

XLINKS' MOROCCO-UK POWER PROJECT

Environmental Statement

Volume 2, Appendix 1.3: Dormouse Report

Document Number: 6.2.1.3

PINS Reference: EN010164/APP/6.2

APFP Regulations: 5(2)(a)

November 2024

For Issue



XLINKS' MOROCCO – UK POWER PROJECT

Document status					
Version	Purpose of document	Authored by	Reviewed by	Approved by	Review date
For Issue	Application	RPS	Xlinks 1 Ltd	Xlinks 1 Ltd	November 2024

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Prepared for:

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Glossary

Term	Meaning
Alverdiscott Substation site	The National Grid Electricity Transmission site within which the Alverdiscott Substation sits.
Converter Site	The Converter Site is proposed to be located to the immediate west of the existing Alverdiscott Substation site in north Devon. The Converter Site would contain two converter stations (known as Bipole 1 and Bipole 2) and associated infrastructure, buildings and landscaping.
Converter station	Part of an electrical transmission and distribution system. Converter stations convert electricity from Direct Current to Alternating Current, or vice versa.
Environmental Impact Assessment	The process of identifying and assessing the significant effects likely to arise from a project. This requires consideration of the likely changes to the environment, where these arise as a consequence of a project, through comparison with the existing and projected future baseline conditions.
Landfall	The proposed area in which the offshore cables make landfall in the United Kingdom (come on shore) and the transitional area between the offshore cabling and the onshore cabling. This term applies to the entire landfall area at Cornborough Range, Devon, between Mean Low Water Springs and the transition joint bays inclusive of all construction works, including the offshore and onshore cable routes, and landfall compound(s).
Nest Tube	Dormouse nest tubes are used to survey for dormouse. The tubes are 5 x 5 cm in cross section and 25 cm long, and made from stiff double walled black plastic. A plywood tray is placed inside, projecting 5 cm beyond the tube's entrance to allow the animals' easy access. The other end of the tube is sealed with a wooden block. The tubes are then suspended by wire or tape, or fixed firmly underneath horizontal limbs, where they resemble a hollow branch. Dormice form nests in these tubes and it is these nests that are used as indicators of their presence in the habitat.
Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor	The proposed corridor within which the onshore High Voltage Direct Current cables would be located.
Proposed Development	The element of Xlinks' Morocco-UK Power Project within the UK. The Proposed Development covers all works required to construct and operate the offshore cables (from the UK Exclusive Economic Zone to Landfall), Landfall, onshore Direct Current and Alternating Current cables, converter stations, and highways improvements.
Xlinks' Morocco UK Power Project (the 'Project')	The overall scheme from Morocco to the national grid, including all onshore and offshore elements of the transmission network and the generation site in Morocco (referred to as the 'Project').

Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ES	Environmental Statement
HVDC	High Voltage Direct Current
NERC	Natural Environments and Rural Communities
UK	United Kingdom

Units

Units	Meaning
ha	Hectares
km	Kilometre
m	Metre
mm	Millimetre

1 DORMOUSE REPORT

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This document forms Volume 2, Appendix 1.3: Dormouse Report of the Environmental Statement (ES) prepared for the United Kingdom (UK) elements of Xlinks' Morocco-UK Power Project (the 'Project'). For ease of reference, the UK elements of the Project are referred to as the 'Proposed Development, which is the focus of the Environmental Statement (ES). The ES presents the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process for the Proposed Development.
- 1.1.2 This document provides the methodology and results of the dormouse surveys undertaken in 2021 and 2022 to determine the presence or likely absence of dormouse within suitable on-site habitats.
- 1.1.3 The survey and subsequent report are prepared in accordance with the British Standard for Biodiversity Code of Practice for Planning and Development (BS42020:2013).

Site Location

- 1.1.4 The Onshore Infrastructure Area is located in north Devon and includes the Landfall, Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor, HVAC Cable Corridors and Converter Site. The Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor is approximately 14.5 km in length and the Converter Site is approximately 39.5 ha. The HVAC Cable Corridors are situated within the boundaries of the Converter Site and Alverdiscott Substation Site.
- 1.1.5 The Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor passes through a mixture of pastoral and arable farm land, with fields bounded by Devon hedgerows, and occasionally crossing small watercourses in wooded valleys. The route also crosses the tidal Torridge estuary.
- 1.1.6 The site location is shown on **Figure 1.1** to **Figure 1.5**. Aerial imaging available via Google Earth Pro was also reviewed to assess the site in relation to its context in the wider landscape.
- 1.1.7 The design of the Proposed Development has changed since these surveys were undertaken. Updated surveys are currently ongoing, which started in August 2024 and will continue to the end of the current season. The results of the ongoing surveys are not incorporated into this appendix, however once completed, the survey results will be made available. Although the design of the Proposed Development has been modified, the general findings of the survey remain relevant.

Local Status of Dormouse

- 1.1.8 There is a known population of dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) in the local area. RPS have previously undertaken surveys in the locality, which confirmed presence of dormouse within hedgerows along Dunn Lane near the centre of the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor.

- 1.1.9 Local landowners have also provided anecdotal evidence of dormouse being present in woodland connected to onsite habitats at the eastern end of the site.
- 1.1.10 No records of dormouse were identified by the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (RPS Desk study, 2022). Previous surveys undertaken for the Atlantic Array scheme identified the presence of dormice in hedgerows at a number of locations along the proposed Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor and close to the proposed Converter Site.
- 1.1.11 Dormice receive full protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are listed in Section 41 of the Natural Environments and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 as species of principal importance for conservation in England.

1.2 Study Area

- 1.2.1 The onshore ecology and nature conservation study area is detailed within Volume 2, Chapter 1: Onshore Ecology and Nature Conservation of the ES. The study area includes the following.
- Locally designated sites, including Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs), and less mobile species located within 2 km of the Onshore Infrastructure Area.
 - Nationally designated sites, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves, and records of particularly mobile protected or otherwise notable species (e.g. bats and otters) located within 5 km of the Onshore Infrastructure Area.
 - Internationally designated sites located within 12 km of the Onshore Infrastructure Area.
- 1.2.2 The onshore ecology and nature conservation study area is presented in Volume 2, Figure 1.1 of the ES (see Volume 2, Figures).

