



**Curraghinalt Gold Project,
County Tyrone,
Northern Ireland**

Otter Survey Report 2025

October 2025

Dalradian Gold Limited

**DALRADIAN
GOLD**

Reference: DGL-25.001 v1.2

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Version	Issued To	Comments
October 2025	DGL-25.001 v1.0	Dalradian Gold Limited	Draft Report issued to client for review and comment.
October 2025	DGL-25.001 v1.1	Dalradian Gold Limited	Draft Report issued to client for review and comment following minor amendments.
October 2025	DGL-25.001 v1.2	Dalradian Gold Limited	Final Report issued to client.

CONTRACT

This document has been prepared by Green & Blue Ecology for Dalradian Gold Limited to provide information of an otter survey carried out as part of the ecological monitoring programme as part of the gold mine development at Curraghinalt, County Tyrone.

Prepared by:



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Date: October 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

A planning application for the development and operation of an underground gold mine, as part of the Curraghinalt Project at Greencastle in County Tyrone, was submitted to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) by Dalradian Gold Limited (DGL) in November 2017. Further revisions to the planning application were made in 2019.

Since the submission of the planning application in 2017, an annual programme of ecological monitoring has been commissioned by DGL to ensure the adequacy of ecological information for the decision making process is in line with British Standard 42020:2013, Biodiversity - Code of Practice for Planning and Development and advice from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)¹, and where necessary inform any application for a wildlife licence from Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) to ensure the development will comply with legislation and planning policy.

The monitoring programme for 2025 included a survey of sections of the Pollanroe, Attagh, Curraghinalt, and GlenealyBurns for any signs of use of these minor tributaries by otters.

This report has been prepared by Green & Blue Ecology on behalf of DGL and presents the findings of the otter survey carried out in 2025 to support previous survey work carried out, keep baseline information in relation to otters up to date in line with British Standard 42020:2013, Biodiversity - Code of Practice for Planning and Development and advice from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)², and where necessary inform any application for a wildlife licence from Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) to ensure the development will comply with legislation and planning policy.

1.2. Legislation and Planning Policy Context

The otter (*Lutra lutra*) is afforded full protection under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended) and because it are listed in Annex II and IV of the EEC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora. This Directive is transposed into Northern Ireland law through The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended). In brief, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- deliberately to capture, injure or kill an otter;
- deliberately to disturb an otter while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection;
- deliberately to disturb an otter in such a way as to be likely to:
 - o affect the local distribution or abundance of the species;
 - o impair its ability to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or care for its young; or
 - o impair its ability to migrate.
- deliberately to obstruct access to a breeding site or resting place of an otter; or
- to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an otter.

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland, published in September 2015, states that planning permission will only be granted for a development proposal that is not likely to harm a statutorily protected species, that includes the otter, and which can be adequately mitigated or compensated against.

¹ CIEEM Advice Note on the lifespan of Ecological Reports and Survey dated April 2019.

² CIEEM Advice Note on the lifespan of Ecological Reports and Survey dated April 2019.

1.3. Survey Aims and Objectives

The aim of the survey was to continue to provide up to date baseline information on the current status of otter in minor tributaries relevant to the mine development. Surveys were undertaken with regard to the specific guidance requirements of the NIEA³, to inform where appropriate mitigation measures may be required to ensure mine development will comply with statutory requirement of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

³ NIEA (2017). *Otter Surveys - NIEA Specific Requirements* dated 17th February 2017. Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Lisburn.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Study Area

The Curraghinalt gold deposit is located in the South Sperrin Mountains approximately 7.5km east of the village of Gortin, and between the settlements of Rouskey and Greencastle, County Tyrone.

The application area has five component project sites that include:

- i. **Infrastructure Site (Area A).** The site where the process plant and dry stack facility (DSF) will be located and includes the access road from the Crockanboy Road near Greencastle.
- ii. **Mineral Extraction Area (Area B).** The area where the mineral deposit is known to occur and the maximum extent of the underground mine workings.
- iii. **Existing Surface Infrastructure Site (Area C).** The existing surface infrastructure that was developed for the underground exploration programme that will be retained for use as an early works base and for underground development and future training.
- iv. **Passing Bays on Camcosy Road and a Proposed Turning Point for Heavy Goods Vehicles off Lenagh Road (Area D).** The existing passing bays developed for the Curraghinalt Underground Exploration Programme and proposed turning point for heavy goods vehicles during the construction phase of the development.
- v. **Mineral Exploration Area (Area E).** The target area for future exploration of the Curraghinalt deposit by means of underground drifts (essentially exploration tunnels).

