

Landscape and Ecology Management Plan

The Abbey Senior School

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Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Eight Associates has been appointed to produce a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan to support the BREEAM 2018 assessment of the site of the proposed development known as The Abbey Senior School, located in Reading, Berkshire. Current proposals consist of the construction of a new dining hall and an extension to the sixth form at The Abbey Senior School. A green roof above the dining hall is included as part of the designs.

This Landscape and Ecology Management Plan details the five-year management of biodiversity features, species, and maintenance regime. This document should be used in conjunction with the Ecology Report (4309 – The Abbey School BREEAM 2018 Ecology Report – 1912–17gg) produced by Eight Associates for The Abbey Senior School development, which identifies existing ecology and outlines actions that can be taken to enhance the ecological value on site.

The BREEAM New Construction 2018 requirements for the credit LE 05 – ‘Long term ecology management and maintenance’ require that a five-year landscape and habitat management plan is produced, covering at least the first five years after project completion. This document describes how management can be established and be continued over the medium to long term, fulfilling this BREEAM requirement, and allowing a credit to be awarded.

Introduction

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Introduction

This document is a landscape and ecology management plan covering at least the first five years after project completion. This document describes how management can be established and be continued over the medium to long term, fulfilling a key criteria for BREEAM LE 05 to allow a credit under this issue to be awarded.

It is anticipated that the ecological value of the site will be increased significantly in relation to its pre-development condition. By following this landscape and habitat management plan, the increased ecological value and good condition of the new habitats will remain the same throughout the development's life.

The implementation of the ecological recommendations contribute to activities external to the development project

This is a reviewable document that should be updated and revised as required. The plan and the management regime will be informed by the on-going works at the site. The plan will also be reviewed to ensure the objectives and prescriptions are in accordance with current wildlife legislation and conservation objectives.

Site description and survey

The site currently comprises the existing The Abbey Senior School buildings and sports courts. The site is located in Reading, Berkshire, within an urban setting. The site is bounded by Crown Place to the north, University of Reading London Road Campus to the north and east, Kendrick Road to the west and Reading School Morgan Road Playing Fields and residential properties to the south.

A survey was carried out to assess the ecology of the site on 19th November 2019, conducted by ecologist Gemma Golding. The survey provided an Initial Site Survey (Phase 1 habitat survey), which involved the identification of habitat types present and assessment of the possibility for protected species on site. The site survey was based upon the standard Phase 1 survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). An inventory of habitats present on site was recorded and mapped. Plant species nomenclature followed Stace (2010) for vascular plant species. The site was also checked for the presence of invasive plant species as defined by Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.

The site was deemed to have low ecological value. The existing buildings' walls and roofs were inspected for protected species such as birds and bats – these were found to contain no features considered to be suitable for these species.

Ecological Enhancements

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Recommendations for Ecological Enhancement

The BREEAM credit LE 05 requires that a five-year management plan is adopted, to cover the recommendations made at the time of the initial survey. Recommendations for ecological enhancement were made for incorporation into the scheme and are summarised below. Full details of recommendations are contained in the BREEAM Ecology Report for the site (4309 – The Abbey School BREEAM 2018 Ecology Report – 1912–17gg). Please note that requirements for compliance with protected species legislation are covered within this ecology report for The Abbey Senior School only.

Biodiverse green roof

In line with the current proposed plans for the development, it is recommended that a biodiverse green roof, with an area of 195m², is installed. A light weight pre-grown 'wildflower blanket' will be installed over a substrate base with a depth of around 80mm, with a species diversity of over 20 species.

The wildflowers and herbs incorporated into the blanket will provide a viable and vibrant plant community in blanket format for instant greening of a biodiverse green roof. Native UK species will be used, to suit the green spaces to local populations of invertebrates.

The substrate depth of the roof should vary between 80–150mm to create varying microclimates across the roof. If possible, areas of bare shingle or bare sand should be incorporated into the green roof's landscaping in order to provide habitat for burrowing invertebrates and foraging birds. Crushed brick and other non-contaminated aggregates can also be placed in small piles on the roof to create a mosaic of habitats across the roof.

The installation of this green roof is in line with Reading's biodiversity policy and its aims to increase the amount of green infrastructure across the borough. The green roof will attract a diversity of invertebrates, and other fauna such as foraging bat and bird species, would be attracted to a roof featuring an abundance of wildflowers.

Bird boxes

It is recommended that at least three bird boxes are installed on the site. These should contain a mix of 26mm hole boxes for tits and robins and open-fronted boxes for larger birds such as thrushes.