1.3 Survey Area

- 1.3.1 The survey area is defined as the area within which each survey has been undertaken and is based on species or site-specific guidance on the extent of survey required. The survey area includes all dormouse habitat within the Onshore Infrastructure Area and adjoining sections of hedgerow.

Contextual Data

- 1.3.2 Owing to the iterative design process of the Proposed Development, some surveys were undertaken further than 100 m from the Onshore Infrastructure Area. These surveys may have been located within, or within the buffer of, previous iterations of the Onshore Infrastructure Area boundaries. Nevertheless, information from these surveys have been included in this technical report because they provide context regarding the ecological sensitivity of the wider area and to inform Volume 2, Chapter 1: Onshore Ecology and Nature Conservation of the ES (where relevant). Any contextual information (based on survey data collected from outside the survey area) is shown on **Figure 1.1** to **Figure 1.5**.

1.4 Methodology

Nest Tube Survey

- 1.4.1 The nest tube survey was undertaken following a methodology based on published best practice guidelines (Bright, Morris & Mitchell Jones 2006; Chanin & Woods 2003).
- 1.4.2 Dormouse are arboreal, spending the majority of their time during the active season in the canopy. The nest tubes provide shelter in which dormice nests can be constructed, enabling the presence of dormouse to be confirmed. Nest tubes can also be used by other mice species but differences in the structure of nests enables identification of features created by dormice.
- 1.4.3 The nest tubes used were based on the standard design described in the published guidelines and as recommended by the mammal society and were set following the methodology described by Chanin and Woods (2003).
- 1.4.4 A total of 310 nest tubes were installed in each of the hedgerows and copses throughout the site between 5 and 8 July 2021. The survey covered all suitable habitat through which the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor will cross.
- 1.4.5 Nest tubes were installed at a recommended tube spacing of 20 m (Chanin & Woods 2003). The locations of the hazel dormouse nest tubes are provided in **Figure 1.1** to **Figure 1.5** below.
- 1.4.6 The nest tubes were then inspected on six separate occasions during the following dates:
- 26 to 28 July 2021;
 - 23 to 25 August 2021;
 - 28 to 29 September 2021;
 - 26 to 27 October 2021;
 - 23 to 24 November 2021; and
 - 29 to 30 June 2022.
- 1.4.7 All the survey inspections coincided with dry weather. Each nest tube was checked and any signs of dormouse occupation or evidence of activity by small mammals or other species was recorded.

Survey Effort

- 1.4.8 The dormouse survey guidelines provide recommendations on the minimum survey effort for presence/absence surveys. A method is outlined for quantifying survey effort based on the number of nest tubes used and the likelihood of encountering dormice during each month between April and November (when dormice are typically active).
- 1.4.9 Using this method, the months April through to November are each allotted a value referred to as an 'index of probability' score reflecting the relative likelihood of dormice being detected in nest tubes in that month. The 'index of probability' scores for each month are given in **Table 1.1**. The survey effort is calculated by totalling the index of probability scores for each month in which nest tubes are installed.

Table 1.1: Dormouse survey months and survey effort scores

Survey Month	Index of Probability Score (based on 50 nest tubes placed in suitable habitat at 20 m spacing)
April	1
May	4
June	2
July	2
August	5
September	7
October	2
November	2

1.4.10 A total survey effort score of 20 is considered to be the minimum requirement to determine the presence/likely absence of dormouse. The 2021 survey covered July to November 2021 and June 2022, achieving an Index of Probability score of 20.

Limitations

Survey Access

- 1.4.11 Survey access was not granted to a parcel of land at the west of the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor which comprises several pasture fields and a single crop field bounded by hedgerows. Based on aerial imagery, several of the hedgerows are gappy or defunct reducing their suitability for dormice.
- 1.4.12 The Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor will follow the existing access points where possible, however this may require some hedgerow removal to widen the working area and there will be a requirement for new access points to be made in other hedgerows.
- 1.4.13 The presence of dormouse will be assumed in the inaccessible land parcel and measures will be followed during the construction as with other areas of the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor to protect dormouse.
- 1.4.14 This dormouse survey was undertaken on a previous iteration of the Onshore Infrastructure Area. During the dormouse surveys undertaken in 2021 and 2022, survey access at the Converter Site was not available. As detailed within **paragraph 1.1.7**, dormouse surveys are currently ongoing and will cover all suitable habitat for dormouse within the Onshore Infrastructure Area. Where it has not been possible to exclude this presence, it is appropriate to assume that the presence of such species is likely and assess the Proposed Development on this precautionary basis.

Dormouse Tube Removal

- 1.4.15 Throughout the 2021 survey visits, a small number of dormouse tubes were removed by cattle or hedge flailing throughout the survey period. Dormouse tubes were replaced accordingly.

- 1.4.16 Given the high number of dormouse tubes used across the survey area and the good coverage achieved, this is not considered to be a significant constraint.
- 1.4.17 During the final survey visit in June 2022, approximately one third of the dormouse tubes remained. Given the consistency of the 2021 survey results and the precautionary assumption that dormouse are present in low numbers in suitable habitat throughout the route, this is not considered to be a significant constraint on the validity of the results.

Accurate Lifespan of Ecological Data

- 1.4.18 The majority of ecological data remain valid for only short periods due to the inherently transient nature of the subject. The survey results contained in this report are considered accurate for two years, assuming no significant considerable changes to the site conditions.
- 1.4.19 Site specific surveys used to inform Volume 2, Chapter 1: Onshore Ecology and Nature Conservation of the ES were undertaken between 2021 and 2024. CIEEMs Advice Note: On the lifespan of ecological reports and surveys (CIEEM, 2019) recommends that surveys exceeding three years in age are likely to require updating, whilst surveys undertaken between 18 months and three years prior to application may require site visits pre-construction to review the validity of survey findings. Therefore, in accordance with CIEEM guidance, site specific surveys undertaken over 18 months prior to the submission will be updated, where required (following a site review to confirm the validity of survey findings by a suitably qualified ecologist). Those surveys undertaken over three years will be supplemented by further surveys (if Development Consent Order is granted) to be completed pre-construction.