The area of study for the otter surveillance survey was based on sections of the Pollanroe, Attagh, Curraghinalt, and GlenealyBurns, access permitting, that flow through the mine development application site (Figure 1).

2.2. Field Survey

The otter survey was carried out on the 18th and 19th June 2025 during a dry period with no previously heavy rainfall over the previous seven days.

The survey broadly followed a standard approach developed for conserving the wildlife and habitats of rivers within the Natura 2000 network of protected European sites as part of the Life in UK Rivers Project⁴ and involved a walkover of each watercourse (access permitting) and a search made for signs of otter activity that included:

- spraints - faeces left by otter, often found under tree roots, in or next to a watercourse, beneath bridges, at crossing points of fences or walls, or on raised ground close to the water;
- tracks - footprints and other clearly defined signs of otter including slides where otters enter the water from the bank;
- feeding sites - where food remains are found typically fish or amphibians;
- holts - underground shelters often found under tree roots, in rock piles, earth banks and other animals holes such as badger setts, rabbit burrows and fox earths as well as above ground shelters in dense scrubby vegetation;
- couches - lying up places above ground often found in long grasses or rushes near a watercourse or in wetland areas.

In addition, suitable areas of habitat lying within a 10m corridor of each watercourse were also searched for any evidence of otter using these sites, access permitting.

⁴ Chanin, P. (2003). *Monitoring the Otter Lutra lutra*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No.10. English Nature, Peterborough.

2.3. Survey Personal

The surveys were led by Steve Judge of Green & Blue Ecology. Steve has over 25 years of experience in ecological and environmental consultancy and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) and is experienced in carrying out otter surveys in Northern Ireland and throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

2.4. Uncertainty of Data and Limitations

The sections of watercourse surveyed was determined where access was permitted. However, with the exception of the Pollanroe Burn, it is considered that if Otter was present evidence would be highly likely to found along the lower sections of the Attagh, Curraghinalt and Glenealy burns.

No access was permitted to the Pollanroe Burn downstream of Pollanroe Bridge, crossed by the Crockanboy Road, to its confluence with the Owenreagh River.

The lack of evidence of otter at any particular location does not necessarily preclude their being present at a later date. This is particularly true of otter that are very mobile animals often with home ranges extending many kilometres and therefore their use of a section of watercourse, structure or area of land can vary significantly not only on a seasonal basis but also from year to year.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Contextual Information and Historical Records

The otter survey carried out by SLR in 2015/16 found extensive evidence of otter activity along both the Owenkillew and Owenreagh Rivers. No evidence of otters were recorded in the Pollanroe Burn and the unnamed tributary flowing through the proposed Infrastructure Site as part of this original survey.

Subsequent monitoring recorded a single otter spraint near the ford structure on the Pollanroe Burn east of the Pollan Rua cottage in 2018 and otter spraints at the Pollanroe Bridge at Crockanboy Road in 2019.

During the ecological monitoring programme carried out by Green and Blue Ecology at the proposed Infrastructure Site, fresh otter spraints were regularly recorded at the Pollanroe Bridge at Crockanboy Road during 2022 and 2023.

A walkover survey carried out along the Curraghinalt Burn from the Owenkillew River to source in 2023 and adjacent to the existing infrastructure site found no evidence of otter activity along this watercourse.

In 2024, a walkover survey of the Pollanroe Burn in April 2024 recorded otter spraints at the Pollanroe Bridge on the Crockanboy Road and spot-check surveillance of 11 points on the Owenkillew and Owenreagh rivers recorded evidence of otter at six of these locations.

3.2. General Habitat Description

The Attagh, Curraghinalt, and Glenealy Burns are minor tributaries of the Owenkillew River that rises in the Davagh Forest and flows in a westerly direction joining the Strule near Newtonstewart. Whilst the Pollanroe Burn is a minor tributary of the Owenreagh River that rises near Creggan and flows in a north westerly direction before joining the Owenkillew at a point approximately 2km northwest of the village of Rousky and 3.5km east of Gortin.

