



## Grassland Survey and Condition Assessment

Land to the East side of Lodge Road

Lodge Road  
Hurst  
Reading  
RG10 0SG

May 2025  
Kelly Jones and Annika Binet

## Project Details

|                           |                                                         |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Client                    | Forays Homes                                            |
| Site location             | Land off Lodge Road, Hurst, RG10 0SG                    |
| Grid Reference            | SU 79279 73580                                          |
| Agent                     | Luke Cleary                                             |
| Report Title              | 24-041-GS - Land off Lodge Road Grassland Survey report |
| Report and version number | 24-041-GS-v1                                            |
| Survey Date               | 09/05/2025                                              |
| Surveyed By               | Kelly Jones MSc MCIEEM                                  |

|                                                                                                                                                           |                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Author                                                                                                                                                    | Annika Binet MCIEEM BSc (Hons) |
| Reviewed/approved by                                                                                                                                      | Kelly Jones MSc MCIEEM         |
| <p>This report remains valid for 18 months from date of issue.</p> <p>Survey data are valid for 12-24 months from the date the survey was undertaken.</p> |                                |

This report has been prepared by AKB Ecology, in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' and 'Code of Professional Conduct' issued by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

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This is a technical report which does not represent legal advice. This report is intended to be submitted with a planning application for a development it is the duty of care of the landowner / developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to works.

## Executive Summary

- AKB Ecology were commissioned by Forays Homes to undertake a grassland survey at Land off Lodge Road, Hurst, RG10 0SG at central grid reference SU 79279 73580 to help inform the Biodiversity Net Gain calculations related to the proposed development of the site.
- The site is approximately 0.85ha in size and contains modified grassland, blackthorn scrub, a small block of woodland and ecologically valuable tree lines.
- The proposed development includes construction of 3 or 4 detached dwellings within the plot with associated gardens.
- A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out for the site in January 2025; this survey identified the need to carry out a detailed grassland survey within the peak survey period for this habitat type in order to confirm the classification of modified grassland and undertake a condition assessment of the habitat.
- This report details the results of the survey, which was carried out on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2025 by Kelly Jones qualified ecologist.
- Based on the results of the grassland survey, the species composition and known management of the site, the grassland is considered to be a best fit for UKHabs g4 Modified grassland.
- The condition assessment identified the grassland to be in poor condition.
- BNG calculations will be required for the site, with a 10% gain for habitats, hedgerows and waterbodies required.

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 AKB Ecology were commissioned by Forays Homes to undertake a grassland survey at Land off Lodge Road, Hurst, RG10 0SG to help inform the proposed development of the site.
- 1.2 A preliminary ecological appraisal was carried out by Annika Binet, a qualified ecologist, on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025 which identified the need for further survey for the grassland on site in addition to great crested newt survey. The full results of this survey are detailed within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report for the site dated February 2025.
- 1.3 Great crested newt survey was carried out in April 2025 with the results detailed in a separate report.

# 2 Background

- 2.1 The proposed development site is located at Land off Lodge Road, Hurst, RG10 0SG at central grid reference SU 79279 73580. The site is located between the city of Reading and village of Hurst in Berkshire. The surrounding landscape comprises residential development interspersed with agricultural land. The River Lodden and a series of lakes associated with the river are located to the west of the site, to the east of Reading. See Figure 1.



**FIGURE 1: SHOWING THE SITE LOCATION**

- 2.2 The site is approximately 0.85ha and largely comprises an agricultural field which was previously used for grazing pasture but has not been in active use for a number of years, with current management of the grassland through cutting and rotovating with a tractor. See Figure 2.



FIGURE 2 : AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE SHOWING THE SITE BOUNDARY

- 2.3 The proposed development plan involves construction of detached dwellings with associated gardens, plans are not yet finalised, however feasibility studies have been carried out based on a 4-unit scheme, which was later revised to a 3-unit scheme following flood assessment.
- 2.4 The proposed works will involve the removal of grassland in addition to removal of a number of trees within the central section of the site. The development will include retention of existing scrub and tree line along the western edge with additional planting in this area to create a buffer between the site and adjacent road. The woodland area in the south-east corner of the site will additionally be retained. The majority of the habitat area on site is unlikely to be negatively affected by these proposals.
- 2.5 The Indicative scheme for the site is shown in Figure 3 of this report. This has been amended since the PEA was carried out and therefore is different to that shown within the PEA report dated February 2025.