1.5 Results

Nest Tube Survey

Dormouse

- 1.5.1 Dormouse were recorded at six locations throughout the survey visits, with nests recorded on both the western and eastern sides of the River Torridge.
- 1.5.2 Dormouse were recorded in three locations to the east of the River Torridge. The first two locations are situated outside of the Onshore Infrastructure Area, to the south of Gammaton Moor (see **Figure 1.5**). A dormouse and its nest were present within the wooded stream corridor at the east of the field. An empty dormouse nest was present within a hedgerow in the same field.
- 1.5.3 At the third location, an empty dormouse nest was recorded within a hedgerow bounding a small pasture field along the path of the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor, to the south of Gammaton Road (see **Figure 1.4**).
- 1.5.4 On the western side of the River Torridge, dormouse were recorded in a further three locations within the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor, which are shown on **Figure 1.1** to **Figure 1.4**. An empty dormouse nest was recorded within a hedgerow bounding an arable field to the west of the A386.
- 1.5.5 Furthermore, empty dormouse nests were recorded in hedgerows bounding arable fields to the south of the A39.

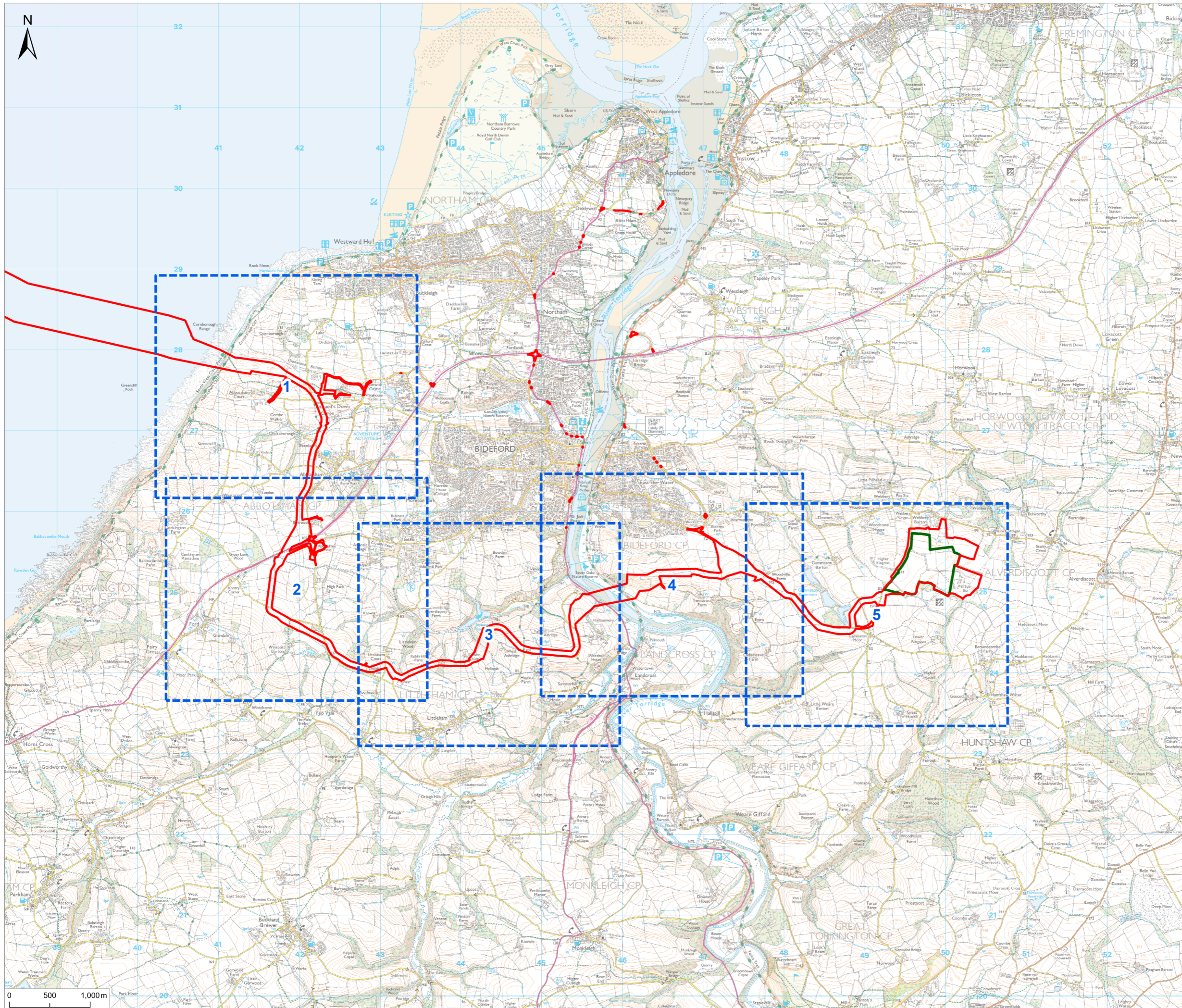
1.5.6 A summary of the findings of the dormouse surveys is provided in **Table 1.2** and presented in **Figure 1.1** to **Figure 1.5** below. The full survey results are provided in **Annex A** at the end of this report.

Other Fauna

1.5.7 Woodmouse and empty Apodemus sp. nests were recorded during each of the survey visits at several locations. Occasional birds' nests and several berry caches were also recorded.

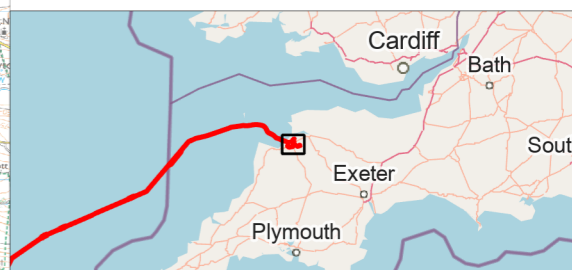
Table 1.2: Dormouse survey results summary.