3.2.1. Attagh Burn

The Attagh Burn is a small tributary stream that rises from an area of blanket bog on the northern side of the Crocknamoghil – Mullydoo ridgeline. It flows in a northerly direction passing under the Camcosy Road before joining the Owenkillew River approximately 390m upstream of Mullan Wood.

The Attagh Burn has a mean channel width of 1.25m with typically shallow flows, but is prone to wide ranging fluctuations in water levels depending upon localised weather conditions. Downstream of the Camcosy Road the banks of the burn are dominated by dense linear woodland/scrub (ranging from 12 to 30m wide), that opens out to fields under permanent pasture comprising of semi-improved and marshy grasslands.

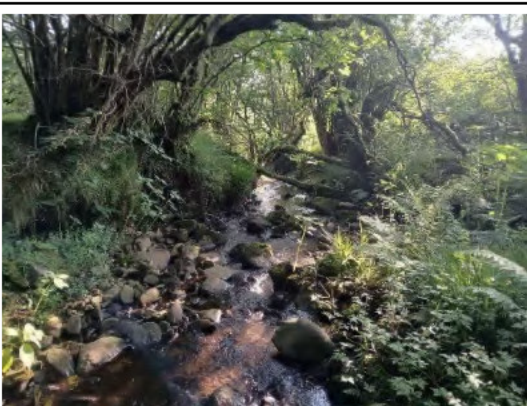
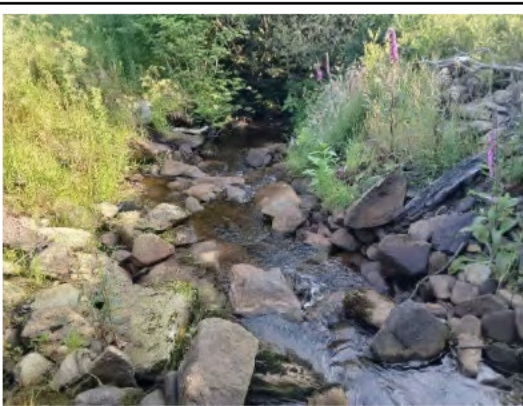
At Attagh Bridge the burn has a concrete apron covering the bed and which comprises of three steps increasing in height downstream of the bridge.

	
Plate 1: Attagh Burn approximately 60m downstream of Attagh Bridge	Plate 2: Concrete apron at Attagh Bridge an uppermost and smallest of three steps

3.2.2. Curraghinalt Burn

The Curraghinalt Burn is a small tributary stream that rises from an area of blanket bog on the northern side of the Crocknamoghil – Mullydoo ridgeline. It flows in a northerly direction passing under the Camcosy Road before joining the Owenkillew River approximately 1.0km upstream of Mullan Wood.

Similar to the Attagh Burn, it has a mean channel width of 1.5m with typically shallow flows, but is prone to wide ranging fluctuations in water levels depending upon localised weather conditions. Immediately downstream of the Camcosy Road the banks support trees and shrubs with the existing mine exploration infrastructure site on the left bank and farm buildings and fields under permanent pasture on the right bank. Pass the existing mine exploration infrastructure site, Curraghinalt Burn flows through a strip of semi-natural woodland and adjoining small block of hazel-coppiced woodland, where it forms part of the Owenkillew River Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI).

	
Plate 3: Curraghinalt Burn downstream of existing mine exploration infrastructure site	Plate 4: Curraghinalt Burn downstream of discharge point at the existing mine exploration infrastructure site

3.2.3. Glenealy Burn

The Glenealy Burn is a small tributary stream that rises from an area of blanket bog on the northern side of Crocknamoghil. It flows in a northerly direction passing under the Camcosy Road before joining the Owenkillew River approximately 2.5km upstream of Mullan Wood and 400m downstream of Greenan Bridge.

The Glenealy Burn flows through a relatively deep and steep coniferous planted re-entrant before passing over a waterfall feature shortly after passing under the Camcosy Road and where its gradient begins to lessen and it emerges from the re-entrant and opens out adjacent permanent pasture before its confluence with the Owenkillew River. It has a mean channel width of 1.5m with typically shallow flows, but is prone to very wide ranging fluctuations in water levels depending upon localised weather conditions.



