



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

**IGLU SAUNA AT UPPER MILLS
SLAITHWAITE
HUDDERSFIELD
HD7 5HA**

APRIL 2026

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

iglu sauna at Upper Mills
Slaithwaite
Huddersfield
HD7 5HA

A report for

iglu sauna

A report by



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

PENNINE ecological were commissioned by iglu sauna in March 2026 to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the land within which the iglu sauna site is located at Upper Mills, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield, HD7 5HA.

The iglu sauna site offers wood-fired sauna and cold water plunge pools. The site is approximately 300 square metres in size.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the approximate red line boundary subject to survey.

In order to gather information on the surrounding habitats, a survey of the adjacent habitats and the species composition of them was undertaken within close vicinity of the site. This was completed in order to be able to thoroughly review and assess the losses of woodland habitat that has occurred (refer to section 1.2)



Figure 1-1: Approximate red line boundary subject to survey.

1.2 REASON FOR SURVEY

The PEA forms part of a retrospective planning application to inform Kirklees Metropolitan Council of the site conditions as of March 2026. Discussions between the council and iglu sauna have been ongoing since early 2026. Iglu sauna took lease of the site in 2026 and does not own the land.

It is understood following conversations between Pennine Ecological and iglu sauna that the landowner, not iglu sauna was responsible for the habitat removal.

The relatively small of loss of habitat under the footprint of the iglu sauna site can be assessed using historical aerial and 'street view' imagery as is shown in Plates 1 - 3. It appears woodland was present in Plate 1 dating from 2021. The image from 2025 shows the extent of the clearance. Plate 3, a Google 'street view' image, shows the vegetation on site prior to the clearance. Plate 4 was taken from a similar angle as Plate 3 by Pennine Ecological on the 6th of April 2026 as part of this study. It cannot be accurate ascertained, but it does appear only a small number of trees have been removed and the design of the site has been in consideration of certain trees which are shown in both Plates 3 and 4.

Kirklees Council requested a baseline habitat to further assess the application.



Plate 1 – Aerial image from 23rd April 2021.



Plate 2 – Aerial image from 19th March 2025.



Plate 3 - Google 'street view' image taken in September 2022. Red arrows indicate trees that have remained in-situ (refer to Plate 4).



Plate 4 – Pennine Ecological image taken on the 6th of April 2026.

1.3 REPORT STRUCTURE

The study includes the following elements:

- A desk-based search of freely available online ecological information (e.g., Defra’s Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC) mapping tool, Google Earth, Ordnance Survey mapping etc.).
- A UK Habitat Classification field survey.
- Survey of the site to support protected and/or notable species (where applicable) including but not limited to:
 - Badger.
 - All bird species, including Schedule 1 listed species of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (e.g., barn owl, hobby, kingfisher, etc.) and those listed in Birds of Conservation Concern 5 etc. (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021).
 - A Preliminary Roost Assessment for bats (European Protected Species) on all buildings, trees, culverts etc. found within the site (if present).
 - All other European Protected Species excluding bats e.g., great crested newt (GCN), otter, dormice, etc.).
 - Where relevant, other protected species (e.g., water vole, common toad, brown hare, hedgehog, reptiles, etc.) listed in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 (DEFRA, 2006).

This report also provides a full evaluation of the ecological significance of the desk based and field survey results and if required, recommendations for further survey and/or precautions when and where appropriate.

With the addition of 'site' value, the site evaluation will be considered within CIEEM's (2018) geographical context which is as follows;

- International and European
- National
- Regional
- Metropolitan, County, vice-county or other local authority-wide area
- River Basin District
- Estuarine system/Coastal cell
- Local and
- Site.

1.4 SITE LOCATION

The site is located at Upper Mills, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield, HD 7 5HA. The centre of Slaithwaite is approx. 500m to the east.

A 2.5m wide footpath and a 0.8m high boundary wall from former site workings separates the site from Huddersfield Narrow Canal which is to the north and approximately 12.5m to the south is the river Colne.

The central Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference¹ for the site is SE 07494 13767.

¹ Ordnance Survey National Grid reference used throughout the report.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The methodologies relating to desk-based searches and field surveys undertaken in April 2026 are outlined below.