Dormouse Tube Number	Results	Month Recorded
2	Dormouse nest (empty)	October – November
48	Dormouse nest (empty)	August - November
122	Dormouse nest (empty)	August – November
258	Dormouse nest (empty)	September – November
277	Dormouse nest (empty)	October – November
306	Dormouse nest (empty)	November
306	Young dormouse in nest	October



Notes
 1. This plan is scaled at paper size A3. If received electronically it is the recipient's responsibility to print to the correct scale. Only written dimensions should be used.

- Legend**
- Order Limits
 - Converter Site
 - Map Frames



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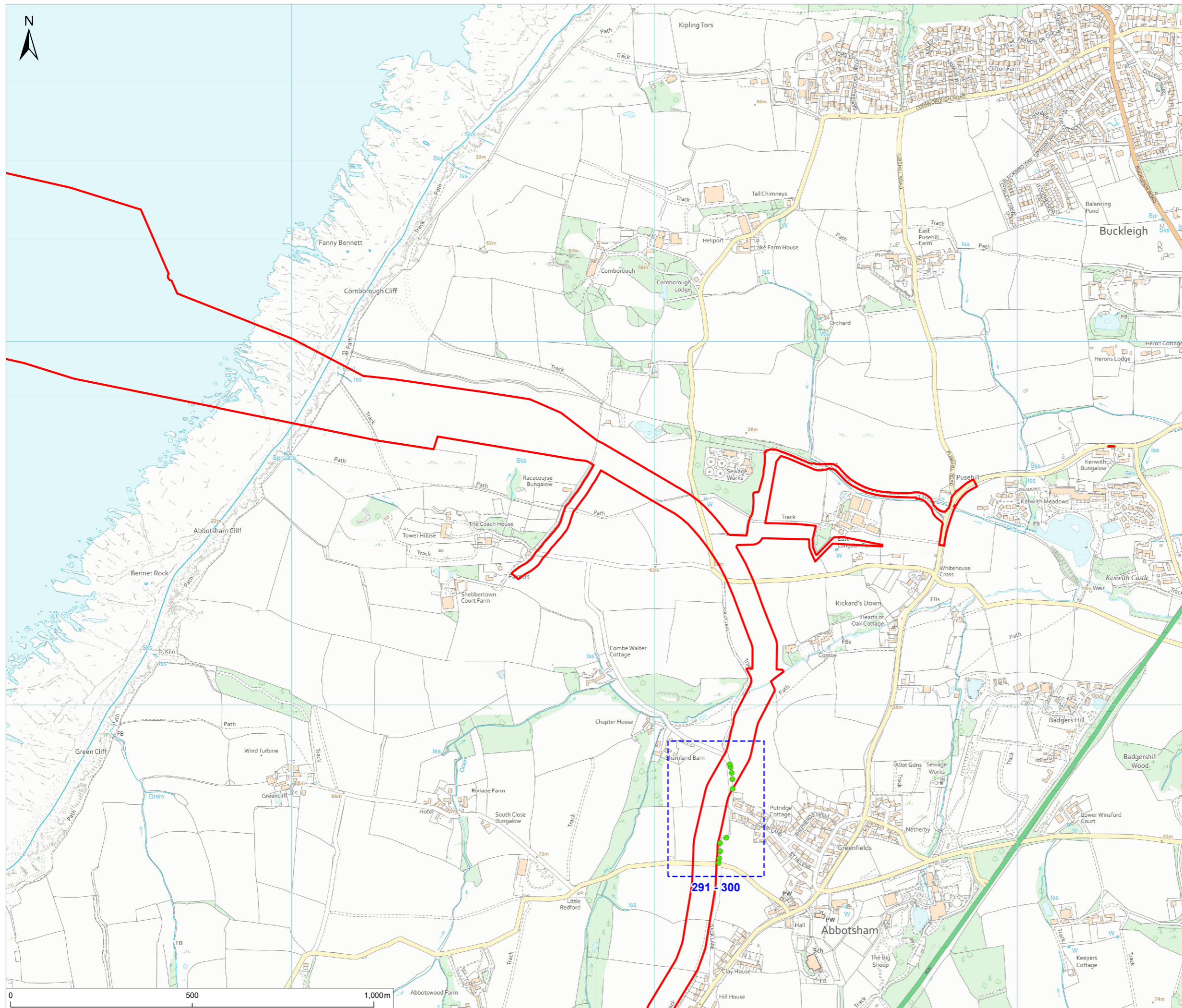


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Title Results of the Hazel Dormouse tube surveys

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Figure Number 1.0 **Rev** P01

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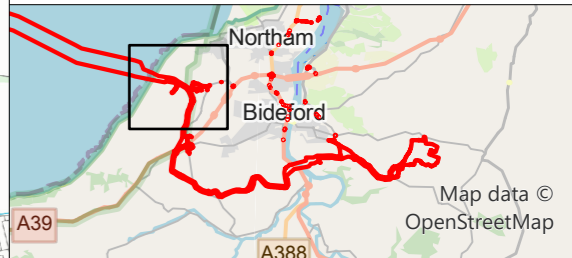
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Legend

- Order Limits
- Converter Site
- Dormouse tube location
- Dormouse nest and/or dormouse in tube