Plate 5: Glenealy Burn at its confluence with the Owenkillew River



Plate 6: Glenealy Burn looking upstream towards the Camcosy Road

3.2.4. Pollanroe Burn

The Pollanroe Burn is a small tributary rising on the southern side of Crockanboy Hill flowing in a southerly direction from a flush on the edge of an area of blanket bog before flowing through an area of remnant peatland before entering a relatively deep and steep wooded/scrub re-entrant. Upstream of the Crockanboy Road the gradient lessens before entering a concrete culvert at Crockanboy Bridge. It has a channel that ranges from <0.5m to 1.5m in width with typically shallow flows, but is prone to wide ranging fluctuations in water levels depending upon localised weather conditions.



Plate 7: Upper section of the Pollanroe Burn flowing through remnant peatland habitat



Plate 8: Pollanroe Burn flowing through the re-entrant

3.3. Field Survey Results

3.3.1. Attagh Burn

The otter survey results for the Attagh Burn are presented in Table 2 and location of otter field signs shown in Figure 2.

Table 1: Attagh Burn Otter Survey Results

Ref	Field Sign	Field Sign Photograph
AB1	Spraint recorded on a stone on the right bank at the confluence with the Owenkillew River.	
AB2	Potential holt located in left bank immediately downstream of an obstruction in the stream caused by the accumulation of large boulders approximately 9m upstream of the confluence with the Owenkillew River.	

3.3.2. Curraghinalt Burn

The otter survey results for the Curraghinalt Burn are presented in Table 2 and the location of otter fields signs shown in Figure 2.

Table 2: Curraghinalt Burn Otter Survey Results

Ref	Field Sign	Field Sign Photograph
CB1	Spraint recorded on a stone on the left bank at the confluence with the Owenkillev River.	

3.3.3. Glenealy Burn

No evidence of otter was recorded on the Glenealy Burn.

3.3.4. Pollanroe Burn

The otter survey results for the Pollanroe Burn are presented in Table 3 and the location of otter field signs shown in Figure 3.

Table 3: Curraghinalt Burn Otter Survey Results

Ref	Field Sign	Field Sign Photograph
PB1	Three sprainting sites within the culvert under the Crockanboy Road located on stone on the right side step.	 The photographs show three distinct sprainting sites on stones. The top photo shows a dark, irregular mark on a light-colored stone. The middle photo shows a similar dark mark on a larger, more textured stone. The bottom photo shows a dark mark on a stone, with a small white tag placed next to it for identification.
PB2	A enlarged hole in the left bank that divides into two tunnels with the the potential to be used as a holt and/or couch. The hole has good access to the channel of the Pollanroe Burn.	 The photograph shows a dark, irregular hole in the left bank of the Pollanroe Burn. The hole appears to be an entrance to a tunnel system. The surrounding area is covered in grass and small plants.

4. DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION

4.1. Discussion of Results

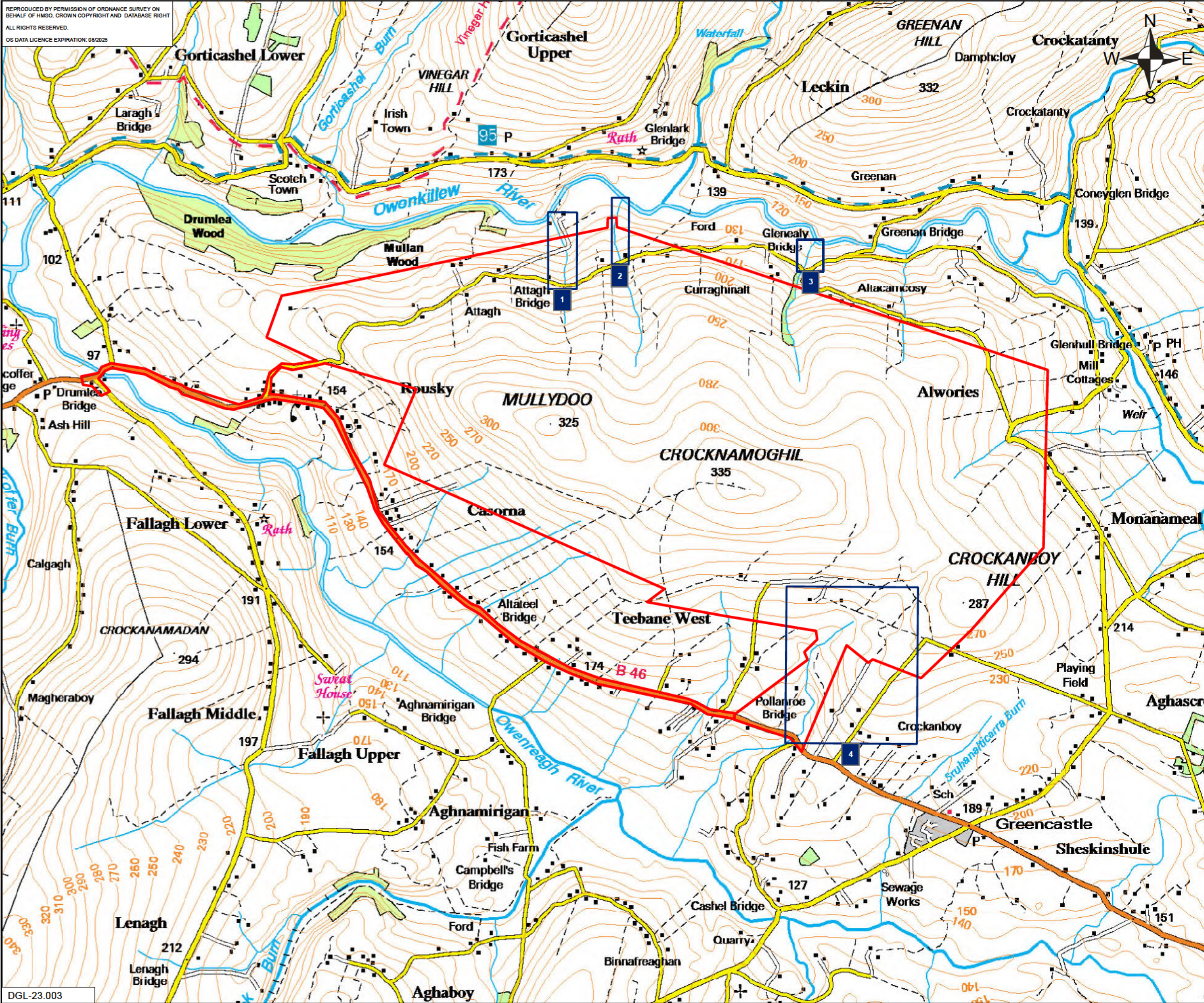
The 2025 otter survey confirmed the presence of field signs (spraints) on the Attagh and Curraghinalt Burns at their confluence with the Owenkillew River and on the Pollanroe Burn at the culvert under the Crockanboy Road. No evidence of otter was recorded on the section of Glenealy Burn surveyed.

No confirmed otter resting places were recorded along any of the watercourses surveyed in 2025. However, a hole in an accumulation of boulders on the Attagh Burn has the potential to be used as a holt as has a hole in the left bank of the Pollanroe Burn.

The woodland/scrub habitat along the riparian corridors, but in particular at the lower end of the Curraghinalt Burn, provide good opportunities for resting otters where they could rest and largely be undisturbed. However, this type of habitat is not restricted to these burns and forms part of an extensive network of available habitat for otter both the Owenkillew and Owenreagh rivers.

Based on the 2025 otter survey, it is considered that baseline conditions have not significantly changed in respect to this species and usage of minor tributaries of the Owenkillew and Owenreagh rivers relevant to the mine development. Whilst these minor tributaries are likely to form parts of territories of otters present on the Owenkillew and Owenreagh rivers they are not likely to be important or critical in maintaining the status of the local otter population given the extensive availability of higher quality habitat and foraging opportunities present along the main rivers within this area.