2.1.1 Desk Based Study

(a) Local Records Centre Data Request

Due to the small scale (approx. 300 square metres) and the localised impacts of the iglu sauna site, it was not deemed necessary to purchase ecological data of protected and/or notable habitats and species within the locality of the site. If requested by the local authority at later date, this can be purchased and retrospectively included in this PEA. In support of not purchasing data, a thorough assessment of adjacent habitats and the potential presence of protected species within them was also undertaken and included within this report so an assessment of their likely presence could be made using experience and professional judgement.

(b) MAGIC

The Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre www.magic.gov.uk was referred to in respect of the following;

- Statutory designated sites e.g., Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) etc. within 2km of the site boundary;
- Habitats of Principal Importance listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006) within 500m of the site boundary;
- GCN licence returns within 500m of the site; and
- Granted European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) within 500m of the site.

The latest access to MAGIC was on the 7th of April 2026.

(c) Kirklees Council Website

The Development Plan policies map (<https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/planning-policy/local-plan.aspx>) was used to search for any Local Wildlife Sites within or adjacent to the site.

2.1.2 UK Habitat Classification Survey

A UK Habitat Classification (UKHabs) 2.0 survey (UKHab Ltd, 2023) of the habitats within the red line boundary was undertaken on the 6th of April 2026. Weather conditions for the survey were 19°C, clear skies and calm.

2.1.3 Protected and/or Notable Species Surveys

(a) Badger Survey

A badger survey was undertaken to identify evidence of badger utilising the site. Surveys were undertaken in accordance with '*Surveying Badgers*', Harris *et al.*, (1989) and '*Badger*', Roper (2010).

(b) Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment Survey

A daytime survey was conducted in accordance with the methodology outlined in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn) Collins, J. Bat Conservation Trust (2023).

During the survey the surrounding habitat was evaluated in relation to bats as very often roost selection is closely correlated with the surrounding habitat.

(c) Otter and Water Vole

Otter survey methods have been applied following standard guidance (Chanin, 2003a). The survey included a search for evidence of otter along each watercourse. Evidence of otter includes: spraints, footprints, feeding remains and slides. The surveys also concentrated on the identification of potential resting sites.

Surveys to determine the presence / likely absence of water vole were undertaken with reference to standard practice guidance (Dean *et al.*, 2016). Where possible, both watercourses were walked to search for evidence of water vole. Evidence of water voles includes burrows, droppings, latrines, feeding stations, lawns, nests, footprints and runways in vegetation.

(d) Breeding Bird Habitat Assessment

The site was assessed for its potential to support breeding birds. This included identifying any evidence of current or historic nesting within the site (i.e. within buildings, trees, scrub, hedgerows etc.).

(e) Scoping of Other Protected and Notable Species

Consideration was given to other protected and/or notable species potentially present within the site. The following species / species groups have been scoped out for further assessment, with reasoning provided below:

- Invertebrates – The mature woodland surrounding the site comprised a variety of canopy and shrub species including oak, silver birch, willow, sycamore, holly etc. (refer to Target Note 1 later in this report for further detail) thus it is possible that a good assemblage of invertebrates is present within the woodland at different times of the year and day. That being said the area within which iglu sauna sits is approximately 300 square meters and the woodland habitat extends westwards for approx. 1km before grassland fields begin to dominate and eastwards for approx. 260m before reaching the urban habitats of Slaithwaite.

It would be disproportionate to conduct detailed invertebrate surveys for such a small site as the losses of woodland that have occurred have likely had minimal impacts of the invertebrate populations.

- Reptiles – The site and adjacent woodland doesn't lend itself to the presence of any notable reptile populations. Whilst the presence of grass snake is possible along the canal, the disturbance from the public using the footpath and presence of dogs and cats from nearby housing is likely to reduce the presence of the species group. The location of iglu sauna as it is now and the habitats it formerly supported i.e., woodland is/was unlikely to support notable reptile populations.
- Other notable mammals – Whilst it is accepted that species such as hedgehog may potentially be present locally, the site is not considered capable of supporting significant populations of any notable mammal species. No observations were recorded during the survey.

2.2 SURVEYOR EXPERIENCE

The field survey and report were undertaken by Stuart Macpherson, who is an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) and has over 15 years' experience in land management, ecological consultancy, ecological survey and evaluation.

