

URS

Ecological Assessment: St Mary's Airport Construction Compound

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Lagan Construction Ltd.

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Rev	Date	Details	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by
-	15 th January 2014	Draft for client review	Paul Gregory Senior Ecologist	Daniel Ellis Graduate Environmental Consultant	Ian Roach Associate Director – Environment and Planning
01	20 th January 2014	Final for planning	Paul Gregory Senior Ecologist	Daniel Ellis Graduate Environmental Consultant	Ian Roach Associate Director – Environment and Planning

URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited
 Mayflower House
 Armada Way
 Plymouth
 PL1 1LD
 UK

Telephone: +44(0)1752 676 700
 Fax: +44(0)8702 386 023

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1. INTRODUCTION

URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited was commissioned by Lagan Construction Limited to undertake an ecological assessment of the Site, which is to be used as a construction compound (the Proposed Development) for the expansion and re-surfacing project at St. Mary's Airport, Isles of Scilly Airport. The survey was undertaken on 13 January 2014.

2. DESK STUDY

The Site is located between two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): Higher Moors & Porth Hellick Pool SSSI and Lower Moors SSSI, located approximately 200 metres and 340 metres away, respectively. This distance is such that no impacts on the SSSIs from the Proposed Development are anticipated.

3. SURVEY METHOD AND APPROACH

3.1 Outline of Scope

The work comprised a site visit to assess the habitats located on the Site of the Proposed Development. A site walkover was carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist and comprehensive species lists were made for the site on the day of the field survey.

3.2 Detailed Ecological Walkover Survey

Survey methods undertaken were according to standard survey methodology (JNCC, 2007). The survey identified all Phase 1 Habitat types present within, and immediately adjacent to, the site (where accessible). The site was surveyed on foot. Dominant, typical and notable plant species were recorded for each habitat type within a set of field notes.

The survey comprised the following ecological surveys / risk assessments:

- Identification of habitats based on those listed in the Phase 1 Habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2007);
- Location and stand size of invasive plant species;
- Signs of protected species that may potentially be using the site;
- Identification of habitats with the potential to contain rare / scarce plants and species of principal importance (The UK post-2012 Biodiversity Framework, which replaces the previous UK level Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (NERC Act 2006) species).

3.3 Limitations

It should be noted that ecosystems are dynamic and constantly changing, and therefore species may move or new species may be recorded in subsequent years. For this reason, and in accordance with current guidance, the existing survey data has a 'shelf-life', and should only be relied on for a period of, two years from the date of survey (i.e. 13 January 2016). After this date, update surveys are likely to be required and advice sought from an

appropriately qualified ecologist to determine survey scope and methods should development be proposed.

3.4 Constraints to Survey

The field survey was undertaken outside the optimum season for botanical survey (which is April to September) and therefore some components of the vegetation would not have been as obvious and may not have been recorded. However this is not considered to affect the assessment of the potential for protected or notable plant species affected by the scheme as the site is mainly improved grassland pasture fields.

4. RESULTS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The entrance to the site consisted of an earthen access path with a granite stonewalled species-rich Cornish hedgerow. A granite stone boundary marker lies at the start of the left-hand side of the stonewalled species-rich Cornish hedgerow.

Cornish Elm (*Ulmus minor* subsp. *Angustifolia*) dominated the hedgerow and included several large mature ivy clad trees towards the east. Hedgerow species included ivy (*Hedera helix*), three-cornered garlic (*Allium triquetrum*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), Stinking iris (*Iris foetidissima*), navelwort (*Umbilicus rupestris*), lords-and-ladies (*Arum maculatum*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), alexanders (*Smyrniololus satrum*), bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), red campion (*Silene dioica*), yellow corydalis (*Pseudofumaria lutea*) and cleavers (*Galium aparine*). Granite stones hosted lichens, sea ivory (*Ramalina siliquosa*) and *Parmelia* spp.

The site consisted of two improved pasture fields separated by a stonewalled Cornish hedgerow dominated by bracken. Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and common mouse-ear (*Cerastium arvense*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*) and common dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*) is recorded around the field boundaries. A small chicken farm is located in the eastern field and cattle are present in the western field.

A shelter belt of Monterrey pines (*Pinus radiata*) is located towards the west of the site boundary.

A stonewalled Cornish hedgerow is located along the eastern boundary with mature Japanese pittosporum (*Pittosporum tobira*) planted next to the hedgerow as a shelter belt.

A grassed access path that leads to the airport is located towards the southern boundary. Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and dense bracken is located either side of the access track, with components of broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) or honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*).

5. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

5.1 Birds

Wild birds are protected under Part 1 Section 1(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is thus an offence, with certain exceptions to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;

- intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built;
- intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird;
- intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

No evidence or presence of protected or notable species was observed during the survey. The pasture fields are of limited ecological value and the stonewalled Cornish hedgerows are of high conservation value. It is therefore recommended that any hedgerow breaks that are required for access are undertaken by hand and not machinery due the potential presence of the Scilly shrew (*Crocidura suaveolens cassiteridum*) that may reside within the stonewalls. Any trees or shrubs that need to be cut-back or felled should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season, September till February inclusive. If any trees or shrubs are cut-back or felled during the bird nesting season (March till August, inclusive) then an ecological watching brief should be present during the works. All hedgerows should be reinstated in their original location once the works are completed.