Boxes should be fixed two to four metres on a tree or facade, out of the reach of predators such as domestic cats. Unless there are trees or buildings, which give permanent shelter, it is best facing between north and east.

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Bat boxes

To support local bat populations, it is recommended that at least two bat boxes or bricks are installed on the façades of the building.

The boxes should be made from untreated wood or 'woodcrete' (a mixture of wood shavings and cement). Schwegler 1FF or Schwegler 2F bat boxes are recommended as they are likely to be of interest to a wide range of species and they typically have longer lifespans than wooden boxes (example images are given below). Bat boxes should be placed at a minimum of 4m, preferably 5–6m, off the ground.



Alternatively, a bat brick can provide internal roost space, and can be incorporated into the fabric of a building as it is built or renovated. A variety of facings can be fitted to suit any existing brick, wood, stonework, or rendered finish, rendering the box unobtrusive.

External lighting in line with the BCT guidelines

Bats are likely to use green spaces in the area for foraging such as the Reading School Morgan Road Playing Fields, in the area for foraging.

It is advised that night-time construction work, using artificial lighting, is avoided. Where this is not possible, construction lighting should be minimised and directed away from trees, shrubs and other natural habitats, to minimise disturbance to notable species, such as bats, which may be using habitats within or adjacent to the site. To reduce the impact on bats of any new external lighting that will be installed on the site for post construction uses, the building's external lighting should be designed in line with the Bat Conservation Trust's "Bats and Lighting in the UK" guideline, to reduce the impact the development has on bat populations.

Ecological Enhancements

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Native plants

Where new planting is installed, this should include native species or species of benefit to wildlife.

Planting should include a diverse mix of species, including a variety of fruiting and flowering species, grasses and herbaceous plants to provide a nectar source and overwintering habitat for invertebrates and in turn a foraging habitat for birds. The planting should be biased towards (and preferably exclusively) wildlife-friendly species, such as the following:

Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, box *Buxus sempervirens* lavender *Lavendula angustifolia*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, common dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, wild privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, ivy *Hedera helix*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*, honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, dog rose *Rosa canina*, heather *Calluna vulgaris*, viper's bugloss *Echium vulgare*, primrose *Primula vulgaris*, daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa*.

Night scented plants may also be beneficial to attract insects and in turn bats. Species such as evening-primrose *Oenothera biennis*, night-scented stock *Mattiola bicornia*, lemon balm *Melissa officinalis*, borage *Borago officinalis*, may be appropriate for this purpose.

Stag beetle loggery/ Reptile habitat feature

Stag beetles are known to be found in Berkshire, and records within close vicinity of the site were returned by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). These are a priority species in the UK BAP. Stag beetles rely on decaying wood that is in contact with the soil, both to feed on as larvae and in which to lay their eggs. A log pile could be incorporated into the site.

This feature can also act as refugia for reptiles such as slow worms and common lizard. Hardwoods such as oak, beech, sycamore or ash are recommended with the bark still attached and should be piled up and left to decay naturally. Alternatively, logs from any trees that are being removed from the site could be retained and used for this purpose.

The feature should be left in a quiet area of the site, ideally within or near dense vegetation.

Hedgehog corridors

Hedgehogs can roam an average distance of 2km on a single night, therefore maintaining corridors and connectivity is of benefit to the hedgehog population.

Creation of a hedgehog hole, a 13cm square gap in the boundary fence or wall at the garden will enable hedgehogs to pass through the Site and provide increased connectivity of the habitat. A part of the redeveloped site could be less formally managed and left 'overgrown' to provide potential nesting and hibernation areas for hedgehogs.

Local Biodiversity Policy

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Reading Borough Local Development Framework – Core Strategy (Adopted 2008)

This document sets out the Reading Borough Council's adopted planning strategy for the Borough. It sets out how planning and development will achieve the Reading 2020 Vision for the town. Relevant Policies are listed below.

CS28: Loss of Open Space

Development proposals that will result in the loss of open space or jeopardise its use or enjoyment by the public will not be permitted. In exceptional circumstances, development may be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that replacement open space, to a similar standard, can be provided at an accessible location close by, or that improvements to recreational facilities on remaining open space can be provided to a level sufficient to outweigh the loss of the open space. The quality of existing open space should not be eroded by insensitive development on adjoining land.

