



Former Mepal  
Outdoor  
Centre, A142  
Ireton's Way,  
Ely,  
Cambridge-  
shire

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## Reptile Presence and Absence Report

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May 2020

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Ref: 19-6364



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|                 |                            |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Revision</i> | -                          |
| Date            | 02/06/2020                 |
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### Note

The advice which we have prepared and provided within this report is in accordance with the CIEEM Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional opinions. Opinions and information provided in the report are based on Syntegra Group Ltd using reasonable skill, care, and diligence in the preparation of the same in compliance with the CIEEM Code of Professional Conduct.

### Validity of Data

The findings of the site survey are valid for a period of 24 months from the date of the survey. If approved works have not commenced by this date, then an updated site survey could be required to inform any changes to the habitats present on site in order to inform any updated mitigation and or precautionary measures required on site.

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No allowance has been made for changes in prices or exchange rates or changes in any other conditions which may result in price fluctuations in the future. Where assessments of works or costs necessary to achieve compliance have been made, these are based upon measures which, in SC’s experience, could normally be negotiated with the relevant authorities under present legislation and enforcement practice, assuming a proactive and reasonable approach by site management.

Forecast cost estimates do not include such costs associated with any negotiations, appeals or other non-technical actions associated with the agreement on measures to meet the requirements of the authorities, nor are potential business loss and interruption costs considered that may be incurred as part of any technical measures.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS.....5**

**2. LIMITATIONS.....5**

**3. METHODOLOGY.....6**

**4. RESULTS.....6**

**5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT.....7**

**6. PROPOSED MITIGATION AND ENCHANCEMENT.....7**

**7. CONSTRUCTION MITIGATION.....8**

**8. POST WORKS.....8**

**9. REFERENCES.....9**

**APPENDICES**

Appendix I: Hibernacula and Log Pile Design

## 1. Introduction and Aims

Syntegra Group was commissioned by The CDS Group, on behalf of the client, to undertake a conduct a reptile presence/absence survey at Land at the Former Mepal Outdoor Centre, A142 Ireton's Way, Ely, CB6 2AY (Grid Ref: TL 42274 82982). The surveys were carried out over the month of May 2020.

This report has been prepared in support of planning application, submitted by The CDS Group on behalf of 'Applicant', to Fenland District Council ('the Council') for the development of The Former Mepal Outdoor Centre, Ely ('the site').

The preliminary ecological appraisal was carried out in November 2019 by Syntegra Group. The survey noted a mosaic of habitats including overgrown grassland, shrub, hedgerows, rubble mounds, and wood piles, that had suitability to host common reptiles including slow worms. As the site's habitats and features were identified as potential terrestrial habitat for reptile species, further surveys were required to determine if a population of reptiles are on site. The surveys were required to support the planning application.

The report details the reptile survey results along with the mitigation and compensation proposals for the land at Mepal Outdoor Centre.

The aim of the survey and report was to:

- Carry out a survey for the presence or likely absence of reptiles that may materially impact on the proposals.
- If the species is present, establish the size of the population.
- Make recommendations for further surveys or any other work as required in order to develop a mitigation strategy for the species if present.

## 2. Limitations

The report only applies to plans drawn up at the time of survey. Any alterations to plans may render the report void and/or require further surveys and should be communicated to the ecologist at the earliest opportunity.

All surveys were undertaken in line with survey guidelines when temperatures were between 9°C-18°C, no strong winds and/or no rain, which are the recommended survey parameters stated within guidance from JNCC and Froglife. The mat check surveys were carried out during May, optimal times for reptile surveys, as per survey guidelines. As such there are no limitations associated with the timing and weather conditions of the surveys.

The site has regular disturbance from the public (fishing, vandalism, etc) with mats moved on numerous occasions and roughly 20 removed from site, missing mats were replaced and moved mats place back into original position.

The client is responsible for reading and understanding the advice given in this report. The client must ensure that, where recommended, precautionary measures and/or mitigation is followed through.

### 3. Methodology

The PEA Survey in November 2019 identified areas of the site that were considered suitable for reptile species including the unmanaged boundary habitats that included, immature, semi-mature and mature trees, hedgerows, scrub, rubble piles, and brush piles. These identified areas and features had the potential to provide complex habitats suitable for use by reptile species.

