposed wind farm development.



**Plates 1 & 2:** View of wet grassland sward with high rush cover at proposed location for AT02 (looking westwards). Upper photo from 25<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (included as Plate 6.6 in EIAR), lower photo 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026.



**Plates 3 & 4:** View of Improved grassland (looking northwards) at location for AT01 and substation. Upper photo from 25<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (included as Plate 6.3 in EIAR), lower photo 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026.



**Plates 5 & 6:** View of Blanket bog (looking westwards) at location for AT13. Upper photo from 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (included as Plate 6.8 in EIAR), lower photo 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026.



**Plates 7 & 8:** View of rock surface with sparse vegetation within the abandoned quarry at Castlelackan Demesne. Upper photo from 25<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (included as Plate 6.19 in EIAR), lower photo 16<sup>th</sup> April 2026. The pine tree in right of image has increased in size since February 2024, whilst clump of gorse in centre of track appears more or less the same.

## **5 Review of Bird Survey Data**

The bird activity surveys were completed in March 2023 and thus the data set was 3 years of age in March 2026.

Surveys for breeding merlin, woodcock and other waders were carried out in summer 2023 and thus will be 3 years of age in summer 2026.

Winter hen harrier roost surveys were carried out in winter 2022/23 and thus the data set was 3 years of age in winter 2025/26.

While the survey data are at the age when updated surveys are likely to be needed according to the CIEEM Advice Note, the following observations are made (in context of the factors to be considered in CIEEM Note):

- *Whether there have been significant changes to the habitats present (and/or the ecological conditions/functions/ecosystem functioning upon which they are dependent) since the surveys were undertaken, including through changes to site management;*

This factor has been addressed in the above habitat review, where it is concluded based on a site visit that there have been no significant landuse changes in the study area between the main bird survey period (2021-2023) and April 2026. Allowing for natural population fluctuations between years, the breeding and wintering species present during the baseline surveys are still likely to be present. Further consideration is given to the species of highest conservation interest, namely breeding snipe, wintering hen harrier and merlin (see **Section 7.13** of **EIAR**).

Snipe: breeding by snipe would still be expected at the three locations recorded in 2023 (see **Plate 7.6** of **EIAR**), namely north-east of AT08 (wet grassland), west of AT09 (bog) and north of AT14 (bog), as habitat conditions at these locations have not changed to any significant extent. At the time of the baseline surveys, potential for breeding was identified at other areas in the northern sector of the study site, including bog west of AT10, bog at AT13 and the bog associated with the abandoned quarry at Castlelackan (to be part of BEMP). While no positive results were recorded at the time, breeding could occur in these areas in any year (hence need for pre-construction surveys – see **EIAR Section 7.8.1.1**).

Hen harrier: hen harrier was shown to be an autumn/winter visitor to the study area, with a winter night roost located in Lackan Bay. The activity surveys involved birds flying/hunting over grassland and bog, mostly in the northern sector of the site.

The roost site was used by at least one male in winter 2022/23 (the survey winter) and at least two males and a possible ringtail in winter 2023/24 (latter information provided by a local observer). The local observer (Steve Meaney) has continued to watch the roost, which has been occupied in each winter since. In December 2025 & January 2026, regular watches showed 3-4 hen harriers used the roost (Steve Meaney pers. comm.).

From above, it is apparent that the current winter status of hen harrier in the area is similar to that in earlier winters.

Merlin: whilst there were no records of merlin during the dedicated breeding surveys, there were sightings in August 2022 and September 2023, and it was considered possible that merlin may breed within the study area. This is still the case, as suitable habitat (i.e. remnant bog and forest edge) occurs widely in the northern and south-western sectors of the study area. (again, such areas will be surveyed in pre-construction surveys – see **EIAR Section 7.8.1.1**).

The other listed factors in the CIEEM Advice Note are linked and are thus considered together.

- *Whether the site supports, or may support, a mobile species which could have moved on to site, or changed its distribution within a site;*
- *Whether the local distribution of a species in the wider area around a site has changed (or knowledge of it increased), increasing the likelihood of its presence.*

Over the course of approximately 3 years, it is considered very unlikely that any additional species of conservation importance (i.e. Annex I listed or Red-listed) would have moved on to the site or for those already within the site changed their distribution to any significant extent. The following species of conservation importance (and target species) are considered:

**Hen harrier** (breeding) - The study site is not within the breeding range of hen harrier in Ireland (Ruddock et al. 2024)<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the site lacks any extensive area of suitable breeding habitat (i.e. bog/heath/upland grassland).