Key skills include the following:

- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey / UKHabs Survey on both small planning applications and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).
- Licensed bat surveyor (2021-10079-CL18-BAT) and Named Ecologists on bat mitigation licences.
- Licensed barn owl surveyor (CL29/0477).

- Licensed great crested newt surveyor (2015-16213-CLS-CLS).
- NPTC qualified tree climber (Units 206 and 306 Tree climbing and Aerial Rescue).
- Proficient field botanist.
- Breeding and wintering bird surveyor on a range of habitats including coastal, farmland and moorland habitats.
- Mammal surveys including badger.
- Riparian corridor and mammal surveys.
- Ecological Evaluation and Impact Assessments in association with large scale infrastructure projects.

2.3 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS

The northern bank of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal (no footpath) and southern bank of the river Colne (ownership) could not be accessed. However, both banks could be surveyed to a limited extent from the respective opposing banks.

The survey was conducted at the beginning of April (6th), and a limited array of flowering plants were in flower. Mid-April to early June is considered to be the optimal survey period for woodland habitats. However, sufficient species composition was recorded to adequately assess the broad habitat type.

There are no other significant survey constraints, and an appropriate evaluation of the site has been completed.

3. RESULTS

3.1 DESK BASED STUDY

A summary of the desk study records are provided below.

(a) Local Record Centre Data

A full data search from the local records centre was not undertaken as has been discussed within the methodology section of this report.

(b) MAGIC

(i) Statutory Designated Sites

There are no statutory designated sites within 2km of the site's approximate central point

(ii) Habitats of Principal Importance listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006)

Iglu sauna is located within deciduous woodland Priority Habitat as is shown within Figure 3.1.

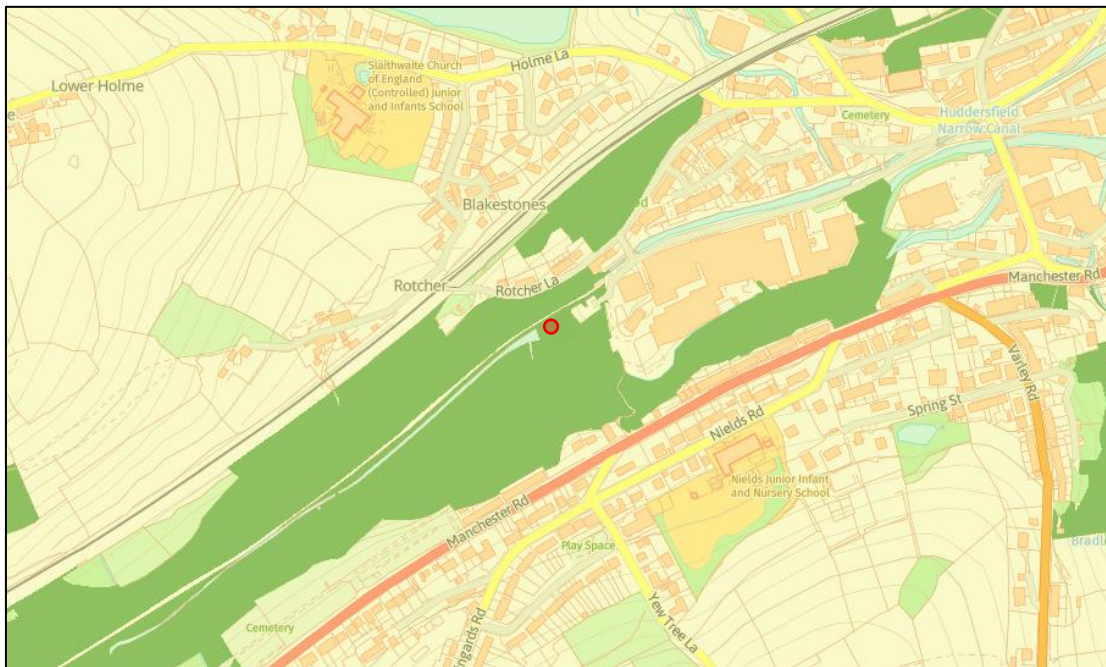


Figure 3.1 - Red dot indicates approximate central point of iglu sauna. Green shaded area is deciduous woodland Priority Habitat.