CS36: Biodiversity and Geology

- a) Development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest (including protected species and their habitats) found within the application site into their schemes. On sites with recognised biodiversity or geological value, development will not be permitted where there would be a direct or indirect adverse impact on the site, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that: –
 - i. The need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and
 - ii. Appropriate compensation, impact minimisation, mitigation and compensation are provided.
- b) Local Nature Reserves and Wildlife Heritage Sites will be safeguarded and where possible, enhanced. Permission will not be granted for any development that would adversely affect a designated nature reserve or Wildlife Heritage Site.
- c) Any development that would sever or threaten the integrity of an established wildlife link, as indicated on an adopted proposals map, will not be permitted. Where applicable, developments should be designed to protect, consolidate, extend and enhance the network of wildlife links and corridors in and adjoining the Borough, working with neighbouring authorities where appropriate.

CS37: Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space

Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of areas designated as a Major Landscape Feature. The designated areas are:

- The Thames Valley;
- The Kennet and Holy Brook Meadows;
- The West Reading wooded ridgeline;
- The East Reading wooded ridgeline; and
- The North Reading dry valleys.

CS38: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal, and the Borough's vegetation cover will be extended.

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The Natural Environment in
Berkshire – Biodiversity Strategy
2014 – 2020

This report provides a statement of the current state of nature in Berkshire and a strategy for protecting and enhancing the natural environment in Berkshire. Relevant National Outcomes hoped for as part of the strategy include:

Outcome 1 – Habitats and ecosystems on land (including freshwater habitats)

- a) Better wildlife habitats with 90% of priority habitats in favourable or recovering condition and at least 50% of SSSIs in favourable condition, while maintaining at least 95% in favourable or recovering condition.
- b) More, bigger and less fragmented areas for wildlife, with no net loss of priority habitat and an increase in the overall extent of priority habitats by 2020
- c) At least 17% of land and inland water, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, conserved through effective, integrated and joined up approaches to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem services including through management of our existing systems of protected areas and the establishment of nature improvement areas;
- d) Restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems as a contribution to climate change mitigation and adaption.

Outcome 3 – Species

We will see an overall improvement of the status of our wildlife and we will have prevented further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species.

Outcome 4 – People

Significantly more people will be engaged in biodiversity issues, aware of its value and taking positive action.

Indicators for the above outcomes have been defined nationally and are published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on the gov.uk website.

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Reading Biodiversity Action Plan

Whilst Reading Biodiversity Action Plan was valid from 2005 – 2005, it still provides an idea of priority habitats and species within the borough. These are listed below.

Priority Habitats

- Man-made sites and structures
- Gardens, parks and similar sites
- Natural Grassland
- Parkland and veteran trees
- Ancient and/ or species-rich hedgerows
- Broad-leaved woodland (including ancient semi-natural woodland)
- Ponds (standing open water) and reedbeds
- Rivers

Species

- Black poplar
- Loddon lily
- Glow worm
- Stag beetle
- Bats
- Water vole
- Black redstart
- House Sparrow
- Sand martin
- Great crested newt
- Slow worm

Other long list species

- Bluebell
 - Cowslip
 - Moschatel
 - Ragged robin
 - Snakes head fritillary
 - Wild service-tree
 - Buttoned snout
 - Heart moth
 - Marbled white
 - Stripped lychnis
 - Otter
 - Barn owl
 - Bittern
 - Bull finch
 - House martins
 - Kestrel
 - Kingfisher
 - Lapwing
 - Linnet
 - Little ring plover
 - Nightingale
 - Reed bunting
 - Skylark
 - Snipe
 - Song thrush
 - Swift
 - Grass snake
-

Contribution to National and Local Priorities

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Contribution to National and Local BAP priorities:

Ecological enhancements to the site will make a positive contribution to the aims of National and Local policies and the Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

The Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy cites that a development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest (including protected species and their habitats). Biodiverse green roofs can support a wide range of insect and plant species. It has been recommended that the green roof also provides a variety of substrate depths and type to encourage invertebrate diversity, which will in turn provide foraging opportunity for birds and bats. This area of green space will also increase the connectivity across the borough, benefiting airborne species such as birds, bats and invertebrates. In addition, any new planting installed will include native species or species of benefit to wildlife, with inclusion of a stag beetle loggery and hedgehog corridors. The installation of bird boxes and bat boxes/bricks on the development will also help to contribute to this aim, with bats, black redstart, house sparrow and sand martin all listed on the Reading BAP.

In total, the recommendations will ensure that there is a positive contribution to National and Local policies and the Reading Biodiversity Action Plan as well as an improvement to the long-term biodiversity of the site. Inclusion of the recommendations within the proposed development will result in the creation of ecologically valuable habitat, which is appropriate to the local area, supporting nationally, regionally and locally important biodiversity, including BAP priority species.

