

Offshore Wind Farm

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Appendix 23.4 Reptile Survey Report

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Revision	Date	Status/Reason for Issue	Originator	Checked	Approved
0	July 2024	Submission	RHDHV	NFOW	NFOW





Reptile Survey Report

North Falls
Offshore Wind
Farm Ltd

October 2022





Status	Name	Date
Draft	Georgina Davey ACIEEM	24/10/2022
Rev 1	Gavin Mullan BA (Hons) MCIEEM	26/10/2022
Rev 2	Georgina Davey ACIEEM	04/11/2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ecology Resources Limited was commissioned by Royal HaskoningDHV on behalf of North Falls Offshore Wind Farm Limited, to undertake reptile presence/likely absence surveys within the onshore project area plus a 50m buffer.

Eleven survey sites within the onshore project area (plus a 50m buffer) were identified as areas with suitable habitat to support common reptiles. The full suite of seven reptile survey visits were completed on nine of these sites. Two further sites, TN446 and TN581, had three and four visits respectively due to access restrictions midway through the suite of surveys preventing the full survey effort from being completed.

Common reptiles were found to be present on seven of the nine fully-surveyed sites. 'Good' populations of common lizard were recorded on two of these sites. 'Low' populations of common lizard were recorded on the remaining five sites. 'Low' populations of grass snake were recorded on three sites and 'low' populations of adder were recorded on one site. No sites recorded more than two common reptile species. No slow worms were recorded throughout the suite of surveys.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Ecology Resources Limited was commissioned by Royal HaskoningDHV on behalf of North Falls Offshore Wind Farm Limited, to undertake reptile presence / likely absence surveys of suitable habitat within the onshore project area plus a 50m buffer.

1.1 Project background

North Falls Offshore Wind Farm (herein North Falls or 'the project') is a proposed extension to the operational Greater Gabbard Offshore Wind Farm (GGOW), which is located off the east coast of England in the Southern North Sea and was opened in 2013. North Falls is located to the west of the existing GGOW and at its closest point is approximately 22km offshore. The wind farm is being developed by North Falls Offshore Wind Farm Limited, a joint venture between SSE Renewables and RWE.

North Falls is currently awaiting a formal grid connection offer from National Grid. Whilst this process is ongoing, in order to ensure that adequate baseline data is collected to inform the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), North Falls has progressed with site selection of the project's onshore infrastructure (landfall location, onshore cable route and onshore substation location) at risk. The outputs of North Falls site selection process have then been used to generate a study area for the purposes of undertaking a suite of ecological surveys during 2021 and 2022 so that baseline data for the project can be gathered. This is referred to herein as the 'onshore project area'.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the onshore project area was undertaken between April 2021 and March 2022 (Royal HaskoningDHV, 2022), the findings of which were used to inform the scope of further 'Phase 2' ecology surveys required in 2022 to inform the project's Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) in support of its Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

This report details the scope, methodology and findings of reptile surveys, which form part of this suite of Phase 2 surveys.

1.2 Legislation

There are four common species of reptile in the UK: grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), adder (*Vipera berus*), common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*). Two further species can also be found; smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) and sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), however these are rarer, more restricted in range and protected under additional legislation; neither are considered to be present in Essex.

All UK reptiles are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it illegal to deliberately kill, injure (or sell) these species; offences which could occur as a result of construction activities. Sand lizard and smooth snake receive additional protection against disturbance as European Protected Species (EPS) under Annex IV of the



European Habitats Directive and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

All reptiles are listed as species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, in accordance with Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Under Section 40 of the NERC Act (2006) public bodies (including local planning authorities) have a duty to have regard for the conservation of species of principal importance when carrying out their functions, including determining planning applications.

2. METHODOLOGY

Reptile surveys were completed in accordance with best practice guidelines (Froglife, 1999). Suitable habitat for common reptiles was identified during the 2022 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey completed by Royal HaskoningDHV (Royal HaskoningDHV, 2022). Six survey sites comprising of habitat mosaics with the potential to support large populations were identified for further survey.

An additional five sites were scoped in for presence / likely absence surveys based upon further assessment of local habitats undertaken during the 2022 season by Ecology Resources Limited. All 11 reptile sites are shown in Appendix A Reptile Survey Site Location Plan.