Reptile surveying methodology followed guidance from JNCC and Froglife. Roof felt mats (0.5m x 0.5m) were placed on site in areas that had potential reptile basking features. Once mats settled, mats were checked during suitable times (8:00 to 11:00 AM and 16:00 to 18:00); weather conditions were favourable with temperatures between 9 and 18°C. A total of seven visits during morning and late afternoons were carried out. Mats were checked for basking individuals either on top of mats or beneath.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020, the mats were laid within the identified reptile hot spot locations on site. The mats were laid by John Johnson BSc, an experienced ecologist who has undertaken numerous reptile surveys and have undergone professional training in reptile surveying techniques. A total of 100 mats were placed across the whole site.

The survey was undertaken by John Johnson BSc (Hons) student CIEEM, as a student member, follow the institutes Code of Professional conduct when undertaking ecological surveys (CIEEM 2016).

### 4. Results

The results of the reptile survey are summarised in Table 1 and 2. Table 1 details the weather and temperature conditions during each mat check. Table 2 shows results for the absence and presence survey.

**Table 1: Survey Dates with Weather and Temperature Conditions**

| <i>Date</i>          | <i>Start Time</i> | <i>End Time</i> | <i>Start Temperature (°C)</i> | <i>End Temperature (°C)</i> | <i>Wind Speed (Beaufort Scale)</i> | <i>Cloud cover (%)</i> |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> May  | 09:00             | 11:00           | 12                            | 14                          | 1                                  | 90                     |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> May  | 08:00             | 09:30           | 11                            | 12                          | 2                                  | 40                     |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> May  | 08:00             | 09:45           | 11                            | 13                          | 2                                  | 20                     |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> May | 16:20             | 18:00           | 16                            | 16                          | 1                                  | 10                     |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> May | 16:15             | 17:45           | 16                            | 16                          | 2                                  | 10                     |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> May | 8:10              | 9:40            | 14                            | 15                          | 2                                  | 80                     |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> May | 8:00              | 9:45            | 14                            | 15                          | 2                                  | 40                     |

**Table 2: Results of Presence/ Absence Surveys**

| Date                 | Species | Adult Male | Adult Female | Sub-Adult | Juvenile | Total Count | Total Adult Count |
|----------------------|---------|------------|--------------|-----------|----------|-------------|-------------------|
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> May  | -       | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0        | 0           | 0                 |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> May  | -       | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0        | 0           | 0                 |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> May  | -       | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0        | 0           | 0                 |
| 11 <sup>th</sup> May | -       | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0        | 0           | 0                 |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> May | -       | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0        | 0           | 0                 |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> May | -       | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0        | 0           | 0                 |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> May | -       | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0        | 0           | 0                 |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> May  | -       | 0          | 0            | 0         | 0        | 0           | 0                 |

## 5. Impact Assessment

No reptile species were recorded during the 2020 surveys and therefore it is considered likely that these are absent from the Survey Areas. It must be noted however, absence of these surveys is not indicative of permanent absence in these areas as suitable habitat to support them is present.

The data search results also confirm that no records of reptiles are located within 2km of the site.

Caution is advised during removal of reptile suitable areas such as log and rubble piles, if a reptile is found, works must stop immediately and an ecologist must be informed as a mitigation programme will need to be put in place to ensure that no individuals are harmed or killed.

All reptiles are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) against the intentional killing and injuring of these species. The habitats of common reptile species are not protected; however, the precautionary principal must be adhered to, and suitable mitigation and compensation is put in place. The development will result in a loss of habitat for these species on the site.

The residual impacts after mitigation are a loss of the original habitat types, shelter sites and potential hibernacula. The site will be opened up to the individuals post construction to allow for future movement across the site and into the wider landscape. The post landscape proposals are to include boundary links across the site to ensure future movement by individuals. The proposed boundary enhancements will be advised and finalised after the various further protected species surveys carried out onsite including entomology and botanical.

## 6. Proposed Pre- Commencement Mitigation

Until the recommendations from the further protected species surveys are received and in line with precautionary measures for reptiles, no management of the onsite vegetation is advised.

## 7. Construction Mitigation

Although the surveys have noted no individuals, given the disturbance on site by the public and movement of mats, individuals could be present, and it is advised that precautionary measures are undertaken during the construction phase. All debris, log, brush, and rubble piles onsite are to have soft demolition during the active reptile period (mid-March to mid-October inclusive). Overgrown areas on site are to have the following methodology: Vegetation clearance should be staged, first cutting back to heights of 50mm and leaving for 48 hours, with arisings removed. Then the remaining vegetation should be searched for reptiles prior to full clearance.

