

UNDERSTANDING SURVEYS AND WHY THEY MATTER

As Peak Cluster develops plans for its proposed pipeline and associated infrastructure, we need to understand the environment where the project may be built. Surveys are an important part of this process and help us gather the information we need to help the project's design, assessment and construction planning. This helps us identify potential environmental challenges early, meaning we can explore ways to avoid, reduce or mitigate impacts wherever possible.

Why are surveys important?

Environmental surveys form a key part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process that supports our planning application (known as a Development Consent Order – DCO). Before potential impacts can be assessed, we must first establish a clear understanding of existing environmental conditions, known as the 'baseline'.

The information collected helps us:

- Better understand local wildlife, habitats and environmental features.
- Design the pipeline route and associated infrastructure sensitively.
- Reduce disruption to landowners, farming operations, businesses, communities and the environment where possible.
- Develop appropriate mitigation measures where impacts cannot be avoided.
- Meet legal and planning requirements for major infrastructure projects.

In short, the more we understand about an area, the better placed we are to minimise impacts by developing effective restoration and mitigation plans as we build and operate the project.

What types of surveys will we undertake?

We might need to carry out a range of surveys across the evolving project area. These may include:

- ✓ **Ecology surveys** – to identify habitats, plants, protected species and other wildlife that may be present.
- ✓ **Bird surveys** – to understand how breeding, wintering or nocturnal bird species use the area.
- ✓ **Bat surveys** – to identify bat activity, roosting locations and potential flight paths.
- ✓ **Great Crested Newt surveys** – to determine whether this protected species is using an area.
- ✓ **Terrestrial invertebrate surveys** – to identify important insect populations and habitats.
- ✓ **Watercourse surveys** – to understand rivers, streams, ditches and drainage features.
- ✓ **Land and environmental surveys** – to assess soils, vegetation, landscape features and existing environmental conditions.
- ✓ **Engineering and utility surveys** – to identify existing structures, services and infrastructure.
- ✓ **Acoustic surveys** – to understand the existing noise conditions.
- ✓ **Archaeological surveys** – to understand the potential for any underground features or artefacts.

Not every survey will be required in every area. We will work closely with landowners to establish which surveys are needed depending on local conditions and the information we need.



What happens when we carry out a survey?

Most surveys involve trained specialists visiting a site on foot to record what they see and collect information. At this phase of Peak Cluster's development, we are only undertaking 'non-intrusive surveys'. These can largely be carried out while people are still living or working on the land and means that we will only record what is visible.

Survey teams will seek to minimise disturbance, follow relevant guidance and leave the land in the same condition as they found it.

Depending on the type of survey, our specialist teams may:

- Walk across fields and existing access routes.
- Observe and record habitats, vegetation, wildlife activity, watercourses, hedgerows, trees or landscape features.
- Take samples, photographs and GPS records.
- Use specialist equipment such as bat detectors or survey cameras.
- Make notes about existing environmental conditions.



How long will surveys take?

Most survey visits are relatively short lasting from a few hours to a day, depending on the survey type and the size of the area being assessed. Some surveys may require repeat visits at specific times of year to ensure accurate results.

Standard survey working hours are typically between **7am and 8pm**. However, certain specialist ecological surveys may take place at particular times to coincide with wildlife activity. For example, some bat, bird, Great Crested Newt and invertebrate surveys may need to be undertaken early in the morning, during the evening or overnight in line with recognised best-practice guidance.

Working with landowners

We recognise that access to land is an important consideration. Our team is committed to working closely with landowners, tenants and occupiers, and using the information gathered to help shape a project that seeks to minimise impacts wherever possible.



GET IN TOUCH

If you'd like to talk to a team member about the project, or for us to send you copies of our consultation materials, you can get in touch in the following ways:



Website: www.peakcluster.co.uk



Phone: 0800 0129 167 (freephone)



Email: consultation@peakcluster.co.uk



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