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The ecological management plan is based on the recommendations for ecological enhancement provided in the ecology report produced by Eight Associates (4309 – The Abbey School BREEAM 2018 Ecology Report – 1912–17gg). The management actions are divided into the following sections covering the proposed features and habitats; Recommendations include:

- Incorporation of a Biodiverse Green Roof
- Installation of at least three bird nesting boxes on the site
- Installation of at least two bat boxes on the site
- External lighting in line with BCT guidelines
- Incorporation of native or fruiting and flowering plant species
- Incorporation of a stag beetle loggery/reptile habitat feature
- Hedgehog corridors

The building and areas of hardstanding are not subject to specific management under this plan as they have negligible ecological value.

Roles and responsibilities

Contact name	Company	Role	Responsibilities
TBC	TBC	Developer	Distribution of management plan to building tenant
TBC	TBC	Tenant	Appointment of green roof maintenance contact for five + years
TBC	TBC	Green roof contractor	Green roof installation and testing
TBC	TBC	Building management	Maintenance of green roof Ad-hoc checks on green roof and bird boxes to report issues

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Biodiverse green roof

Site preparation and planning:

Before commencing installation works, the integrity of the waterproof covering must be tested and approved. All drainage works, flashings, etc. should be finished prior to the application of the green roof covering. Protection sheets, drainage layers and filter sheets should be installed edge to edge across the entire roof area to be greened to ensure the waterproofing is protected and the drainage layer functions consistently.

The optimum periods to install green roofs are late September/early October or late March/early April, as the cooler and wetter conditions will typically reduce the need (and cost) for irrigation to keep plants moist. It is strongly recommended that planting is not carried out during the months of June to August.

Adequate provision for watering the planting must be in place on site before the product is installed.

Substrate Installation:

- Substrate should be applied to the required depth (including the appropriate settlement volume) using grading bars.
- Once the green roof is installed, it should be saturated to capacity using suitable temporary irrigation equipment.
- Keep handling of the growing medium to a minimum.
- Do not handle or install when wet or frozen.
- Handle in the driest condition possible.
- Start by applying two equal layers, building up to required depth.

Gently firm each layer before spreading the next. Allowance should be made for any settlement that may occur. It is recommended that measuring stick markers of the required maximum depth be used around the roof area to ensure that a minimum acceptable thickness of growing medium is achieved.

Base green roof installation

- Shipped in rolled form, the pre-grown mats must be rolled directly on to the prepared substrate within 24 to 48 hours of packaging.
- Once installed the pre-grown mats should be thoroughly watered and irrigated thereafter for a 4 – 6 week period subject to weather conditions, until thoroughly established.

Mat edges are typically butt-jointed, although the specific manufacturer should be consulted to establish any shrinkage risk.

After completion of the installation it will be necessary to keep the substrate and plants damp for a minimum period of 10 weeks using temporary surface mounted sprinklers, or alternatively the permanent irrigation system, should one be installed. Watering should be proactively carried out during this period as required, but only if the substrate/ plants begin to dry out.

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Biodiverse green roof (continued)

General maintenance:

All maintenance actions carried out at roof level must be in full compliance with the appropriate health and safety regulations, and particularly those specifically dealing with working at height. BS 4428:1989 – Code of practice for general landscape operations (excluding hard surfaces) and BS7370-4:1993 Grounds maintenance – Part 4: Recommendations for maintenance of soft landscape (other than amenity turf) provide guidelines for maintenance actions.

- Extensive green roofs typically have low nutrient requirements and are therefore often fertilized on an annual basis, each spring, using a slow-release fertilizer.
- Removal of undesirable plant species and fallen leaves should take place twice each year.
- Drainage outlets (including inspection chambers) and shingle/gravel perimeters to be cleared of vegetation, twice yearly.
- Inspect the waterproofing system visible at all upstands, to ensure it is firmly adhered.
- Cut back vegetation in the autumn and ensure any cuttings are removed from site.
- Plug plant or re-seed if necessary.

The building owner should keep a record of all inspections and maintenance carried out on the roof. Any signs of damage or degradation should be reported immediately so arrangements can be made for remedial work to be carried out if necessary. They should also report any signs of damage or degradation to the landscape, which might affect the future integrity of the waterproofing.

Bird boxes

Nest box maintenance should be carried out during the autumn months. The nests of most birds harbour fleas and other parasites, which over-winter and infest young birds that hatch the following year. Remove old nests in the autumn and rinse the box with boiling water to kill any remaining parasites. Let the box dry out thoroughly before replacing the lid. Insecticides and flea powders must not be used.

If damage occurs to the nest box at any time, the building owner should undertake repairs outside of the bird nesting season (March–August), or replace the box if beyond repair.