P01	FINAL	MP	BC	04.10.24
Rev	Description	By	CB	Date



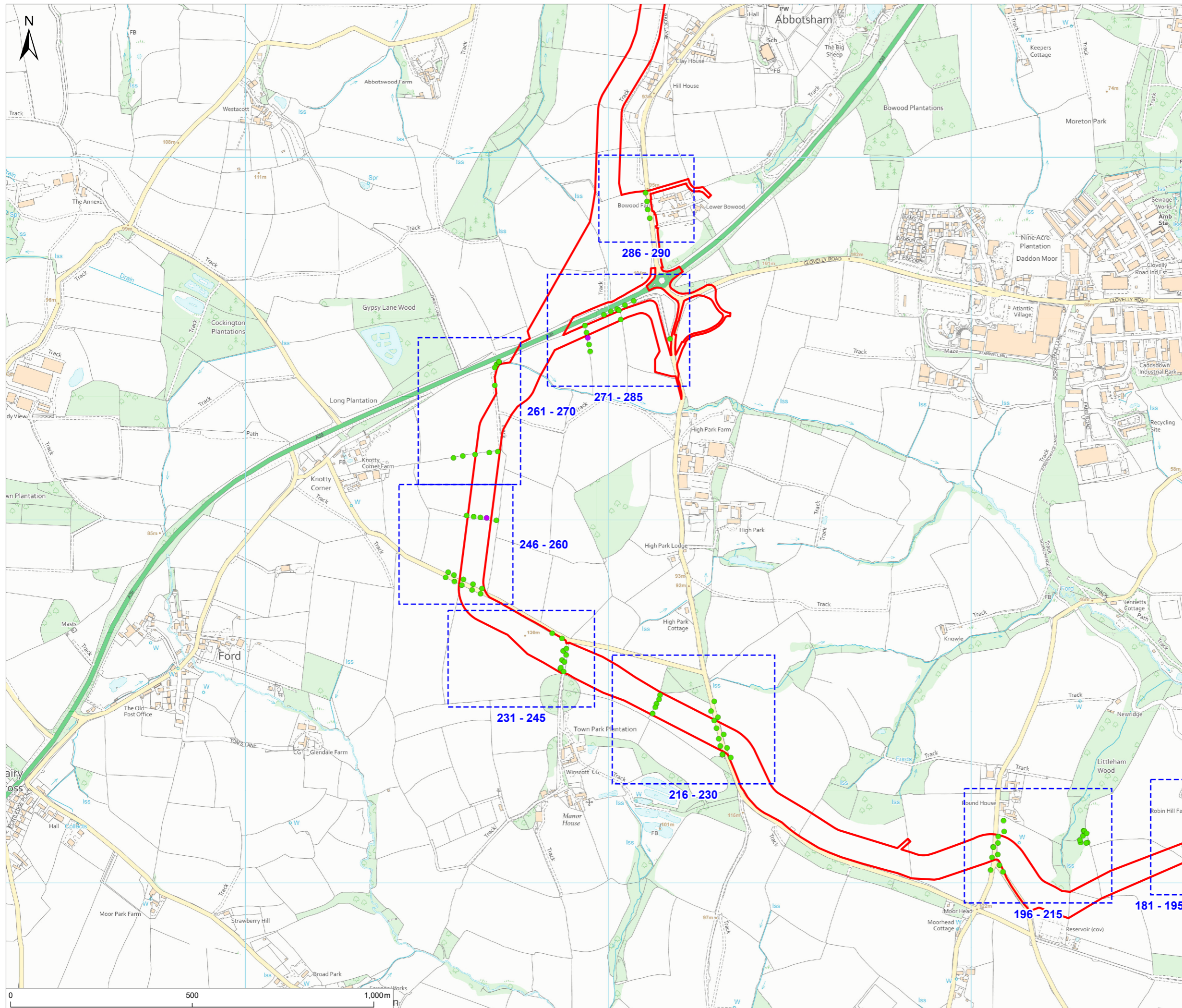
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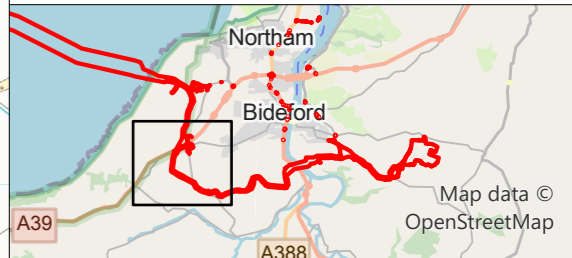
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- Legend**
- Order Limits
 - Converter Site
 - Dormouse tube location
 - Dormouse nest and/or dormouse in tube



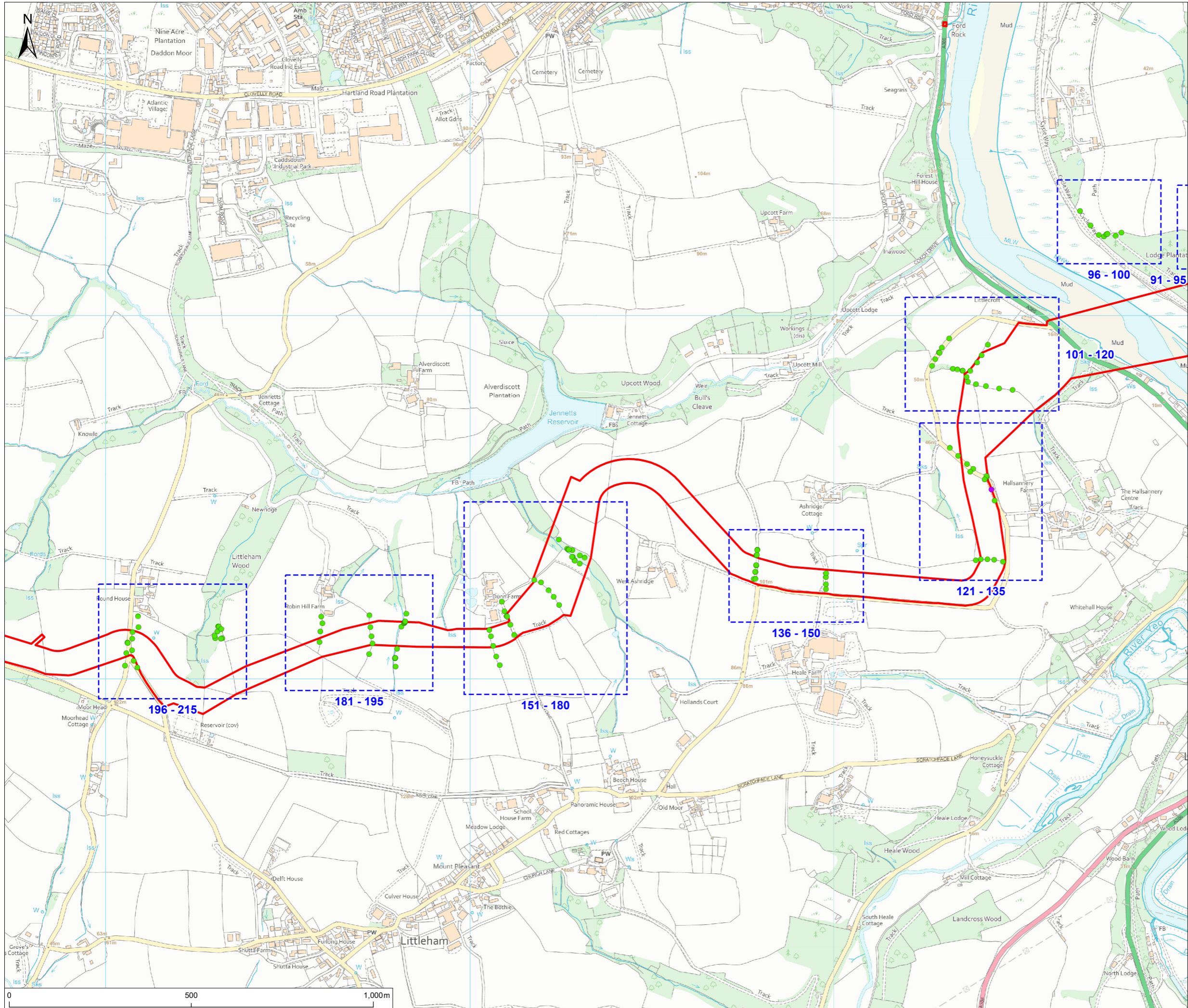
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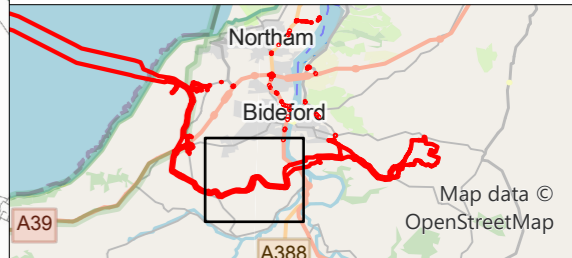
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- Legend**
- Order Limits
 - Converter Site
 - Dormouse tube location
 - Dormouse nest and/or dormouse in tube