(iii) GCN Licence Returns

There are no GCN Licence Returns within 500m of the site's central point.

(iv) Granted European Protected Species Licences

There is one granted European Protected Species Licences approx. 420m to the east of iglu sauna's central point.

The licence reference number is 2014-5943-EPS-MIT and it was for the destruction of a common and soprano pipistrelle resting place. The licence was valid from 11/03/2014 until 31/08/2015.

(c) Kirklee Council Website

The Huddersfield Narrow Canal, which is located immediately north of the iglu sauna site is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Reasons for the designation are unknown.

3.2 HABITATS

3.2.1 UK Habitat Classification Survey

The following habitats were recorded within the survey area (refer to Figure 1 – UKHabs Plan in Appendix A):

- u1b5 Buildings
- u1c Artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface.
- 200 Tree

No other habitats were recorded during the site visit.

Photographs of the site and adjacent habitats are included in Appendix B.

3.2.2 Target Notes

Target Notes identified during the survey are listed and described in further details below.

- Target Note 1 – Artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface / Buildings
- Target Note 2 – Individual trees.
- Target Note 3 – Mixed broadleaved woodland.
- Target Note 4 – Huddersfield Narrow Canal
- Target Note 5 – River Colne
- Target Note 6 – Cleared vegetation.

(i) Target Note 1 – Artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface.

The site was constructed of stone and bark chippings which were laid upon a plastic hexagonal gravel mat.

The term buildings has been used in want of a more accurate category within the UK Habitat classification system. The 'buildings' on site are temporary structures and are wooden sheds and huts used by visitors to the site to change in and use as a sauna.

Plate 3 in section 1.2 of this report shows the site formerly supporting woodland habitat. An assumption can only be made as to the species composition of the woodland upon which the iglu sauna site is now located. However, it likely supported those tree, shrub and ground layer species included within Target Note 3 described below.

(ii) Target Note 2 – Individual trees.

There are two medium sized sycamore trees within the site. Neither comprised features suitable to support roosting bats and no evidence of historic or current nesting birds was recorded.

(iii) Target Note 3 – Mixed broadleaved woodland.

The mixed broadleaved canopy layer comprised the following species; silver birch (O), oak (F), crack willow (O), sycamore (F), and beech (O). The understorey comprised holly (O), hawthorn (F) and hazel (O). The ground layer consisted of bluebell (R), bramble (LA), wood avens (F), foxglove (R), male fern (O), bistort (LA), and soft rush (O).

Reviewing historical aerial imagery this area of secondary woodland appears to have established from around the years 2002 and 2003 onwards as can be seen in Plates 5 and 6 below. The habitats on site in those years appears to resemble grassland with scattered area of possibly tall ruderal / bramble habitat and/or mixed scrub. The approximate red line boundary of iglu sauna has been added for context.

The woodland has established on what appears to be old factory foundations and/or workings. Parallel stone walls extended westwards away from the iglu sauna site.



Plate 5 – Aerial image from 2002.



Plate 6 – Aerial image from 2003.

(iv) Target Note 4 – Huddersfield Narrow Canal

The Huddersfield Narrow Canal was separated from iglu sauna by a footpath approximately 2.5m wide. The footpath was well used by the public. The southern bank comprised a vertical concrete bank whereas the northern bank was dominated by scrub, tall ruderal and semi-mature and mature trees.

(v) Target Note 5 – River Colne

The river Colne is approx. 12.5m to the south of the iglu sauna site. The water was fast flowing in a west to east direction. The channel width was estimated to be 5m and the water depth was unknown although suspected to be between 50cm and 1m at the most.

The northern bank was at an angle of 40° and comprised mixed broadleaved woodland as described in Target Note 3. The southern bank was low angled <20° and comprised scattered trees and grassland. The grassland appeared to form some part of living/recreational space.

(vi) Target Note 6 – Cleared vegetation.

An area of land to the east of the iglu sauna site appears to have been cleared. It is described here only as part of the context for the extent of the vegetation clearance to inform the local authority. Much of the area was bare ground but species beginning to colonise included dock sp., rye grass, nettle, dandelion, willowherb sp. bramble, hogweed, woundwort sp. primrose, and lesser celandine.