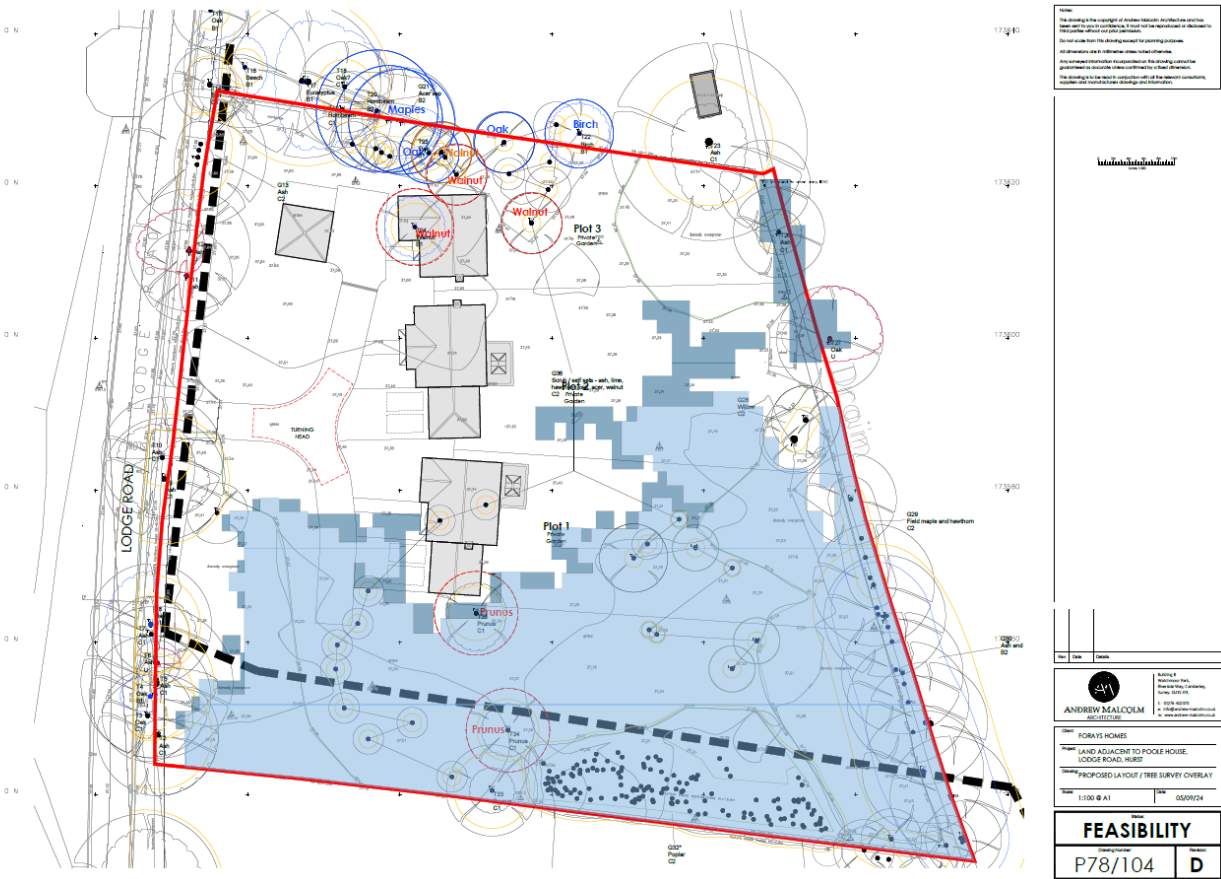


FIGURE 3 : PROPOSED PLANS

3 Surveyor Information

TABLE 1: SURVEYOR INFORMATION

| Surveyor    | Licences                                                                                                                                                                                            | Ecological Experience or qualification                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kelly Jones | <p>Class licence CL19 and CL20 (Bats): 2020-45088-CLS-CLS &amp; 2020-45091-CLS-CLS</p> <p>Class licence CL08 (GCN): 2015-18053-CLS-CLS</p> <p>Class licence CL10a (dormice): 2015-10016-CLS-CLS</p> | <p>Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management</p> <p>MSc Conservation Ecology</p> <p>CS38 Climbing and Aerial Rescue certificate</p> |

4 Methods

Grassland

4.1 A daytime ecological walkover assessment was carried out on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2025 to confirm the characterisation of the grassland present on site. May to August is

considered to be optimal for grassland surveys, with March, April, September and October considered to be suboptimal.