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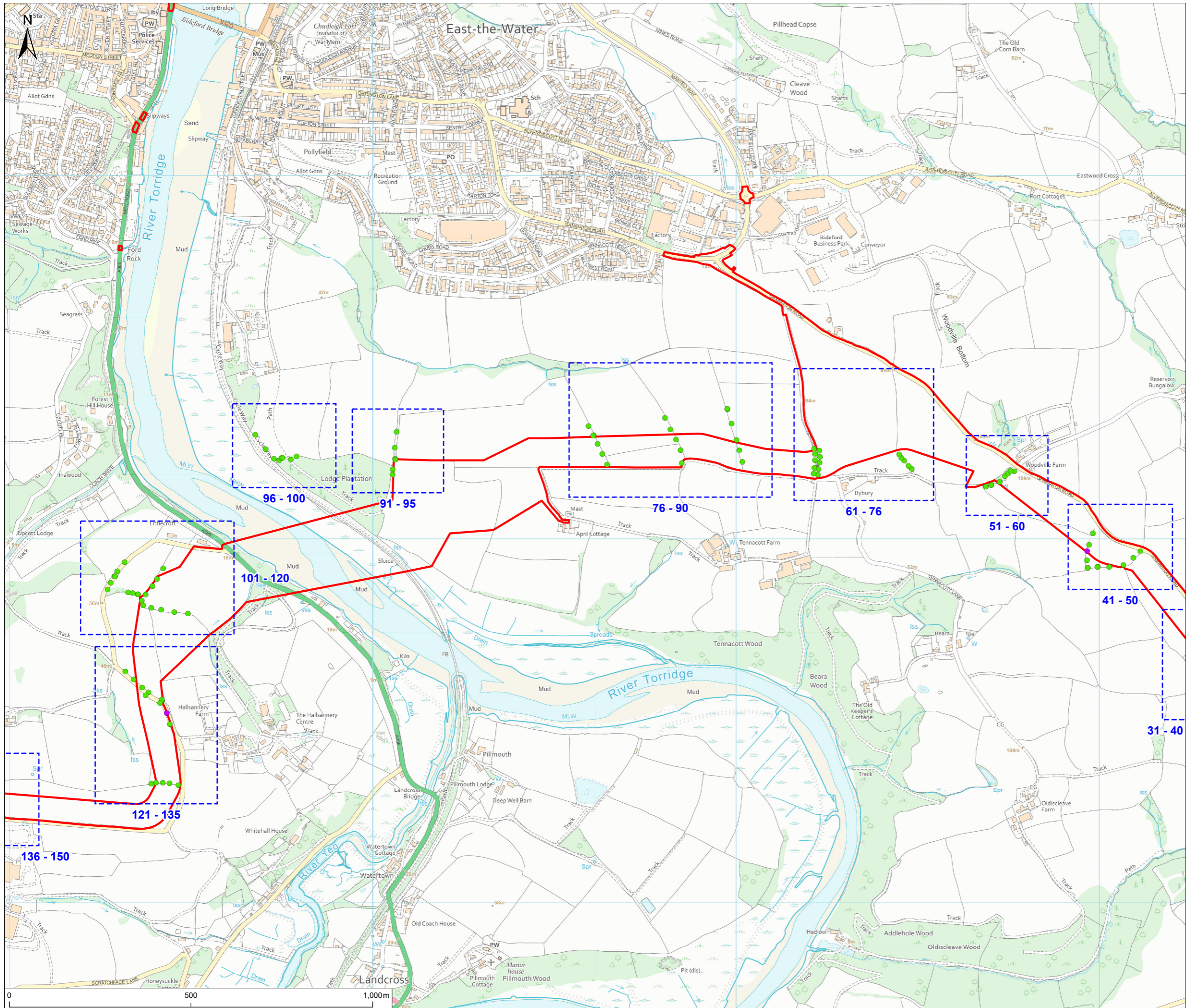