**Golden plover** (breeding) – while this species breeds on the bogs to the west of the R315 road, including such areas as Ummerantary Bog NHA (code 001470,) breeding within the G13 hectad has not been recorded in the past. This largely reflects the absence of extensive open areas of bog and heath within the study site.

**Golden plover** (wintering) – golden plover winters in Killala Bay, including the Lackan Bay inlet (though none recorded there in three of the five winters in period 2018/19-2022/23 – see Table 7.2 in EIAR). During the baseline surveys in the 2021-2023 period, there was one record of c. 40 golden plover flying over the village of Rathlackan (from Lackan pier direction) and continuing in a northwest direction on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022. Also, a flock of c. 100 golden plover was observed circling over bog (height of c.100 m) approximately 1 km northwest of Rathlackan on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

As Crowe (2005) writes that Golden Plover are among the most widespread of the wader species wintering in Ireland, and occur in a variety of habitats, both coastal and inland, their occurrence inland in winter on agricultural lands or on open bog lands cannot be ruled out in any part of the country. However, there is no historical evidence from any of the national wetland surveys (as outlined in Crowe 2005) that the habitats within the study area are suitable for supporting a regular winter population.

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<sup>1</sup> Ruddock, M., Wilson-Parr, Ryan, Lusby, J., Connolly, F., Bailey, J. & O'Toole, L. (2024) *The 2022 National Survey of Breeding Hen Harrier in Ireland*. Irish Wildlife Manual No. 147. NPWS, Dublin.

**Curlew** (breeding) – a recent survey of curlew breeding in Ireland in 2021 recorded a total of 105 pairs (confirmed and probable), which is a decline of 98% since the 1980s (Colhoun et al. 2022)<sup>2</sup>. No breeding pairs were recorded within the G13 hectad (which contains the study site) or in any adjoining hectad. With the remaining breeding population increasingly dependent on active targeted suitable land management projects, there is no basis to expect the occurrence of breeding curlew in the study area since the baseline surveys in 2023.

**Red grouse** – in 2022, outlier bird surveys were carried out in additional areas being considered for wind turbines. The plateau between the R314 and R315 roads (and south of Ballycastle) was surveyed. Red grouse was recorded on bog here and assumed to be breeding. This is approximately 3 km to the west of AT06 location. Whilst some bog occurs within the wind farm study area, this is fragmented and is not considered extensive enough to support red grouse.

**Barn Owl** – historically, barn owl has been a scarce species in Co. Mayo. There appears to be only one past record for the hectad G13, which referred to a bird seen during the 1988-1991 Breeding Bird Atlas Survey. There was no evidence of barn owl within the study area during any of the baseline bird or nocturnal bat surveys from 2021 to 2023. As barn owl is a genuinely scarce species in Co. Mayo (see Balmer et al. 2013)<sup>3</sup>, the likelihood of the species occurring within the study area is low.

## 5.1 Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SPA

Within the AA Screening Report / NIS, for Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SPA the following is noted (in section 2.4.6):

*Some of the habitats within the wind farm, namely improved and semi-improved grassland and wet grassland, potentially provide suitable feeding habitat for inland feeding wader species (golden plover & curlew) associated with the SPA.*

*However, there was no evidence of inland feeding or of flights inland towards the area of the wind farm by these species during the vantage point watches or the Lackan Bay shoreline surveys (see EIAR Chapter 7, Sections 7.3.5 & 7.3.6).*

As noted above for wintering Golden Plover, there was no evidence during the 2021-2023 survey period of birds from the SPA utilising the habitats within the study site for feeding or roosting purposes or of any of the species associated with the SPA flying through the study site. As it can be demonstrated that there have been no significant landuse or habitat changes since 2023, it would seem unlikely that Golden Plover have since commenced to frequent the study area.

The other potential inland feeding species which is a Qualifying Interest of the SPA, Curlew, was not recorded at all within the study area during the baseline surveys. As with Golden Plover, it seems unlikely that Curlew has since commenced to frequent the study area.

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<sup>2</sup> Colhoun, K., Flannelly, F., O'Neill, J., Phelan, E., Servignat, H., O'Donoghue, B. & Kelly, S. (2022) Status and distribution of breeding Eurasian Curlew in Ireland 2021. Irish Wildlife Manuals No. 138, NPWS, Dublin.

<sup>3</sup> Balmer, D.E., Gillings, S., Caffrey, B., Swann, R.L. Downie, I.S. & Fuller, R.J. (2013) Bird Atlas 2007-11: the breeding and wintering birds of Britain and Ireland. BTO, Thetford.