Bat boxes/bricks

Bat box maintenance should occur when the house is vacant, ideally late in the season:

- Check the seams: all seams should be airtight. If they are not, this will most likely lead to the bats vacating. Daily heating and cooling will cause expansion and contraction, which usually leads to a split or a crack somewhere in the construction. Test this by shining a light from the outside of the bat house inwards. Roof repair sealant may be needed to repair cracks. Replace anything that needs it. Stain or re-paint the bat box every few years. This helps to seal and protect the bat box.
- Remove any nesting wasps and bees.
- Prevent overcrowding and overheating: An indicator of overcrowding is seeing bats towards the bottom or on the exterior of the bat house. In this case, install a very similar bat house nearby to help split up the population (Source: <http://bathouse.com/bat-house-maintenance>).

Modern bat boxes do not need cleaning out. Droppings accumulate on the ground directly under the bat box. This material naturally biodegrades and there is no need to remove it.

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Native planting

Soil condition: Improve soil condition by applying peat free compost and bone meal prior to and during planting.

Pruning: Prune to encourage denser growth. Prune the longest branches on shrubs and remove dead, dying or diseased branches in the months outside of the bird-nesting season seasons (October–February).

Ensure that any fruit producing shrubs are managed for wildlife by cutting back after winter. Stimulate berry production by removing old branches with infrequent or poor berry production in the months outside of the bird nesting seasons (October–February). Remove dead, dying or diseased wood and suckers.

Weed control: Control weeds by mulching using chippings. Carry out weeding every six months. Prevent the growth and spread of invasive weeds.

Shrubs: Mulch all shrub planting areas to a minimum depth of 75mm. Ensure that soil is thoroughly moistened prior to re-mulching, applying water where necessary.

Stag beetle loggery/reptile habitat feature

This should be in a shaded location where possible, for example near a corner wall. Large logs 10–50cm in diameter of hardwood (oak, beech, sycamore or ash), positioned vertically with bark still attached, are recommended. These should be sunk approximately 60cm into the ground, piled up and left to decay naturally, with occasional watering during periods of drought. The loggery should be checked in winter to ensure it is not overgrown with vegetation.

Hedgehog corridors

Creation of a hedgehog hole, a 13cm square gap in the boundary fence or wall at the garden will enable hedgehogs to pass through the site and provide increased connectivity of the habitat. This should be checked in winter to ensure the gap is not overgrown with vegetation.

Schedule of Works

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Year	Feature	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
One	Green Roof	Install living roof in either spring or autumn.		Install living roof in either spring or autumn.	
	Bird boxes	Installation		Clean out bird boxes at the end of the breeding season (if necessary).	
	Bat bricks/boxes	Installation			
	Native planting	Improve soil condition by applying peat free compost and meal prior to and during planting.			Improve soil condition by applying peat free compost and meal prior to and during planting.
	Stag beetle loggery/reptile habitat feature	Install loggery			Check to ensure not overgrown with vegetation.
	Hedgehog corridors				Check to ensure not overgrown with vegetation.

Schedule of Works

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Year	Feature	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
Two – Five	Green Roof			Check the pebble ballast borders / drainage channels are weed free and allow adequate drainage.	
				Cut back vegetation where appropriate and ensure any cuttings are removed from site.	
				Weed out unwanted plants.	
				Re-seed or plug plant if necessary.	
		Signs of damage or degradation should be reported immediately.			
		Inspect the waterproofing system is viable at all upstands, to ensure it is firmly adhered.			
		Ensure that all rainwater pipes are free from blockages and that water flows freely through them.			
		Clear all debris from the roof surface, rainwater outlets, gutters etc. Debris must be removed from the roof.			
	Bird boxes			Clean out of bird boxes annually (if necessary). After the end of each breeding season, nest boxes should be taken down and the old nesting materials removed. The box should be cleaned with boiling water to kill any parasites.	
	Bat bricks/boxes			Carry out checks for signs of wear and tear, remove bees/wasps if present.	
	Native Planting	Improve soil condition by applying peat free compost and meal prior to and during planting. Weeding to remove unwanted plants / Removal of yellowing leaves/dead plants.			
				Cut back vegetation where appropriate and ensure any cuttings are removed from site. Pruning/ Removing dead, dying diseased wood and suckers (if necessary). Cut back the fruiting species after winter. Remove old branches with infrequent or poor berry production to stimulate berry production. Ensure this is carried out outside of the bird season (October–February).	
	Stag beetle loggery/reptile habitat feature				Check to ensure not overgrown with vegetation.
	Hedgehog corridors				Check to ensure not overgrown with vegetation.