- 4.2 The survey involved a UK Habitat Classification System Survey which was carried out based on the standard methodology produced by UKHab Ltd (2023). A plant species list is created with subjective estimates of the relative abundance of species in selected habitat parcels using a modified DAFOR scale. The DAFOR scale ranks species according to their relative abundance in a given parcel of land as follows: d – dominant, a – abundant, f – frequent, o – occasional, r – rare. In addition, the following prefixes are used: l – locally, v – very.
- 4.3 Nine quadrats were surveyed across the site, see Figure 4. Species within the quadrats were recorded and compared with the standard definitions of UK Habs grasslands in order to determine the best fit classification. The Biodiversity Net Gain Statutory Metric Condition Assessment sheet was used to determine the condition of the grassland for use within metric calculations.
- 4.4 A hand lens was used to assess features where required to determine species classification.



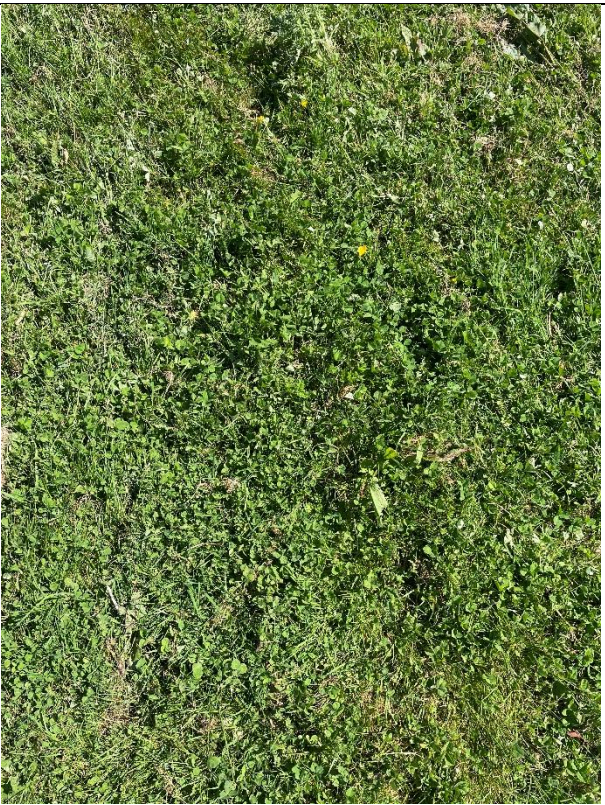
FIGURE 4 : QUADRAT LOCATIONS

## 5 Constraints/Limitations

- 5.1 All surveys act as a snapshot to record any flora that is present at the time of the survey. It is therefore possible that some species may not have been present during the survey but may be evident at other times of the year.
- 5.2 The grassland had been recently cut limiting identification of certain species (those which have no basal leaves).