## **5.2 Bird Survey Data Lifespan Conclusion**

Whilst the bird survey data set for the project has reached the likely lifespan limit as provided in the CIEEM advice note, the following points are noted for the proposed wind farm development site:

- the absence of any significant changes to the habitats or landuse practices within the study area,
- the unlikelihood that any additional species of conservation importance would have moved on to the site since the surveys in the 2021-2023 period,
- the unlikelihood that any of the species of conservation importance which were recorded have extended to any significant extent their distribution patterns within the study area since the surveys in the 2021-2023 period,
- the unlikelihood that the two inland feeding Qualifying Species of the Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SPA, i.e. golden plover and curlew, have adapted to feeding and/or roosting within the study site, or have established regular flightlines through the site, since the surveys in the 2021-2023 period.

Allowing for the above points, as well as consideration of the actual results of the baseline surveys regarding the range of bird species recorded and their populations and distributions within the study site, as well as their conservation importance (as presented in **Chapter 7** of this EIAR), it is considered that the survey data is likely to still be valid for the purpose of allowing impact assessment by the proposed Tirawley Wind Farm project.

## **6 Review of Bat Survey Data**

The primary baseline for bat activity at the Tirawley Wind Farm site is the **2022 static detector dataset**, collected during the optimal survey period (May–October) and prior to refinement of the turbine layout. These data formed the basis for the original turbine risk assessment and spatial characterisation of bat activity across the site.

As the 2022 dataset has exceeded the 3-year threshold identified in the *CIEEM Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports & Surveys* (2019), additional targeted surveys were undertaken between 2023 and 2026 to assess whether the baseline remains valid and to determine whether any material changes in bat activity, roost presence or spatial distribution have occurred.

### **6.1 Summary of Updated Survey Effort (2023–2026)**

To address the CIEEM criteria for ageing datasets (18 months – 3+ years) and to assess changes made to the initial proposal, the following surveys were completed:

#### **Winter 2023 and Winter 2024 – GLTA Tree-Roost Assessments**

Targeted winter surveys were undertaken to:

- assess trees for their potential to host bat roosts, and
- identify any features requiring follow-up emergence surveys.

These surveys identified a number of potential roost features that would require further examination if within the zone of influence of a turbine (252 m) or if impacts to the tree was required.

### **June 2024 – Emergence Survey at Potential Roost**

A targeted emergence survey was undertaken in June 2024 at building group 17 to 20. This survey:

- confirmed a small satellite bat roost (2 x Soprano Pipistrelles),
- recorded low-level emergence activity, and
- verified that the roost was not located within a high-risk turbine collision zone.

This roost was incorporated into the project's constraints mapping and informs the pre-construction survey requirements.

### **April 2026 – Updated Static Detector Surveys**

Static detectors were deployed in April 2026 at:

- locations previously surveyed in 2022 (to allow qualitative comparison), and
- updated locations aligned with the final turbine layout.

These surveys were designed to validate whether the spatial patterns identified in 2022 remain accurate.

### **April 2026 – Updated Emergence Surveys**

Emergence surveys were completed at high-potential roost features within 252 m of proposed turbines and where construction impacts could occur, following Bat Conservation Ireland (2026) guidance. No confirmed roosts were identified during these surveys.

## **6.2 Comparison of 2022 and 2026 Static Survey Results**

The 2026 static dataset provides a qualitative comparison with the 2022 baseline. However, the two datasets are not directly comparable in terms of absolute activity levels due to seasonal timing and weather differences.

The bat report (**EIAR Appendix 6.2**) states:

*“Bat activity recorded during the April 2026 survey was lower than that recorded during the 2022 baseline surveys... mean activity levels decreased from approximately 2.6 BpHr in May 2022 to approximately 0.3 BpHr in April 2026... This reduction is considered to reflect seasonal timing and weather variations... the 2026 dataset is not considered directly comparable to the 2022 baseline in terms of absolute activity levels.”*

Accordingly, no scaling or correction has been applied. Instead, the 2026 dataset is used to validate the spatial distribution of bat activity across the site.

## **6.3 Qualitative Validation of Spatial Activity Patterns**

Despite lower overall activity levels in 2026, the relative spatial distribution of bat activity remains consistent with the 2022 baseline.

The bat report notes:

*“The relative spatial distribution of bat activity across the site remains broadly consistent... Locations associated with linear features continue to exhibit comparatively higher levels of activity, while more open or exposed areas consistently record lower activity levels.”*

Key findings:

- Edge habitats (treelines, hedgerows, plantation margins) continue to support higher relative activity.
- Interior plantation and open grassland continue to show low activity, as in 2022.
- Co-located detectors (e.g., D3a, D12a) show similar relative differences between habitat types.
- Detectors placed at or near final turbine locations recorded activity levels consistent with the habitat types characterised in 2022 and did not indicate any new areas of elevated risk.