3.3 PROTECTED SPECIES

3.3.1 Badger

(i) Setts

The survey found no setts within or adjacent to the site.

No sign of badger activity was found within the site.

3.3.2 Bats

(i) Preliminary Roost Assessment

The two trees within the site and those in the adjacent woodland did not comprise any features suitable for roosting bats thus all were of negligible suitability. As has been alluded to above, whilst not a determining factor in features being present on trees, the woodland is relatively young forming from 2002 / 2003 onwards thus features such as knot holes, torn limbs, dead wood etc. have not yet occurred or developed.

As trees have been removed from within the site it is impossible to assess whether these had features suitable for roosting bats.

The temporary structures for changing and the sauna were also of negligible suitability to support bats. These buildings were only constructed in early 2026 and were of a construction i.e., wooden and single skin that did not comprise cavities, raised tiles etc. that are typical of housing or industrial buildings that often support roosts.

(ii) Bat Habitat Suitability

The surrounding woodland, the canal and river corridors are excellent bat foraging and commuting habitat. It is almost certain the adjacent habitats supports numerous species of bats including those in the *Myotis* group e.g., Daubenton's bat, whiskered bat, Brandt's bat, natterer's bat etc., both common and soprano pipistrelle bats, brown-long eared bat and potentially noctule bats.

The woodland extends for approximately 1km to the west before reaching open grassland fields with flushes which appears to be bounded by treelines, dense scrub and hedgerows all of which are also optimal bat foraging habitat.

3.3.3 Otter and Water Vole

Iglu sauna is located approx. 2.5m to the south of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and approx. 12.5m north of the river Colne. The canal footpath is well used by the public.

Both watercourses are optimal otter habitat as they likely support fish upon which they will feed. Additionally, there are likely holt and lay-up sites along each watercourse as both are bordered by dense vegetation i.e., mature trees and scrub.

Neither watercourse is likely to support water vole as they lack the food plants, bankside vegetation and bank profiles that are required by the species to survive.

No evidence of either species was recorded within 50m of iglu sauna, however, their presence, particularly otter cannot be ruled out.

3.3.4 Birds

No evidence of bird nesting was recorded during the survey. The trees within the site are potentially suitable for larger birds e.g., woodpigeon, magpie etc to nest in. However, the lack of scrub or hedgerows within the site meant over all the habitats associated with the site are considered to be of low suitability for birds.

4. ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION

The following section discusses the significance of the survey findings. It should be noted that this part of the evaluation relates to habitats and species and includes reference to the following statutory/non-statutory instruments.

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and later amendments), with particular reference to protected species listed in Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the above act.
- Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.
- Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance in England as listed in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

The evaluation is based on the commissioned surveys and desk study only.

The following statements are relevant in respect of the above.

4.1 DESK STUDY

4.1.1 MAGIC

(i) Statutory Designated Sites

There are no statutory designated sites within 2km of the site.

The Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones² (IRZ's) has also been reviewed and no further consultation with Natural England is likely to be required.

(ii) Habitats of Principal Importance listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006

Iglu sauna is located within deciduous woodland Priority Habitat.

4.2 HABITATS

The existing habitats on site are of very low (artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface) medium (individual trees) distinctiveness' (in accordance with the BNG metric calculation tool). The site comprised habitats of limited ecological value and are evaluated at site level only.

² The Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make an initial assessment of the likely risk of impacts on SSSIs posed by developments.

However, an extensive survey of the deciduous woodland Priority Habitat which was not commissioned as part of this survey could potentially lead to the woodland being of higher importance and this would include the site in which iglu sauna is located.

4.3 PROTECTED SPECIES

4.3.1 Badger

No evidence of badger activity was found within the site or the wider area during the survey.

It is concluded that badger are absent on site and locally and the impacts iglu sauna has on the species is deemed to be negligible.

4.3.2 Bats

No buildings or trees within or adjacent to the site were found to comprise features that would support roosting bats. It is not known and impossible to assess whether the trees cleared had any suitability to support roosting bats.

The loss of woodland habitat whilst important to bats, the relatively small area of clearance is unlikely to have a significant detrimental impact on bats.