## 6 Results and Evaluation

- 6.1 A review of Google Earth images shows that the site has contained grassland for at least 40 years, with encroachment of bramble, hawthorn and blackthorn scrub around edges. The grassland had been cut in the previous few weeks prior to the survey, with clumps of thatch found frequently and areas of bare soil resulting from movement of heavy machinery.
- 6.2 Remnants of a bonfire were found in the centre, likely disposing of vegetation collected during maintenance activities. The overall sward was open, likely due to a tall and dense sward prior to cutting, with abundant bare ground and an average height of 7cm. The edges (adjacent to scrub and trees) supported shade tolerant species, more typical of woodland ground flora (ground ivy).
- 6.3 An average of five species were recorded per plot. Within the surveyed quadrats the grassland was dominated by Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, rough meadow grass *Poa trivialis*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, and/or creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens* with perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* and cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata* abundant in some quadrats. Species recorded at lower levels include oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, greater plantain *Plantago major*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, mouse ear chickweed *Cerastium fontanum*, hogweed *Heracleum sphodylium*, cut-leaved crane's-bill *Geranium dissectum* and field forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis*.
- 6.4 No invasive non-native species were recorded during the surveys, and no bracken was identified within the grassland. Minor encroachment of scrub into the grassland was noted along the borders of the grassland and scrub, but no significant presence of scrub within the grassland.
- 6.5 Photos of the vegetation within the quadrats is shown within photos 1-9. Species lists for the individual quadrats are shown in Appendix 1.

|                                                                                     |                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    |    |
| PHOTOGRAPH 1- QUADRAT 1                                                             | PHOTOGRAPH 2- QUADRAT 2                                                              |
|  |  |
| PHOTOGRAPH 3- QUADRAT 3                                                             | PHOTOGRAPH 4- QUADRAT 4                                                              |



PHOTOGRAPH 5- QUADRAT 5



PHOTOGRAPH 6- QUADRAT 6



PHOTOGRAPH 7- QUADRAT 7



PHOTOGRAPH 8- QUADRAT 8



- 6.6 Based on the results of the grassland survey, the species composition and known management of the site, the grassland is considered to be a best fit for UKHabs g4 Modified grassland. This is defined as “species-poor vegetation (<9 species per m<sup>2</sup>) dominated by a few fast-growing grasses on fertile, neutral soil. It is frequently characterised by an abundance of Rye-grasses *Lolium* spp. and White Cover *Trifolium repens*. Most broadleaved species present will be associated with high fertility.”
- 6.7 The condition assessment identified the grassland to be in poor condition as shown in Table 2 which has been extracted from the BNG Statutory Metric Condition Assessment sheets.

TABLE 2: CONDITION ASSESSMENT RESULTS

| Condition Assessment Criteria |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Criterion passed (Yes or No) | Notes (such as justification)                |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| A                             | <p>There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m<sup>2</sup> present, including at least 2 forbs (these may include those listed in Footnote 1). <b>Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition.</b></p> <p>Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m<sup>2</sup> (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.</p> | No                           | Average = 5 species in quadrat sample plots. |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| B                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.                                                                             | No                    | Potentially varied prior to cutting but can't be sure. Now it is uniform and open.                      |
| C                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present).<br><br>Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type. | Yes                   | Appears to be well maintained with only minor encroachment along the borders adjacent to scrub habitat. |
| D                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.                                     | No                    | Heavy machinery resulting in abundant areas of bare ground leading to dry and eroding soils.            |
| E                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) <sup>2</sup> .                                                                                                                                                       | No                    | Average = 19% in quadrat sample plots.                                                                  |
| F                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Yes                   | No bracken recorded.                                                                                    |
| G                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species <sup>3</sup> (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA <sup>4</sup> ).                                                                                                                                                                       | Yes                   | None recorded.                                                                                          |
| Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       | No                                                                                                      |
| Number of criteria passed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       | 3                                                                                                       |
| Condition Assessment Result (out of 7 criteria)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Condition Assessment Score                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Score Achieved<br>×/✓ |                                                                                                         |
| Passes 6 or 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Good (3)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                       |                                                                                                         |
| Passes 4 or 5 criteria including passing essential criterion A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Moderate (2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                       |                                                                                                         |
| Passes 3 or fewer criteria;<br>OR<br>Passes 4 - 6 criteria (excluding criterion A)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Poor (1)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | ✓                     |                                                                                                         |
| Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |                                                                                                         |
| Dependant on the proposed land use and targeted condition: planting of a nutrient drawing species (e.g. legumes) to reduce nutrient content before seeding with a wildflower meadow mix. Reseeding likely required once or twice per year until the target species composition is established. Control of ruderal/dominating species using targeted herbicide or selective cutting. Phased cutting regimes to create diverse sward structure. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |                                                                                                         |
| Footnotes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |                                                                                                         |
| <b>Footnote 1</b> – Creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i> , spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> , curled dock <i>Rumex crispus</i> , broad-leaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i> , common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> , creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> , greater plantain <i>Plantago major</i> , white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> and cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i> .                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |                                                                                                         |
| <b>Footnote 2</b> – For example, this could include small, scattered areas of bare ground allowing establishment of new species, or localised patches where not exceeding 10% cover.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |                                                                                                         |
| <b>Footnote 3</b> – Assess this for each distinct habitat parcel. If the distribution of invasive non-native species varies across the habitat, split into parcels accordingly, applying a buffer zone around the invasive non-native species with a size relative to its risk of spread into adjacent habitat, using professional judgement.                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |                                                                                                         |
| <b>Footnote 4</b> – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |                                                                                                         |