2.1 Presence / likely absence survey

A reptile presence / likely absence survey was undertaken over two survey windows (May – June and September – October) during 2022. The surveys avoided the sub-optimal survey period (Gent & Gibson, 1998) during summer (July – August), when daytime temperatures are high and use of artificial refugia by reptiles is more variable (Froglife, 1999).

The surveys were undertaken at locations ('survey sites') that offer the most suitable habitat for common reptiles, i.e., structurally diverse grassland habitats with areas of bare ground/short vegetation and transitional 'edge' habitats. Artificial refugia comprising of roofing felt tiles were placed within each survey site, in accordance with good practice guidelines (Froglife, 1999).

The artificial refugia were cut to measure 0.5m² and placed dark-side up in order to absorb the most thermal radiation, which is favourable to basking reptiles. These were then left to 'bed-in' for two weeks prior to the first survey visit. The dates of refugia deployment are detailed in Appendix B and total number of refugia deployed per site are detailed in Table 2.

Seven surveys were conducted during suitable weather conditions (temperatures between 9°C and 20°C, little/no wind, no precipitation). During each survey visit, every tile was carefully viewed on approach to identify any reptiles basking on top before being disturbed. Once the tile was reached it was carefully lifted and the area below inspected. Any natural refugia (e.g. log piles, stumps, compost mounds) within the site were also visually inspected for reptiles and surveyors were vigilant for incidental encounters with reptiles. All reptiles observed were recorded, noting species, life stage and gender where possible.

2.1.1 Field survey personnel

Surveys were led by Johnnie Johnson (qCIEEM) who has over seven years' experience conducting herpetofauna surveys, and is the secretary for Essex Amphibian and Reptile Group (EARG).



Surveys were supported by Stephen Treadwell and Nick Losset, ecologists with over four years' experience of commercial and voluntary reptile surveys with EARG.

All surveyors are either members of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Mangement (CIEEM) or adhere to CIEEM's professional Code of Conduct.

2.2 Population size class estimate

Reptile population classes are assessed in accordance with criteria from Froglife (1999). This system classifies populations of individual reptile species into three distinct categories (Table 1), based on the total number of adult animals observed during individual survey occasions.

Table 1: Population size class estimates (Froglife, 1999). Figures in the table refer to maximum number of adults seen by observation and/or under refugia (placed at a density of up to 10 per hectare), by one person in one day.

Species	Low Population	Good Population	Exceptional Population
Adder	<5	5 - 10	>10
Grass snake	<5	5 - 10	>10
Common lizard	<5	5 - 20	>20
Slow worm	<5	5 - 20	>20

2.3 Survey Limitations

Five sites (TN581, TN582, TN583, TN584 and TN585) were not identified in the survey scope until summer 2022 and as such artificial refugia were deployed at these sites during the second survey window, on 31st August, 1st September and 2nd September 2022, with surveys completed between 19th September and 14th October 2022. This is not considered to be a significant limitation to survey results, as these surveys were conducted during suitable survey conditions and with at least 48 hours between surveys.

Site TN531 required artificial refugia to be re-deployed on 31st August 2022, due to the original refugia having been trampled by livestock. These were allowed two weeks to bed in before the next survey, and it is not considered that this was a significant limitation to the results.

Two sites, TN446 and TN581, had access refused by the landowners and therefore had three and four surveys, respectively. Neither of these sites had any reptiles recorded, however it is considered that access restrictions posed a significant limitation, and these results cannot reliably be used to determine likely absence of reptiles from these sites.



3. RESULTS

3.1 Presence / likely absence survey

The results of the surveys conducted across all 11 survey sites in the 2022 survey season are outlined in Tables 2 and 3, below. Full metadata for each survey can be found in Appendix B. Survey results for each site are shown in Figures 2a-h.

Table 2: Species recorded and estimate of population size at each survey site during 2022.