4.3.3 Otter and Water Vole

No evidence of either species was recorded during the survey. The presence of water vole is unlikely within either the Huddersfield Narrow Canal or the river Colne due to the lack of suitable habitats features required by the species. However, the presence of otter cannot be ruled out.

The canal and river appear to be used regularly by members of the public thus the use of iglu sauna is unlikely to have any additional impacts not already present within the locality on either species should they be present.

4.3.4 Birds

No evidence of current or historic bird nesting was recorded on site.

Based on the sites size and habitats present, the value of the site for breeding birds does not exceed 'site' ecological value.

Due to the scale and nature of the proposals, impacts are not anticipated to extend beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section outlines any mitigation or precautions required in respect of the survey findings.

5.1 DESK STUDY

5.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

The Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones³ (IRZ's) has been reviewed and no further consultation with Natural England is likely to be required.

5.2 HABITATS

There are no requirements for further surveys.

The information within this report with regards habitats has been presented so to inform the local authority on how best to proceed with any further assessment.

5.3 PROTECTED SPECIES

5.3.1 Badger

There are no requirements for any further surveys or assessment.

5.3.2 Bats

In all cases illumination of the site should be avoided/kept to a minimum. Where lighting is required, this must be low level, low intensity and directed downwards away from boundaries. It is not expected that the lighting will be in operation for a significant period of time past sunset which should reduce any potential impacts on foraging and or commuting bats. The following principles will apply.

- Where and if lighting is required, this will be directed internally within the site avoiding any light spillage.
- Lights must be fitted with cowls / covers that will direct the light downwards and only illuminate the paddock area. Furthermore, this will reduce any potential light spillage further afield which may impact on bat foraging/commuting behaviour.
- If required, lights will be fitted with timer controls that minimise the duration of lighting. Recommended timings are 30 minutes after sunrise and at sunset.

³ The Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make an initial assessment of the likely risk of impacts on SSSIs posed by developments.

Lighting requirements will follow guidance provided by the Bat Conservation Trust; links are provided below.

- Bat Conservation Trust's Acritical Lighting Guidance. Webpage link <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting>
- Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK. Webpage link <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

5.3.3 Birds

No strategic bird surveys are required.

An assessment of the likelihood of the site supporting breeding birds cannot be made as the clearance has already occurred. No further vegetation removal is planned.

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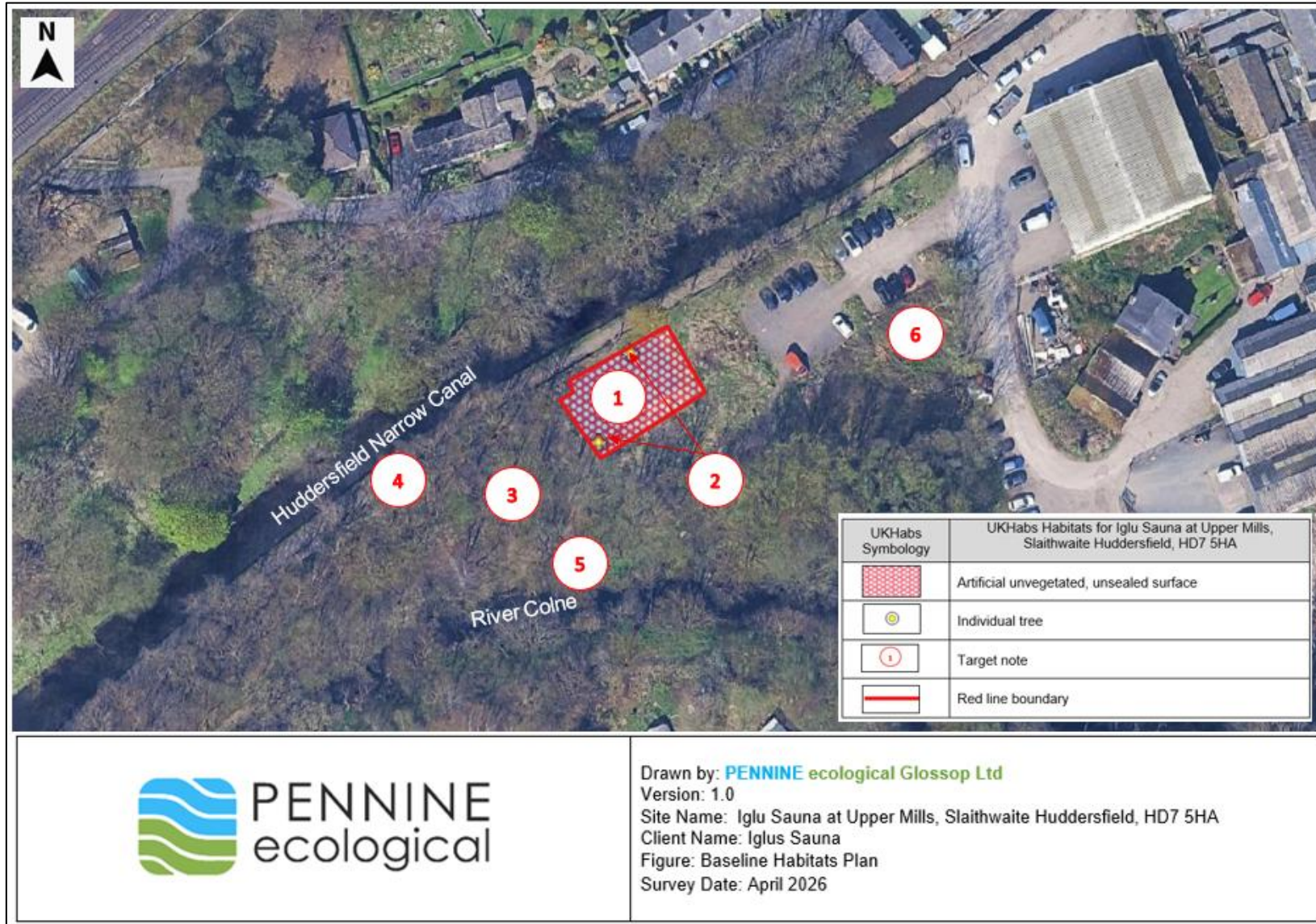
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Appendix A - Figures