FIGURES



NOTES

1. Attagh Burn
2. Curraghinalt Burn
3. Glenealy Burn
4. Pollanroe Burn

LEGEND

APPLICATION SITE

OTTER SURVEY STUDY AREA

CURRAGHINALT GOLD PROJECT
COUNTY TYRONE

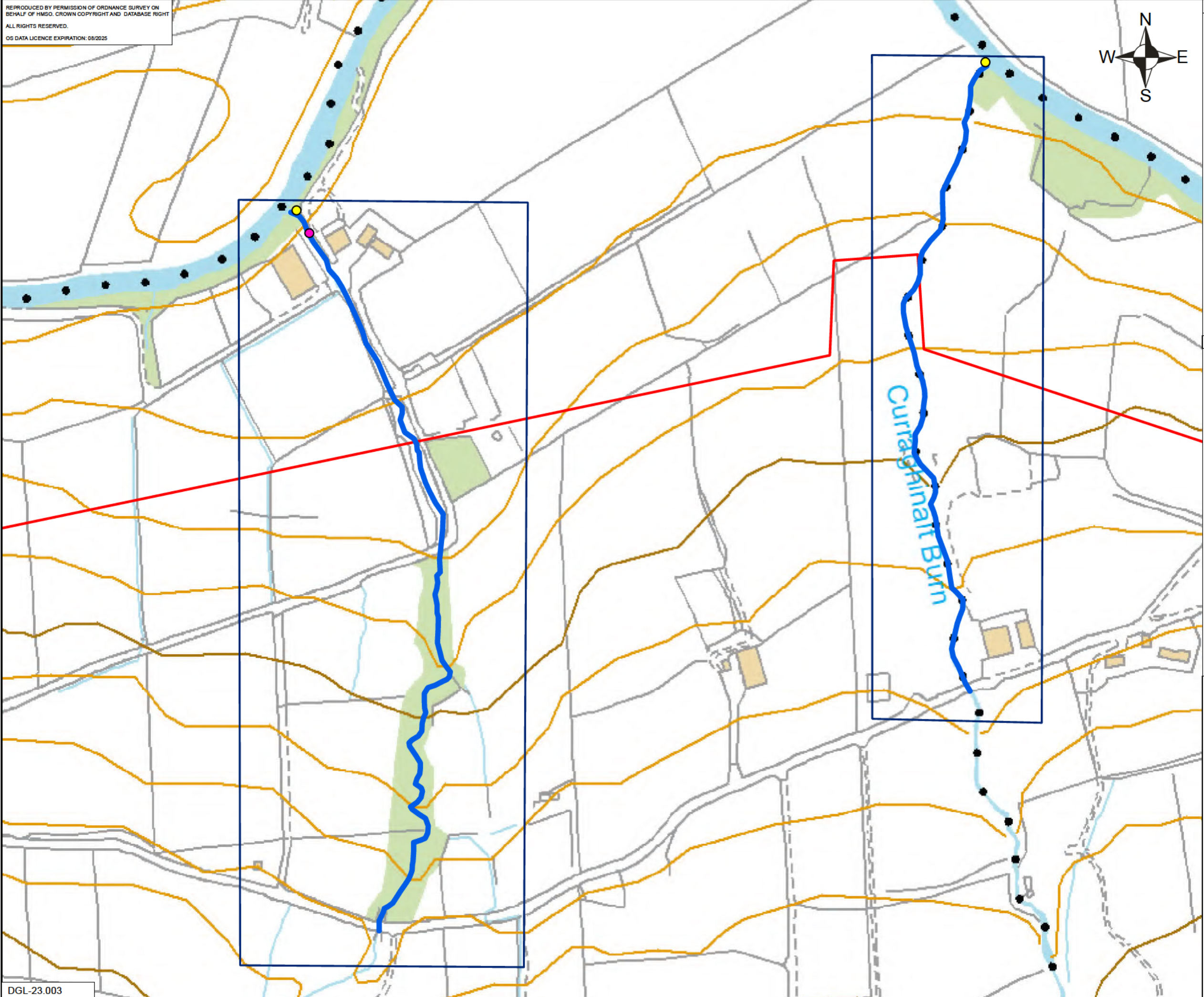
OTTER SURVEY 2025

STUDY AREA

FIGURE 1

Scale
1:25,000 @ A3

Date
SEPTEMBER 2025



NOTES

LEGEND

APPLICATION SITE

OTTER SURVEY STUDY AREA

BURN SECTION SURVEYED

SPRAINT

POTENTIAL HOLT

CURRAGHINALT GOLD PROJECT