During construction works, as a precautionary measure, materials will be stored on pallets away from the boundaries of the site. Machinery must avoid movements into or around the edge boundaries of the site. Hedgerows can be cut back but it is recommended that hand tools only are used to ensure no injury or killing of individual reptiles. It should be noted that hedgerow management must avoid the nesting bird season, unless first checked and cleared by the ecologist.

All site staff will be informed of the potential of reptiles on the site, precautionary measures that are in place, and what to do should an individual be found.

## 8. Post Works

It is recommended that the edge boundary habitats are enhanced wherever possible to allow for future movement of animals in the area. The landscape proposal plan will be finalised after the further protected species surveys, in particular the entomology and botanical surveys.

A hibernaculum will be placed within the southern boundary of the site post construction and landscaping works. The exact location will be determined following the further botanical surveys. Two log piles will also be placed on site, the exact locations will be subject to the results of the further entomology and botanical surveys that are still be carried out at this time of the report.

The boundary habitats will be maintained to foster future movement of potential individuals onsite. The exact boundary enhancement will be determined following the results of the entomology and botanical surveys.

The boundaries will require the council to be aware of the potential reptiles on site with an agreement in place that will ensure that the site will maintain the log piles and hibernacula. Future maintenance to the boundary, will have annual strimming to heights of 35cm with the arisings removed, best carried out in late August to early September. The areas must be disturbed in sections first and then strimmed. The ecologist should attend the first annual maintenance of these boundary habitats to ensure the correct measures are undertaken.



## 9. References

Froglife (1999). *Reptile Survey: An introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation*. Froglife Advice Sheet 10. Froglife, Peterborough.

Gent, A.H., & Gibson S.D. (1998). *Herpetofauna workers' manual*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

Stace, C. A. (1997). *New Flora of the British Isles, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.

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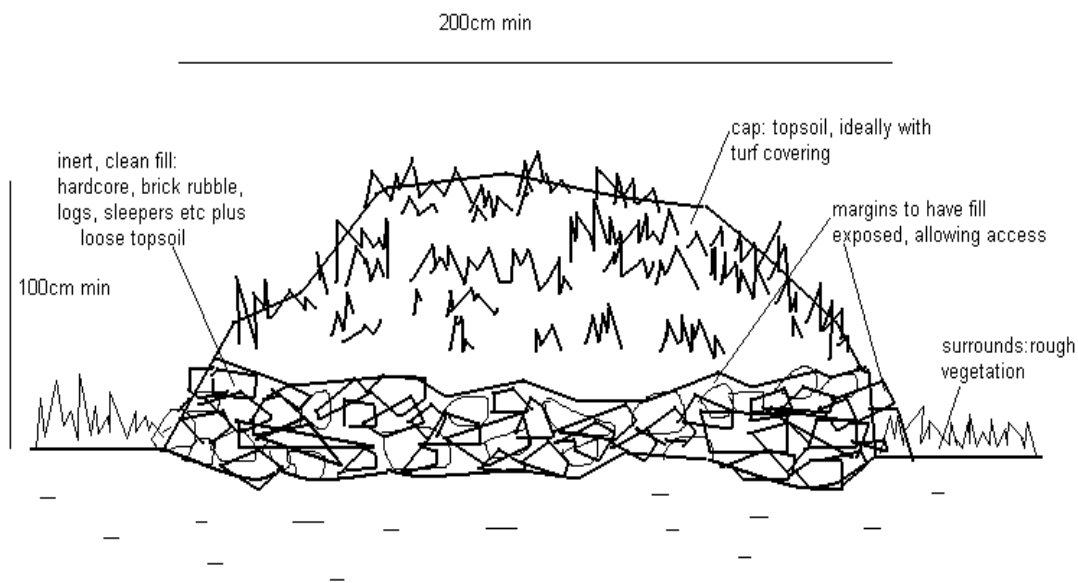
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Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (1998). *Evaluating local mitigation/translocation programmes: Maintaining Best Practice and Lawful Standards*. HGBI.

JNCC (2004). *Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Reptiles and Amphibians*.

## Appendix I: Hibernacula and Log Pile Design



- Not less than 2m length x 1m width x 1m height
- Inert clean fill of hardcore, brick rubble, logs, sleepers
- Covered with topsoil and ideally a turf covering

### Example of Log Pile Designs



*Mixture of hard and soft woods heaped into a pile*