Survey Site ID	No. Refugia	Area (ha)	Refugia density/ha	No. Surveys	Species Recorded	Peak Count (adults)	Population Size Estimate
TN426	70	3.4	20.6	7	Common lizard	4	Low
					Grass snake	1	Low
TN446	81	3.6	22.5	3	None	N/A	N/A
TN448	100	5.0 20 7 Common lizard		5	Low		
					Adder	1	Low
TN525	117	3.5	33.4	7	Common lizard	9	Low
					Grass snake	1	Low
TN531	30	0.4	75	7	None	N/A	N/A
TN570	40	1.1	36.4	7	Common lizard	2	Low
TN581	27	2.5	10.8	4	None	N/A	N/A
TN582	71	6.1	11.6	7	None	N/A	N/A
TN583	34	3.7	9.2	7	Common lizard	7	Good
TN584	41	7.8	5.3	7	Common lizard	5	Good
TN585	67	3.9	17.2	7	Common lizard	3	Low
					Grass snake	1	Low

No amphibians were recorded beneath any artificial refugia.



3.2 Incidental records

Incidental findings of reptiles were observed during other ecological surveys undertaken within the onshore project area during 2022. These are detailed in Table 3 and shown in Figure 1.

Tabe 3. Incidental reptile sightings across North Falls proposed route, 2022.

Incidental Record ID	Date	Species	Location	Notes
1	13.05.22	Common lizard	X 611190, Y 228337	Female common lizard seen during water vole survey.
2	17.05.22	Grass snake	X 623009, Y 218287	Adult. Observed in Holland Haven Marshes during great crested newt eDNA survey
3	24.05.22	Common lizard	X 620105, Y 220047	Basking on log pile.
4	28.09.22	Adder	X 620306, Y 219687	2x juvenile adders seen along hedgerow on dormouse survey.



4. CONCLUSION

Reptile presence was recorded at seven of 11 survey sites. Of these sites, two were identified as having a 'good' population of common lizard (TN583 and TN584), according to the population estimation guidance set out in Froglife (1999).

A further five sites recorded low populations of common lizard. TN448 and TN525 both had peak counts of five adult common lizard, however both survey sites had a refugia density of more than 10 per hectare and therefore this corresponds to a low population. Three sites had low populations of grass snake and one site (TN448) had a low population of adder.

No records of slow worm were observed. None of the surveyed sites recorded more than two species of common reptile.

Two sites, TN581 and TN446, were only able to be surveyed three and four times respectively due to access restrictions partially imposed by the landowners as a response to the avian influenza outbreak. No reptiles were recorded during the completed visits on these survey sites, however a minimum of seven visits is required in order to reliably conclude a likely absence of reptiles.

Common reptiles are generally widespread and prevalent, particularly in the south of England (Russell & Foster, 2021). Therefore, the suitable areas that the onshore project area passes through are likely to represent a very small proportion of land use for common reptiles and would be unlikely to result in an adverse effect on the conservation status of the various species.



5. REFERENCES

Froglife (1999) Reptile survey. An introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation. Froglife advice sheet 10.

Gent, A.H. & Gibson, S.D. *eds.* (1998) Herpetofauna Workers' Manual. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