## Appendix 1 – Quadrat survey results

| Date       | 1m2 plot | Percentage bare ground | Height (cm) | Number of species | Dominant           | Abundant                       | Frequent                                 | Occasional                                                       | Rare                                          |
|------------|----------|------------------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 09/05/2025 | 1        | 20                     | 7           | 6                 | white clover       | creeping buttercup, cocks foot | oxeye daisy, ground ivy                  | greater plantain                                                 |                                               |
| 09/05/2025 | 2        | 2                      | 5           | 5                 | white clover       |                                | perennial rye-grass                      | common nettle, creeping buttercup and broad-leaved dock          |                                               |
| 09/05/2025 | 3        | 15                     | 8           | 7                 | rough meadow grass | Yorkshire fog                  |                                          | ribwort plantain and ragwort                                     | hogweed, common nettle and creeping buttercup |
| 09/05/2025 | 4        | 30                     | 7           | 6                 | creeping buttercup |                                | rough meadow grass and broad-leaved dock | spear thistle                                                    | common nettle and field forget me not         |
| 09/05/2025 | 5        | 50                     | 8           | 4                 | rough meadow grass |                                | creeping buttercup and broad-leaved dock |                                                                  | cut-leaved crane's-bill                       |
| 09/05/2025 | 6        | 5                      | 5           | 2                 | creeping buttercup | perennial rye-grass            |                                          |                                                                  |                                               |
| 09/05/2025 | 7        | 5                      | 10          | 6                 | Yorkshire fog      | perennial rye-grass            |                                          | common mouse ear, creeping buttercup and white clover            | ragwort                                       |
| 09/05/2025 | 8        | 20                     | 6           | 3                 | white clover       |                                |                                          | creeping thistle, creeping buttercup                             |                                               |
| 09/05/2025 | 9        | 25                     | 5           | 5                 | rough meadow grass |                                |                                          | creeping thistle, common mouse ear, common hogweed, white clover |                                               |
| AVERAGE    |          | 19                     | 7           | 5                 |                    |                                |                                          |                                                                  |                                               |

## Appendix 2 – Survey timetable

| Species            | Survey                        | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Badger             | Bait marking & sett search    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Bats               | Roost assessments             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Ground level tree assess      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Emergence and activity        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Hibernation                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Trapping                      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    |                               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Birds              | Wintering                     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Breeding                      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Great crested newt | H S I                         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | eDNA                          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Presence/absence & popn       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Refugia                       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Hazel dormouse     | Tube                          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Nut search                    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Otter              | Field signs                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Reptiles           | Refugia & search              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Water vole         | Field signs                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Invertebrates      | Presence & communities        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Grassland          | Phase 1 habitat, UKHabs & NVC |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Optimal                       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Sub-optimal                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                    | Outside survey season         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

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