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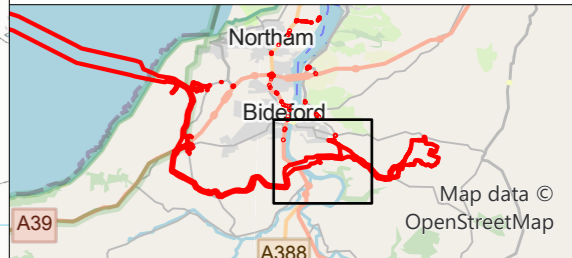
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- Legend**
- Order Limits
 - Converter Site
 - Dormouse tube location
 - Dormouse nest and/or dormouse in tube



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Rev	Description	By	CB	Date

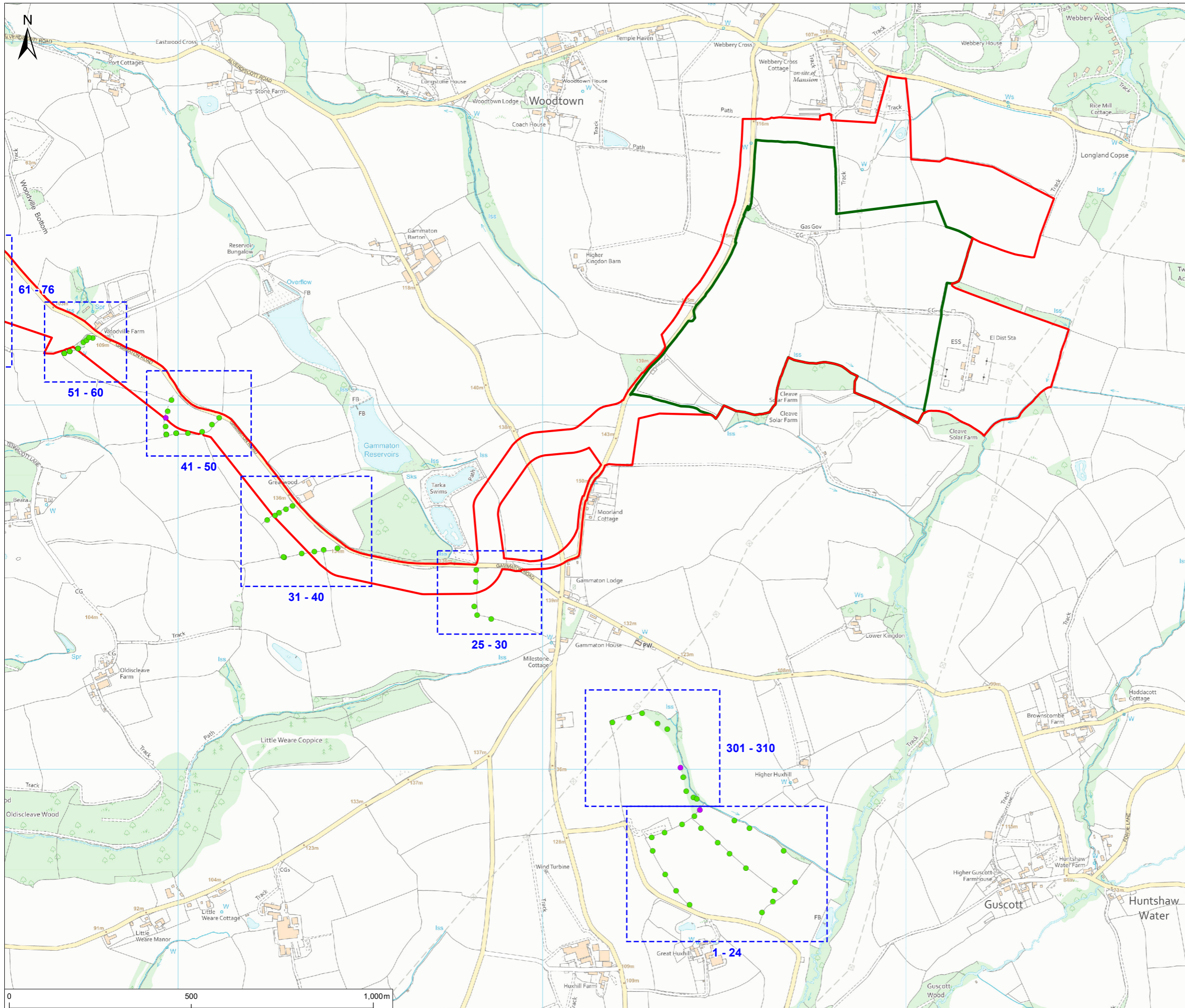


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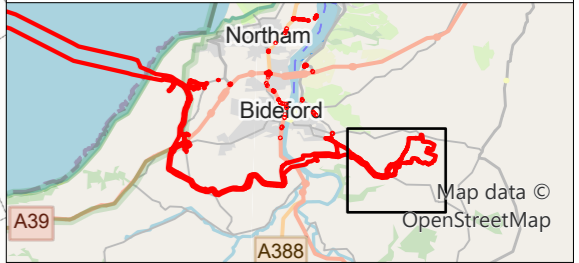
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Legend

- Order Limits
- Converter Site
- Dormouse tube location
- Dormouse nest and/or dormouse in tube



P01	FINAL	MP	BC	04.10.24
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1.6 Discussion and recommendations

Dormouse Population

- 1.6.1 The survey has confirmed that dormouse are present within the Onshore Infrastructure Area with dormouse recorded in low numbers throughout the survey area.
- 1.6.2 The Onshore Infrastructure Area is located in a rural area and the surrounding landscape largely comprises farmland and small villages and hamlets. Hedgerows and small sections of woodland are throughout the survey area provide suitable dormouse habitat. With the exception of the River Torridge and A39, there are few barriers for dormouse dispersal throughout the Onshore Infrastructure Area.
- 1.6.3 Dormouse will move nesting locations throughout the year. The locations of dormouse recordings are spread throughout the survey area and have good habitat connectivity to areas where no dormouse nests were recorded and there is potential for dormouse to move between these areas. It is therefore recommended that under a precautionary basis it is assumed that dormouse are present throughout the Onshore Infrastructure Area.