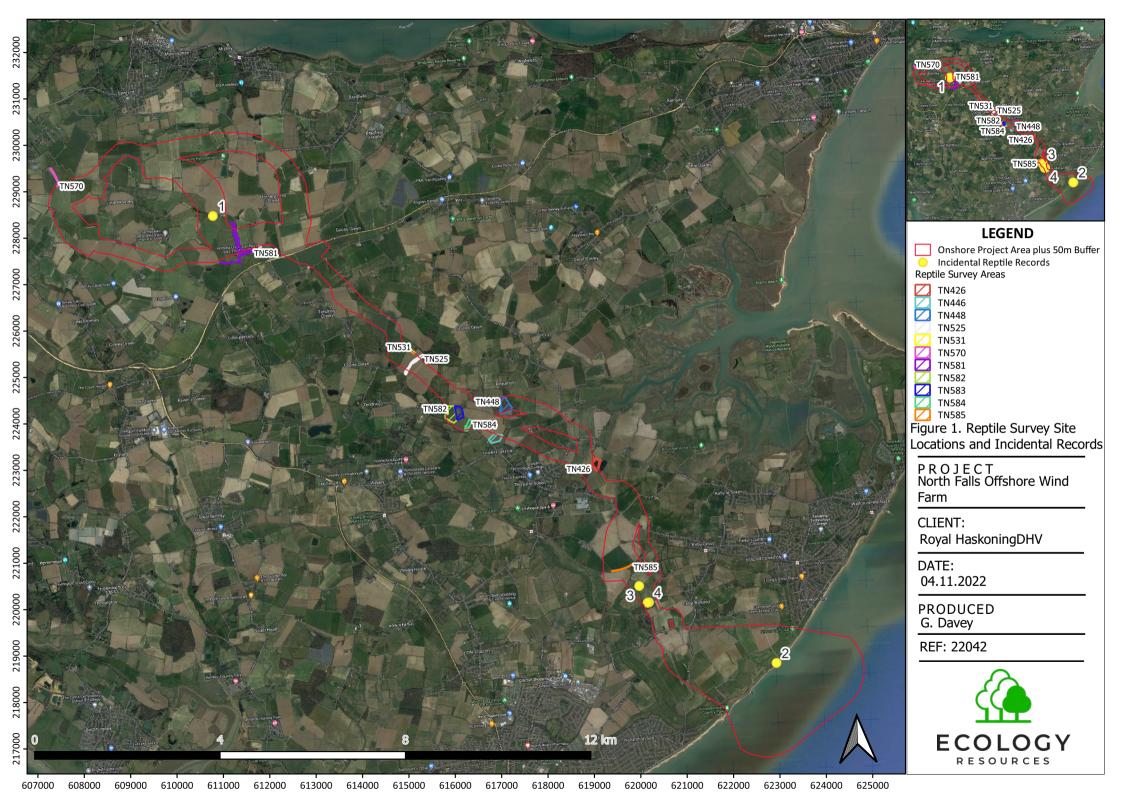
Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (1998) Evaluating local mitigation/translocation programmes: Maintaining Best Practices and lawful standards. HGBI advisory notes for Amphibian and Reptile Groups (ARGs). Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland, c/o Froglife, Halesworth.

Royal HaskoningDHV (2022) North Falls Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report.

Russell, L. & Foster, J. (2021) Establishing a baseline dataset for widespread reptiles in England to inform better management of development impacts. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, Bournemouth.



APPENDIX A: Location Plan – Figure 1





APPENDIX B: Reptile Survey Metadata

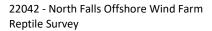
TN426							
Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End time	Surveyor(s)		
Deployment	19/04/22						
1	13/05/22	16°C. Dry, light breeze.	09:00	10:00	Stephen Treadwell, Nick Losset		
2	18/05/22	15°C. Overcast, slight breeze.	10:30	11:45	Stephen Treadwell		
3	26/05/22	17°C. Dry, light breeze. Clouds forming.	07:00	08:00	Stephen Treadwell		
4	28/09/22	13°C. Dry and overcast. Light breeze.	07:15	08:30	Stephen Treadwell		
5	03/10/22	14°C. Dry, patchy cloud. Light breeze.	09:40	10:20	Stephen Treadwell		
6	07/10/22	15°C. Dry and warm, slight breeze.	08:15	09:45	Stephen Treadwell		
7	09/10/22	14°C. Dry, slight breeze, no cloud.	10:50	11:30	Stephen Treadwell		
TN446							
Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End Time	Surveyor(s)		
Deployment	20/04/22						
1	13/05/22	14°C. Dry, light breeze.	07:00	08:30	Stephen Treadwell, Nick Losset		
2	18/05/22	15°C. Dry, light breeze.	09:00	10:00	Stephen Treadwell		
3	26/05/22	17°C. Dry, light breeze. Clouds forming.	08:00	09:15	Stephen Treadwell		
TN448							
Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End time	Surveyor(s)		
Deployment	04/05/22						
1	23/05/22	17°C. Dry day, slight breeze.	17:00	18:00	Stephen Treadwell		
2	26/05/22	16°C. Dry with patchy cloud.	10:15	11:30	Stephen Treadwell		
3	30/05/22	17°C. Dry and mild.	07:30	09:45	Stephen Treadwell		
4	29/09/22	15°C. Dry, slight breeze. Patchy cloud.	09:10	10:30	Stephen Treadwell		
5	01/10/22	16°C. Dry with patchy cloud.	10:20	12:00	Stephen Treadwell		
6	07/10/22	14°C. Dry, light breeze.	15:30	17:00	Stephen Treadwell		
7	10/10/22	12°C. Dry and bright, no cloud.	14:45	16:00	Stephen Treadwell		
TN525							
Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End time	Surveyor(s)		
Deployment	20/04/22						
1	13/05/22	17°C. Dry, light breeze.	10:30	12:00	Stephen Treadwell and Nick Losset		
2	17/05/22	14°C. Dry with patchy cloud.	10:30	11:45	Stephen Treadwell		