These results confirm that the spatial risk profile used in the original turbine risk assessment remains valid.

#### **6.4 Updated Roost Assessments (2023–2026)**

The combined GLTA, emergence and static datasets provide a comprehensive review of roost potential across the site:

- Winter 2023 & 2024 GLTA surveys identified no new high-risk roost features near turbines.
- April 2026 emergence surveys at high-potential features within 252 m of turbines confirmed no roosts present in the only PRF trees found close to a turbine.

There is no evidence that roost availability or roost distribution has changed in a way that would alter the original assessment.

#### **6.5 Assessment Against CIEEM Lifespan Criteria**

Applying the CIEEM criteria:

- Mobile species / distribution changes: No evidence from 2023–2026 surveys indicates any expansion of bat distribution or increased activity within the site.
- Habitat or management changes: As confirmed in Section 4, no significant habitat or land-use changes have occurred within the study site since 2022.
- Changes in wider species distribution: No new species of conservation concern have been recorded locally or regionally.
- Updated surveys confirm baseline validity: The 2026 dataset provides qualitative confirmation that the spatial patterns identified in 2022 remain accurate. The 2023–2024 GLTA and emergence surveys confirm that roost status has not changed in a way that affects turbine risk.

#### **6.6 Bat Survey Data Lifespan Conclusion**

Although the original static dataset (ending October 2022) is now beyond the 3-year threshold identified by CIEEM, the combination of:

- winter GLTA surveys (2023–2024),
- a confirmed small roost in June 2024 (outside turbine risk zones),
- updated static surveys (April 2026),
- updated emergence surveys (April 2026), and

- confirmation of stable habitats and land-use, demonstrates that bat activity patterns, roost status and spatial risk profiles have not materially changed within the site since the original baseline surveys.

Therefore, it is considered that the 2022 baseline dataset remains valid for ecological impact assessment when considered in combination with the updated 2023–2026 survey results, and the original turbine risk assessment remains appropriate for the final turbine layout.

### **6.7 Updated Risk Assessment and Mitigation Requirements (Reflecting BCI 2026 Guidance)**

The original turbine-specific bat risk assessment (2022) was undertaken using the SNH (2021) guidelines, which classifies turbines based on relative activity levels and habitat context. Under this approach, three turbines were identified as requiring operational mitigation (curtailment) due to elevated levels of Soprano Pipistrelle bat activity (AT02, AT03 and AT04).

Since completion of the original assessment, Bat Conservation Ireland (2026) has introduced updated guidance for wind-farm bat risk assessment. A key change is the adoption of a percentile-based threshold for Leisler's bat activity derived from static detector data. The guidance states that:

Where the median percentile for Leisler's bat exceeds 41, the turbine should be classified as "high risk" and operational mitigation (curtailment) should be applied.

Application of this updated methodology to the Tirawley dataset (using the 2022 baseline static surveys, supported by the 2026 qualitative validation of spatial patterns) results in a greater number of turbines exceeding the BCI 2026 high-risk threshold.

Under the BCI 2026 percentile-based classification:

- the original three turbines identified as requiring curtailment remain high-risk, and
- an additional six turbines exceed the 41st percentile for Leisler's bat activity threshold,
- a further three turbines will have curtailment as a substitute for removal of vegetation.
- resulting in a total of twelve turbines requiring operational curtailment

This change reflects the updated national guidance, rather than any increase in bat activity or change in spatial distribution since 2022. The 2026 surveys confirm that spatial patterns remain consistent, and the increased number of turbines requiring mitigation arises solely from the revised risk-classification criteria. The updated curtailment regime has been incorporated into the project's mitigation strategy and will be implemented as part of the operational bat protection plan.

## **7 Review of Ground Mammal Survey Data**

For ground mammals, principally badger and otter, the main surveys were from October 2023 to February 2024, and thus the survey data were 2 years of age in winter 2025/26.

While there was no evidence of either species within at least a 100 m distance of any of the main Wind Farm infrastructure, both are known to have a presence in the wider area. As the distribution of land mammal such as badger and otter can change over time, pre-construction surveys shall take place (see

**Sections 6.9.2 & 6.9.3** of this **EIAR**). Should such surveys indicate a requirement for protection of the relevant species (badger and/or otter), appropriate measures shall be taken to comply with all relevant legislation and best practice guidance in force at the time.