Figure 1: UKHabs Baseline Map (Pennine Ecological, April 2026).



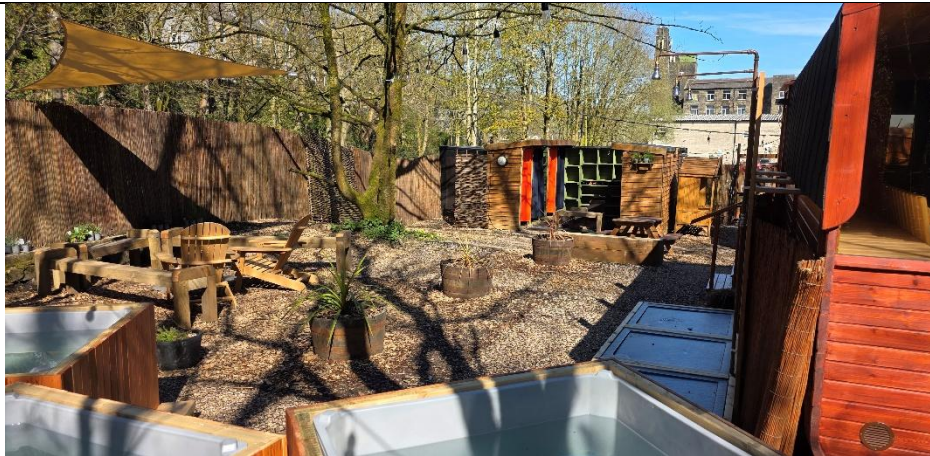
Appendix B – Photographs 6th of April 2026



Photograph 1: Eastern aspect of iglu sauna.



Photograph 2: Eastern aspect of iglu sauna.



Photograph 3: Interior of iglu sauna from the western boundary of the site.



Photograph 4: Interior of iglu sauna from the eastern boundary of the site.



Photograph 5: Northern boundary of the site and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal.



Photograph 6: Western boundary of the site and the remnants of the old factory foundations/workings.



Photograph 7: Southern boundary of the site.



Photograph 8: Remnants of the old factory foundations/workings.



Photograph 9: River Colne looking downstream.



Photograph 10: River Colne looking upstream.



Photograph 11: Area of cleared land (Target Note 6)



Photograph 12: Area of cleared land (Target Note 6)