3	24/05/22	14°C. Dry, overcast with a mild breeze.	07:00	08:30	Stephen Treadwell
4	29/09/22	12°C. Dry and bright, no cloud.	07:10	08:45	Stephen Treadwell
5	04/10/22	15°C. Dry but overcast, slight breeze.	11:00	12:55	Stephen Treadwell
6	06/10/22	15°C. Dry with slight breeze.	08:15	10:15	Stephen Treadwell
7	09/10/22	13°C. Dry and bright, no cloud.	09:25	10:45	Stephen Treadwell
TN531					
Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End time	Surveyor(s)
Deployment	20/04/22				
1	09/05/22	13°C. Cool, light breeze and intermittent drizzle.	09:20	11:00	Stephen Treadwell and Nick Losset
2	17/05/22	13°C. Dry with a slight breeze.	09:30	10:15	Stephen Treadwell
3	24/05/22	15°C. Warm and hazy with light mist.	08:45	09:30	Stephen Treadwell
Re- deployment	31/08/22				
4	26/09/22	13°C. Dry but overcast.	13:00	13:40	Stephen Treadwell
5	03/10/22	14°C. Dry with patchy cloud.	08:30	09:30	Stephen Treadwell
6	05/10/22	15°C. Dry and mild, overcast.	08:00	09:30	Stephen Treadwell
7	09/10/22	12°C. Dry and mild with a slight breeze.	08:20	09:20	Stephen Treadwell
TN570				•	
Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End time	Surveyor(s)
Deployment	26/04/22				
1	09/05/22	12°C. Dry and hazy with a light breeze.	10:15	11:30	Stephen Treadwell
2	17/05/22	12°C. Dry with patchy cloud.	08:00	09:15	Stephen Treadwell
3	24/05/22	15°C. Dry and hazy, slight breeze.	10:15	11:30	Stephen Treadwell
4	27/09/22	13°C. Overcast, intermittent showers.	07:00	08:15	Stephen Treadwell
5	03/10/22	15°C. Dry and warm with patchy cloud.	10:50	12:00	Stephen Treadwell
6	06/10/22	15°C. Dry and warm day, no cloud.	16:00	17:50	Stephen Treadwell
7	09/10/22	12°C. Dry and mild, no cloud.	08:15	09:00	Johnnie Johnson
TN581					
Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End time	Surveyor(s)
Deployment	31/08/22				
1	19/09/22	11°C. Dry, patchy cloud with slight breeze	07:15	08:30	Stephen Treadwell
2	24/09/22	14°C. Dry with patchy cloud.	08:00	09:00	Johnnie Johnson
3	27/09/22	14°C. Overcast with intermittent showers.	09:00	10:00	Stephen Treadwell