For both badger and otter, NRA (now TII) Guidance notes the following: *“Where 36 months or more has elapsed between obtaining statutory approval of a road scheme and initiation of the construction phase, an appropriate level of resurvey will be required because the baseline data may be altered during this time.”*

#### **7.1 Mammal Survey Data Lifespan Conclusion**

For ground mammals, 2 years since the baseline survey is not considered an excessively long period and the status of the relevant species within the study site is unlikely to have changed significantly (and the future status of these species will anyway be established by confirmatory surveys prior to construction).

It is concluded that the baseline survey data for ground mammals remains valid for ecological impact assessment.

ADVICE NOTE



# ON THE LIFESPAN OF ECOLOGICAL REPORTS & SURVEYS

APRIL 2019

It is important that planning decisions are based on up-to-date ecological reports and survey data. However, it is difficult to set a specific timeframe over which reports or survey data should be considered valid, as this will vary in different circumstances. In some cases there will be specific guidance on this (such as for the age of data which may be used to support an EPS licence application). In circumstances where such advice does not already exist, CIEEM provides the general advice set out below.

For some projects the time taken between commencing the scoping or design and submitting a planning application can be several years, and this can result in the early ecology surveys becoming out-of-date (based on the advice set out below); this can lead to additional costs for developers associated with updating survey data. Nevertheless, there are considerable advantages associated with undertaking surveys early during the scoping or design phases of a project.

Ecological consultants should give careful consideration to which, if any, surveys need to be updated; design their data collection in a way which maximises the benefits of early surveys whilst minimising the costs to developers; and provide clarity on the likely lifespan of surveys in their reports.

AGE OF DATA	REPORT / SURVEY VALIDITY
Less than 12 months	Likely to be valid in most cases.
12-18 months	<p>Likely to be valid in most cases with the following exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where a site may offer existing or new features which could be utilised by a mobile species within a short timeframe (see scenario 1 example);</li> <li>• Where a mobile species is present on site or in the wider area, and can create new features of relevance to the assessment (see scenario 2 example);</li> <li>• Where country-specific or species-specific guidance dictates otherwise.</li> </ul> <p>Report authors should highlight where they consider it likely to be necessary to update surveys within a timeframe of less than 18 months.</p>
18 months to 3 years	<p>A professional ecologist will need to undertake a site visit and may also need to update desk study information (effectively updating the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal) and then review the validity of the report, based on the factors listed below. Some or all of the other ecological surveys may need to be updated. The professional ecologist will need to issue a clear statement, with appropriate justification, on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The validity of the report;</li> <li>• Which, if any, of the surveys need to be updated; and</li> <li>• The appropriate scope, timing and methods for the update survey(s).</li> </ul> <p>The likelihood of surveys needing to be updated increases with time, and is greater for mobile species or in circumstances where the habitat or its management has changed significantly since the surveys were undertaken. Factors to be considered include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the site supports, or may support, a mobile species which could have moved on to site, or changed its distribution within a site (see scenario 1&amp;2 examples);</li> <li>• Whether there have been significant changes to the habitats present (and/or the ecological conditions/functions/ecosystem functioning upon which they are dependent) since the surveys were undertaken, including through changes to site management (see scenario 3 example);</li> <li>• Whether the local distribution of a species in the wider area around a site has changed (or knowledge of it increased), increasing the likelihood of its presence (see scenario 4 example).</li> </ul>
More than 3 years	The report is unlikely to still be valid and most, if not all, of the surveys are likely to need to be updated (subject to an assessment by a professional ecologist, as described above).



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## EXAMPLE SCENARIOS

### 1

- Trees or buildings on site have been surveyed for evidence of bat roosts and none were found; new roosts may be present, and trees or buildings may have developed new features which were not previously present. An update bat roost survey is likely to be required.
- One or more potential otter resting sites have been identified, although there was no evidence of use at the time of the survey; such features may have been used by otters during the intervening period. An update otter survey is likely to be required.

### 2

- A badger survey confirmed the presence of badgers on site; new setts may have been excavated within the site. An update badger survey is likely to be required.

### 3

- An area of grassland was heavily grazed by cattle at the time of the original survey and was considered to be unsuitable for reptiles, although slow-worms were known to be present in the wider area; grazing has since ceased and the grassland has been cut once annually, which has encouraged the development of a tussocky sward which provides suitable habitat for slow-worms. A reptile survey is now likely to be required.

### 4

- A water vole survey confirmed their absence from the site but identified them as present in the wider area surrounding it; a recovery project is underway in the local area through a mink control programme, which is encouraging the spread of water voles.