

Appendix I.10 Broken Brow Ecology Surveys - Addendum



Ecology Surveys–Broken Brow- Addendum

Client: Wokingham Borough Council

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1 Addendum – Reptile Mitigation Strategy

1.1 Guidelines

- 1.1.1 There is no one set of guidelines that are recognised for use for development schemes. The HGBI guidelines set out best practice methods but are somewhat outdated and aimed at ARG's rather than development projects. Natural England released a Technical Information Note (TIN102) in 2011 that was subsequently withdrawn due to issues with practical implementation of some of the requirements, although the document remains withdrawn it does provide some useful guidance. The TIN is directly referenced in the report along with the Herpetofauna Workers' Manual and Froglife guidance and all documents would be referenced and used in compiling a comprehensive mitigation strategy to be set out in the EMMP.

1.2 Population size

- 1.2.1 It is widely recognised that determining the size of a reptile population is difficult and it is also acknowledged that a precise population estimate is not required for an impact assessment and instead an estimate of the population can be obtained in very broad terms.

The combined report sets out that the peak adult count was just one animal. This taken in isolation would indicate a very low population but in recognition of the fact that it is likely that more animals will be caught in the translocation work a precautionary estimate combining the peak count along with a habitat suitability assessment was arrived at which concluded a medium population of animals with reference to TIN102. A medium population is considered in this guidance to be between 10 - 40 animals. And given the findings on site it is likely that the number of animals is towards the lower end of this scale. It is recognised that the main population and the source of the animals on site is likely to be a larger and more stable population along the railway. The site in recent years has seen a rapid decrease in the amount of good quality habitat available due to the encroachment of scrub,

1.3 Area of Suitable Habitat

- 1.3.1 The area of good quality reptile habitat is limited to the small areas of chalk grassland with some encroaching scrub this is shown in orange hatching on Figure 2 this orange hatched area is approximately 1416M². The remainder of the site comprises areas of dense scrub whilst the presence of reptiles in these areas cannot be ruled out it is not considered good quality habitat.

1.4 Proposed Mitigation Strategy

- 1.4.1 A two pronged mitigation strategy is proposed with the main aim being to retain a population of reptiles on site. The receptor sites initially proposed are not be suitable due to the likelihood of flooding in these areas and the difficulty in securing them within a section 106.

Retention of the reptile population on site.

- 1.4.2 In line with the various sets of guidelines it is proposed where possible to retain the reptile population on site.
- 1.4.3 As the number of animals likely to be captured during the translocation phase it anticipated to be small (due to the relatively small amount of the site with good suitability and the very small peak count) and it is recognised that the likely source of the population is the railway and the key area currently used by reptiles is against the railway. The scheme proposes an area of retained habitat against the railway, protected by a retaining wall and post and rail fence that retains at least one third of the existing area used by reptiles and an additional area that is currently dense scrub that can be manipulated to make it suitable for reptiles. The receptor area is approximately 1300M² with a small area of tree planting that would house hibernacula.
- 1.4.4 If the number of adult animals caught during the translocation remains below 10 (this is the number of animals considered by Natural England to represent a low population), it is proposed that all of the animals could be translocated to the retained receptor site. See addendum figure.
- 1.4.5 Although the retained area is smaller than the area of good quality habitat available on site the retained area can be enhanced to increase its suitability for reptiles overall.

Ex-situ translocation receptor.

- 1.4.6 If the number of animals captured during the translocation exceeds 10 then it is proposed that these additional animals would be moved to an ex-situ translocation receptor. Capture rates would be carefully monitored and movement of animals to the ex-situ receptor would only commence if the capture rate predicts that numbers likely to be caught would represent a viable population. Kentwood Farm SANG was been proposed by the Wokingham Borough Council Biodiversity officer, this is a recently created and is also intended to function as a receptor site for great crested newts translocated from the development site.

- 1.4.7 The Kentwood Farm SANG totals approximately 5ha, a walkover was undertaken in October 2016 and the site was found to support a variety of habitats including amenity grassland, developing species rich meadow, areas of damp grassland, areas of woodland planting and ponds. Notably the site also features a 400m long south facing bank which represents approximately 0.8ha of good quality habitat for reptiles. It is understood that it is intended to continue to manage the site for reptiles and great crested newts and that it will potentially be used as a receptor site for other projects where necessary, this will help to ensure a viable population can be maintained on site.
- 1.4.8 To ensure there are suitable refuges for slowworms during their initial introduction to the site and suitable hibernacula to ensure survival over winter a reptile hibernacula will be created near to the foot of the bank prior to the commencement of the translocation.
- 1.4.9 The area of good quality reptile habitat on the TVP site totals 1416sqm and the entire site is 1.35ha, as the SANG supports greater area of suitable new habitat than that being lost in the Park and Ride there is likely to be a long-term gain in overall population in the borough. Photos of Kentwood Farm taken in October 2016 are shown below.



Information board at entrance



Site overview



South facing bank

Some refugia



One of the ponds