		_			
4	30/09/22	13°C. Overcast with light shower prior to survey, dry during survey.		17:00	Stephen Treadwell
TN582					
Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End time	Surveyor(s)
Deployment	02/09/22				
1	21/09/22	11°C. Dry, light breeze and patchy cloud.	09:30	10:00	Stephen Treadwell
2	24/09/22	16°C. Dry and warm, no wind or cloud.	10:30	11:00	Johnnie Johnson
3	26/09/22	14°C. Dry with patchy cloud.	14:45	15:50	Stephen Treadwell
4	29/09/22	14°C. Dry and bright, no cloud.	14:50	15:50	Stephen Treadwell
5	01/10/22	15°C. Dry and warm, patchy cloud.	08:00	08:30	Johnnie Johnson
6	04/10/22	15°C. Dry and mild, with patchy cloud.	08:00	08:50	Stephen Treadwell
7	09/10/22	13°C. Dry and bright, no cloud.	09:00	10:00	Stephen Treadwell
TN583					
Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End time	Surveyor(s)
Deployment	02/09/22		li de la companya de		
1	22/09/22	12°C. Misty with patchy cloud.	08:30	10:00	Stephen Treadwell
2	24/09/22	15°C. Dry and bright, no cloud.	09:30	10:10	Johnnie Johnson
3	26/09/22	14°C. Dry, patchy cloud. Light breeze.	15:00	16:00	Stephen Treadwell
4	29/09/22	14°C. Dry and bright, no cloud.	16:00	17:30	Stephen Treadwell
5	01/10/22	15°C. Dry but overcast.	08:30	09:10	Johnnie Johnson
6	04/10/22	15°C. Dry, patchy cloud and light breeze.	08:50	09:40	Stephen Treadwell
7	09/10/22	13°C. Dry and bright, no cloud.	10:00	11:00	Johnnie Johnson
TN584					•
Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End time	Surveyor(s)
Deployment	01/09/22				
1	22/09/22	12°C. Misty with patchy cloud.	11:00	13:00	Stephen Treadwell
2	24/09/22	15°C. Dry and bright, no cloud.	08:45	09:55	Johnnie Johnson
3	26/09/22	14°C. Dry, patchy cloud. Light breeze.	17:00	18:10	Stephen Treadwell
4	29/09/22	14°C. Dry and bright, no cloud.	18:00	19:00	Stephen Treadwell
5	01/10/22	15°C. Dry but overcast.	09:00	10:00	Johnnie Johnson
6	04/10/22	15°C. Dry, patchy cloud and light breeze.	09:50	10:40	Stephen Treadwell





Survey visit	Date	Weather conditions	Start time	End time	Surveyor(s)
Deployment	02/09/22				
1	23/09/22	15°C. Dry with patchy cloud.	10:45	12:00	Stephen Treadwell
2	25/09/22	15°C. Dry with patchy cloud.	08:00	08:50	Johnnie Johnson
3	27/09/22	14°C. Dry, patchy cloud, light breeze.	10:20	12:00	Stephen Treadwell
4	30/09/22	12°C. Dry but overcast with some mist.	07:30	09:00	Stephen Treadwell
5	02/10/22	16°C. Mild and still, but overcast.	08:00	09:30	Johnnie Johnson
6	08/10/22	10°C. Chilly, patchy cloud. Light breeze.	08:00	09:10	Stephen Treadwell
7	14/10/22	10°C. Chilly but dry and bright, no cloud.	16:20	17:30	Stephen Treadwell

APPENDIX C: Reptile Survey Results - Figures 2A-H





Onshore Project Area plus 50m Buffer

Reptile Refugia and Survey Site ID

o TN570

Reptile survey results

- Adder (adult)
- ▲ Common Lizard (adult)
- △ Common Lizard (juvenile)
- Grass Snake (adult)
- Grass Snake (juvenile)

Figure 2a. Reptile Site TN570 Survey Results

PROJECT North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

CLIENT:

Royal HaskoningDHV

DATE:

04.11.2022

PRODUCED G. Davey







Onshore Project Area plus 50m Buffer

Reptile Refugia and Survey Site ID

o TN581

Reptile survey results

- + Adder (adult)
- ▲ Common Lizard (adult)
- △ Common Lizard (juvenile)
- Grass Snake (adult)
- Grass Snake (juvenile)

Figure 2b. Reptile Site TN581 Survey Results

PROJECT North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

CLIENT:

Royal HaskoningDHV

DATE:

04.11.2022

PRODUCED G. Davey







Onshore Project Area plus 50m Buffer

Reptile Refugia and Survey Site ID

- TN525
- TN531

Reptile survey results

- Adder (adult)
- ▲ Common Lizard (adult)
- Common Lizard (juvenile)
- Grass Snake (adult)
- Grass Snake (juvenile)

Figure 2c. Reptile Sites TN525 and TN531 Survey Results

PROJECT North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

CLIENT:

Royal HaskoningDHV

DATE:

04.11.2022

PRODUCED G. Davey







Onshore Project Area plus 50m Buffer

Reptile Refugia and Survey Site ID

- TN582
- TN583
- TN584

Reptile survey results

- + Adder (adult)
- ▲ Common Lizard (adult)
- △ Common Lizard (juvenile)
- Grass Snake (adult)

Figure 2d. Reptile Sites TN582, TN583 and TN584 Survey Results

PROJECT North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

CLIENT:

Royal HaskoningDHV

DATE:

04.11.2022

PRODUCED G. Davey







Onshore Project Area plus 50m Buffer

Reptile Refugia and Survey Site ID

o TN448

Reptile survey results

- + Adder (adult)
- ▲ Common Lizard (adult)
- △ Common Lizard (juvenile)
- Grass Snake (adult)
- Grass Snake (juvenile)

Figure 2e. Reptile Site TN448 Survey Results

PROJECT North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

CLIENT:

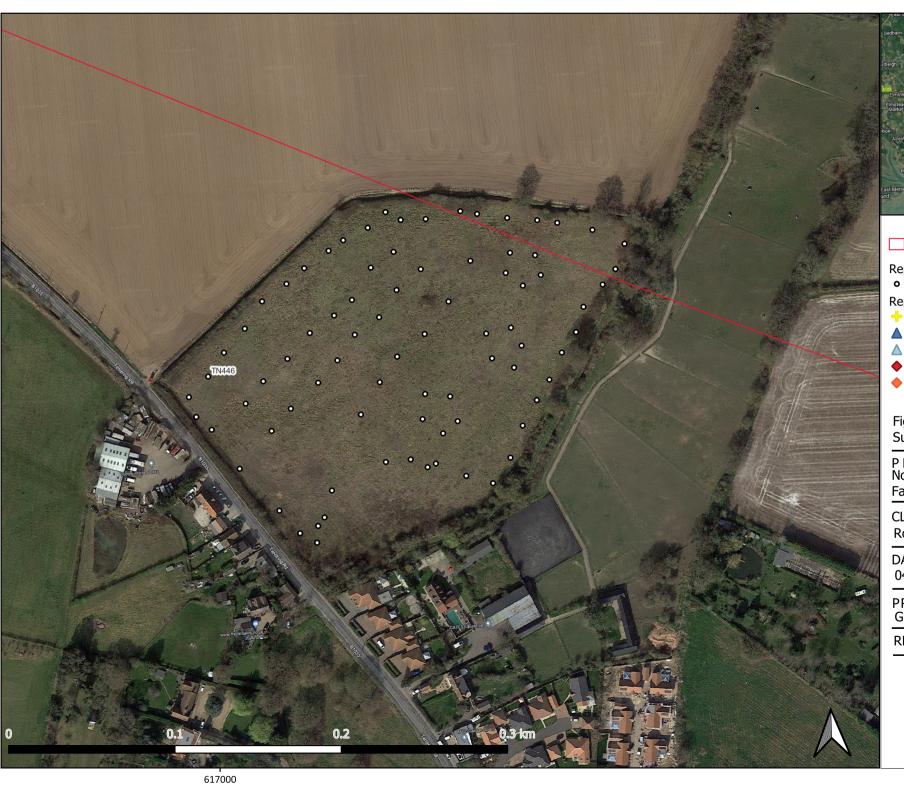
Royal HaskoningDHV

DATE:

04.11.2022

PRODUCED G. Davey







Onshore Project Area plus 50m Buffer

Reptile Refugia and Survey Site ID

o TN446

Reptile survey results

- Adder (adult)
- ▲ Common Lizard (adult)
- Common Lizard (juvenile)
- Grass Snake (adult)
- Grass Snake (juvenile)

Figure 2f. Reptile Site TN446 Survey Results

PROJECT North Falls Offshore Wind Farm

CLIENT:

Royal HaskoningDHV

DATE:

04.11.2022

PRODUCED G. Davey











HARNESSING THE POWER OF NORTH SEA WIND

North Falls Offshore Wind Farm Limited

A joint venture company owned equally by SSE Renewables and RWE.

To contact please email contact@northfallsoffshore.com

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