COUNTY TYRONE

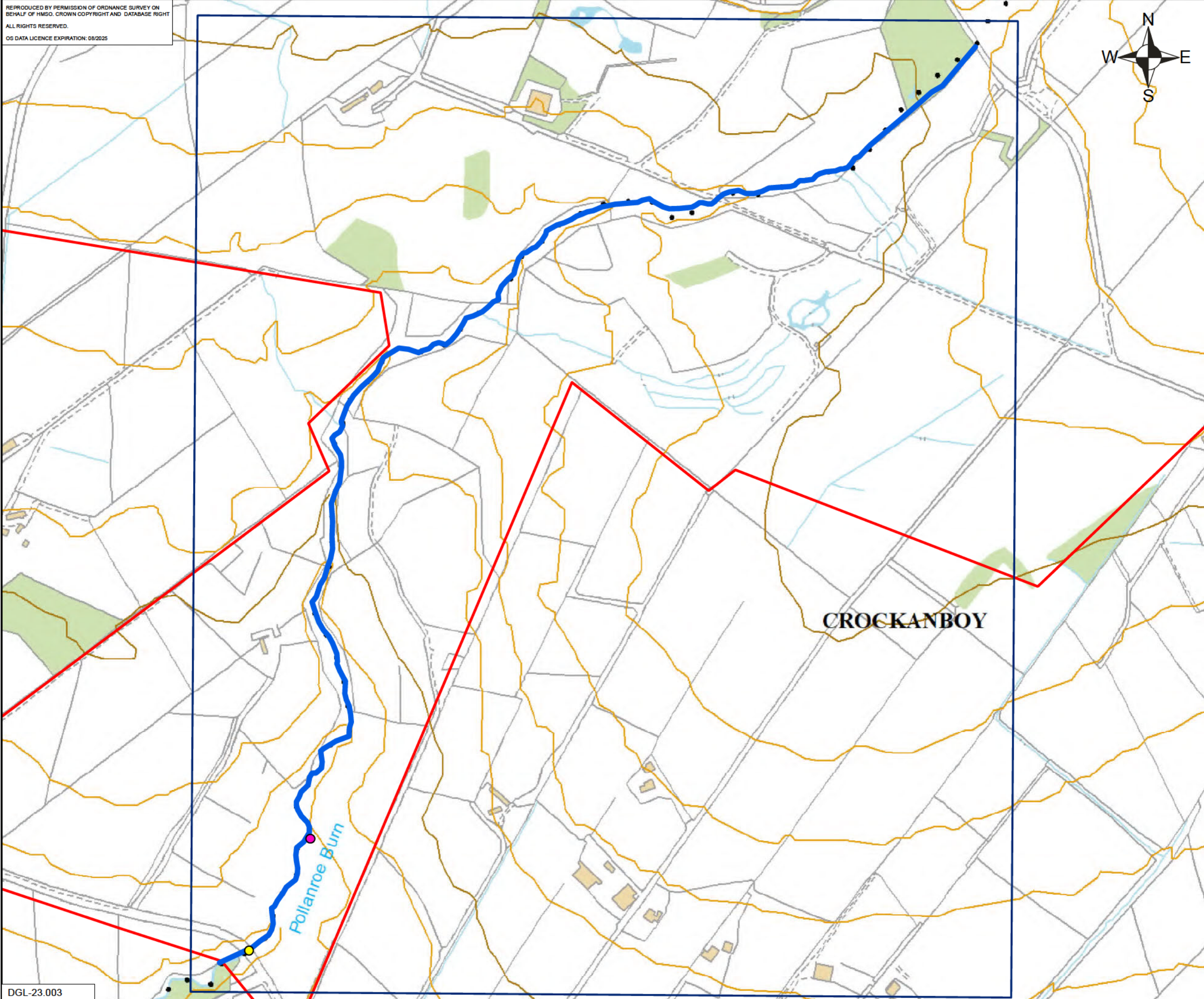
OTTER SURVEY 2025

ATTAGH BURN AND CURRAGHINAL BURN
OTTER SURVEY RESULTS 2025

FIGURE 2

Scale
1:2,500 @ A3

Date
OCTOBER 2025



NOTES

LEGEND

- APPLICATION SITE
- OTTER SURVEY STUDY AREA
- BURN SECTION SURVEYED
- SPRAINT
- POTENTIAL HOLT

CURRAGHINALT GOLD PROJECT
COUNTY TYRONE

OTTER SURVEY 2025

POLLANROE BURN
OTTER SURVEY RESULTS 2025

FIGURE 3

Scale
1:4,000 @ A3

Date
OCTOBER 2025