Potential Impact of Works

- 1.6.4 The Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor and associated infrastructure and access routes will follow the path of existing field entrances wherever possible which will minimise disturbance of dormouse habitat. Where this is not possible, the temporary loss of small sections of hedgerow will be required to facilitate the cable route installation. The proposals will retain all areas of woodland.
- 1.6.5 Sections of hedgerow removal are anticipated to be no more than 12 m wide in most cases.
- 1.6.6 The Converter Site at Gammaton Moor would result in some permanent hedgerow loss.
- 1.6.7 The proposed temporary construction compounds could result in potential disturbance to dormouse utilising hedges forming the boundaries of proposed compound areas.
- 1.6.8 Mitigation will be required to protect dormouse and their nests during the construction phase.

Recommendations

- 1.6.9 As the Proposed Development will result in temporary and potentially permanent destruction of habitat used by dormouse, a licence under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 will be required. This will require the production of a detailed dormouse mitigation strategy.
- 1.6.10 Work should be timed to avoid impacts on dormouse where possible. This would include phased hedgerow cutting. Following this method, hedgerows should be cut to no less than 150 mm in winter when dormouse will be in hibernation (typically November to March). Disturbance of hedgerow bases (vegetation below 150 mm and any below ground disturbance such as root removal) should only be undertaken when dormouse will be active (typically April to November inclusive).

- 1.6.11 If for any reason, any small areas of hedgerow cannot be subject to the two-stage approach referred to above, small sections of hedge requiring removal should be cut when dormouse may be active should first be checked for the presence of dormouse nests by a suitably experienced Ecological Clerk of Works. If nests are identified they would be retained in situ during periods when dormice may have dependent young in the nests (early June until late September). The intention would be to carry out short lengths of clearance on successive days to persuade dormice to move away from the affected area, but if nests potentially containing young are identified, this clearance would be delayed until the young are no longer present. It is for this reason that the two-stage approach is to be preferred, as this prevents the presence of suitable habitat for dormouse breeding in sections to be cleared.
- 1.6.12 Full reinstatement of hedgerows on a like-for-like basis will be undertaken. This would ensure the habitat removed and the potential severance of connectivity will be addressed.
- 1.6.13 In addition, habitat suitable for dormice should be created as a part of the landscape scheme associated with the Proposed Development.

1.7 Summary

Dormouse Population

- 1.7.1 Devon hedgerows and small sections of woodland throughout the Onshore Infrastructure Area provide habitat for dormouse. Low numbers of dormouse were recorded in several locations along the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor.
- 1.7.2 Given the good connectivity of suitable habitat within the Onshore Infrastructure Area, it is recommended that the presence of dormouse is assumed throughout the Onshore Infrastructure Area. The Proposed Development will therefore require licensing under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, to cover temporary damage to dormouse habitat (hedgerows affected by the Onshore HVDC Cable Corridor), permanent damage to dormouse habitat (hedgerows removed as a result of construction of the Converter Site and those affected by the proposed road widening along Gammaton Road for improved access). Disturbance to dormouse, particularly as a result of activity within construction compounds may also occur to animals utilising hedges on the boundaries of the compounds.
- 1.7.3 The Proposed Development is relatively low impact and most of the existing core habitat (woodlands) will be retained and protected. Where temporary habitat loss is required appropriate mitigation measures should be implemented to protect dormouse during the construction phase. This should include temporary connective features such as “dead-hedging” across hedgerow gaps (where no work is being undertaken). Dead hedging consists of placing branches and brash into a row, forming an interwoven connection of branches along which dormice can travel. In addition measures such as hedgerow reinstatement and enhancements will be required, including measures set out in section 5 of the Dormouse Conservation Handbook (Bright et al 2006).
- 1.7.4 Reinstatement of affected hedgerows on a like-for-like basis would ensure current connectivity will be maintained post completion of construction.

- 1.7.5 Habitat creation will be implemented to compensate for permanent losses to habitat (hedgerows) associated with construction of the Converter Site and also for hedgerow modifications required to improve access. Hedgerow and woodland habitat will be created as part of the biodiversity mitigation and enhancement and landscape requirements associated with the Proposed Development. These habitat elements are likely to provide additional resources for dormice within this landscape.

1.8 References

Bright, P. Morris, P. & Mitchell-Jones, T. (2006). The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Ed. English Nature (Natural England) Peterborough.

Chanin, P. & Woods, M. (2003). English Nature Research Report No. 524: Surveying Dormice using nest tubes. Results and experiences from the South West Dormouse Project. English Nature (Natural England) Peterborough.

Annex A: Full Dormouse Survey Report

Apx Table 1: Full Dormouse Survey Report

Dormouse Tube Number	Results	Month Recorded
2	Dormouse nest (empty)	October – November
43	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	September
48	Dormouse nest (empty)	August - November
49	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	July - August
58	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	September
64	Wood mouse in nest	July - August
72	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	September
76	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	August - September
77	Wood mouse nest (empty)	November
77	Wood mouse in nest	October
78	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	November
78	Wood mouse in nest	October
88	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	August
94	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October
95	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October
98	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	July
110	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October - November
118	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	September
122	Dormouse nest (empty)	August - November
126	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	September
135	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October - November
136	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October
147	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October
148	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October
154	Hawthorn berry cache	September
155	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October
161	Wood mouse in nest	September
172	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October - November
177	Wood mouse in nest	September
188	Wood mouse in nest	August
188	Wood mouse nest (empty)	September
200	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	August - September
202	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	September - October
204	Hawthorn berry cache	September
234	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	November
241	Bird nest	September

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Dormouse Tube Number	Results	Month Recorded
244	Hawthorn berry cache	September
258	Dormouse nest (empty)	September - November
274	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October
275	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October - November
277	Dormouse nest (empty)	October - November
299	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October
302	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October
306	Dormouse nest (empty)	November
306	Young dormouse in nest	October
308	<i>Apodemus</i> nest	October