

# Otter, badger and hedgehog

## Precautionary working method statement and Toolbox Talk

### Vyrnwy reserve

The Vyrnwy reserve site has been assessed for the potential to support terrestrial mammals, such as otters, badgers and hedgehogs (“Vyrnwy reserve Ecological Impact Assessment Report, April 2025 – Habitat Works”). This finds that there is no significant risk to these species due to the works, but highlights that they could pass through the area. It recommends a precautionary approach should be taken.

#### **LEGAL PROTECTION:**

Otters and badgers are a protected species, and protected from disturbance, harm and destruction of resting areas. Hedgehogs are protected from certain ways of being killed, but this protection is not as high as otters and badgers. However, they are a key species and under severe threat so best practice will be implemented to ensure their protection during works.

#### **Considerations for the species and site work**

As has been noted in the EclA, these species are not recorded to have resting places on site (setts, holts, dens for example). Generally, the resting places are the biggest risk to disturbing these species. Therefore, the risk from the works is the potential for the species to move across the site commuting between feeding and resting areas.

There is a secondary risk that hedgehogs, which do not have fixed resting areas like badgers and otters, could be present within vegetation on site. Another risk for hedgehogs is that they hibernate within fallen logs and dense vegetation, the locations of which change each year. If they are accidentally disturbed, it can severely impact their chances of survival through the winter.

#### **‘PRECAUTIONARY WORKING METHOD’ to be implemented during the works:**

For hedgehogs, the risk of disturbance to resting/hibernating areas can be managed as the vegetation on site will be cleared prior to the hibernation season. The Ecological Clerk of Works (Ecologist) will be present in advance of works commencing to avoid potential breaches of legislation. The Precautionary Method comprises:

All contractors (including staff undertaking vegetation works and staff undertaking construction works) should read and sign this document to confirm they are aware of the legal issues. The working methods required below are relevant more to Vegetation Management staff to prevent any possible impacts. However, all construction phase staff should read the Toolbox talk to ensure they are aware of the species whilst works are ongoing.

- Removal of vegetation and site clearance should be scheduled to occur between April and October to minimise the risk of encountering hibernating mammals, whilst ensuring the species are still in their active state. This also has potential to affect nesting birds, therefore checks for any presence of nesting birds will also be carried out at the same time as checks for other species.
- Prior to vegetation clearance commencing, the vegetation to be removed and the base of any trees to be cut should be thoroughly checked by a suitably experienced ecologist. The check should encompass all vegetation to be impacted, including both vegetation to be removed, and any vegetation that could be inadvertently impacted or disturbed during the clearance works. This includes areas of ground likely to be impacted by the works (e.g. areas where felled trees will fall, or resulting timber will be stacked).
- No plant or machinery to enter the areas of tall vegetation and all works are completed via 'walking access' only.
- If no otters, badgers or hedgehogs are found during the check by the ecologist, then vegetation clearance works can commence. The vegetation should be cleared in a single direction back towards areas of retained habitat, to give any wildlife an opportunity to move away from the area of clearance. Care should be taken not to isolate or cut off any area of vegetation to be removed during the works.
- Vegetation should be cut in a phased approach to 30cm above ground-level using hand-held tools (e.g. chainsaws) and the arisings should be checked again before being stacked or removed. A further cut to ground level will follow 48 hours later.
- The cut vegetation should be ideally taken offsite immediately. If some of it is to remain on site, it must be stacked in a location away from existing habitat, but also away from the site compound and working areas. It should only be moved under the instruction of the ECoW. Ideally, some material should be placed in locations to create new habitat for the species via log piles, as directed by the ECoW.
- The cut stumps and roots of the felled trees must be removed with the ECoW present and done slowly to be able to check the ground for animals.
- The storage of materials onsite could encourage animals to hide, or even hibernate within. Ideally piles of materials like stone, wood and building debris should be stored in

[illegible]