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Ecological Excellence

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Great Crested Newt (GCN) & other herpetofauna - Reasonable Avoidance Measures Statement (RAMS)

Application Site: Roecrofts Farm, Ulnes Walton Lane, Ulnes Walton, Leyland, PR26 8LT

Method Statement Objectives

Development related activities on the application site (named above), such as vegetation clearance, or excavation creation in areas of suitable newt habitat or reptile habitat, for example, may potentially affect Herpetofauna that may inhabit the local area. As a result, safeguards must be applied to protect these species; the Method Statement below outlines sequential measures to be implemented to ensure these objectives are achieved.

Before Any Works Understanding

- All reasonable avoidance measures within this document are to run in-sync with recommendations agreed for protected species that may be occupying the site (see confidential information).
- Before any works commence at the application site all site contractors/stakeholders will be briefed by 'Tool-box' talk of the potential for protected species to occur on site, what to look out for and what to do in the event that animals are found. This talk should cover ID aids and legal ramifications of an offence through reckless behaviour.
- Contractors/stakeholders will ask any questions as required following the toolbox talk, before signing the Audit Form (see overleaf) which will be kept by the Ecologist/ECoW for audit trail.
- Following the toolbox talk an "Environmental Champion" will be appointed, responsible henceforth to report to the ECoW throughout the work schedule in the absence of ecological supervision.
- Photograph(s) will be displayed at the site office and/or kept by the contractor's personal being for visual reference purposes.
- Construction works are to only take place during daylight hours 8.00am-6.00pm as opposed to the night time, when amphibians and some mammals are most active.

Pre Works

Timings

- Juvenile and adult amphibians are most vulnerable to harm during their **hibernation period considered to be November to February** inclusive. Site preparation works should avoid this sensitive period. If this is not possible works carried out during this sensitive period (between November – February) should take into account, the potential presence of hibernating herpetofauna (this extends to include West European Hedgehog).
- Pre-commencement check - a hand search to take place by an Ecologist/ECoW before any vegetation clearance. A check for nesting birds must commence prior to any works, and no works can take place to areas occupied by breeding birds until the birds have moved on.

Demarcation of buffer zones

- Any buffer zones should be demarcated out using hazard/coloured tape and/or signage to avoid any encroachment/over-management occurring from the development site within this sensitive area.

Habitat manipulation (March-Oct)

- 3 to 5 days prior to stripping the site bare of vegetation in prep for development, it is recommended that habitats are first trimmed in phases; initially strimmed to 15cm in height using brush cutters or similar approved methodology. Strimming should commence directionally north to south across the site at all cutting phases allowing animals to move off site or towards desired buffer zones or retained areas.

- Once vegetation is cut 15cm a further hand search should take place within 72 hours - following the hand search, when Herptiles are confirmed absent, the vegetation should then be cut to ground level (or below 10cm), raked bare and maintained at this sward thereafter. Habitat manipulation like this will discourage animals from using the areas thus less likely to be harmed by works on site.
- x2 hibernaculum will be constructed within a designated opportunity area under instruction of the Ecologist. Any herptiles found during the work schedule will be carefully relocated to the hibernacula acting as a safe receptor zone within the safety of the buffer zone throughout the work schedule.

During Works

- Any clearance works to areas of interest/potential refugia as considered applicable by the Ecologist (such as log piles, garden equipment, plant pots, etc) or loss of existing vegetative features (dense grass, tall ruderal, hedge, shrubbery, bracken, scrub), should only commence after a careful visual inspection (Hand Search) has been carried out and the Ecologist has determined that no animals are present and is satisfied no animals are at risk. Any animals found that are not European Protected Species (EPS) will be removed from harm's way and placed into suitable buffer zones, species pending and following correct protocols/biosecurity measures.
- For the full duration no works are to extend off site in the areas adjacent to the red line boundary or within agreed buffer zones. No pallets, skips or otherwise are to be placed upon areas of dense vegetation and should instead only be placed on flat, cleared ground to avoid animals getting underneath.
- The impact of works on adjacent habitats will be avoided by the clear demarcation of the works area. All work must strictly be in accordance with all of the relevant Pollution Prevention Guidelines published by the Environment Agency which may include, but is not limited to, PPG1 (general), PPG5 (works in, near, or liable to affect watercourses) and PPG6 (work at construction & demolition sites).
- Contingency/emergency plans should be drawn up to address chemical spillage, drainage, collision, etc.
- Machinery and materials to remain on bare ground and reasonable efforts must be made to avoid creating piles, or accumulated aggregates. Materials that require piling will be stored within areas of bare ground above ground level, using pallets to prevent reptiles and amphibians from seeking shelter below.
- Any excavated materials or soils stored overnight will be searched prior to being used as infill.
- Where excavations/trenches are excavated - it should be ensured that they are not left open overnight to avoid amphibians falling into them and becoming trapped. If trenches cannot be filled in after the working day for whatever reason, an escape mechanism such as wooden planks of 5cm wide as a minimum should be placed in them at a 45 degree diagonal angle, to serve as an escape mechanism to small animals including mammals, reptiles & amphibians.
- Excavations should be checked in the morning on a daily basis for the presence of any animals that may have fallen in during the night.
- All site operatives will maintain a watching brief throughout the work schedule and report any issues, anomalies or discrepancies to the ecologist or wildlife champion as appointed.
- If an amphibian or reptile is found in the absence of supervision, work must stop immediately, and contact should be made with the assigned licensed, qualified ecologist / ECoW. At no point should any person handle a reptile without express consent from the qualified ecologist / ECoW.
- Any newts or frogs or toads found should be carefully caught, placed (where capture is possible and humane) in a ventilated box using dampened gloved hands and released into suitable nearby vegetation that will be unaffected by the proposed works. Toads should not be touched using non-gloved hands as they secrete a toxin through their skin and they should not be handled for longer than is necessary.
- Plastic netting, wire coils or similar hazardous features should not be left on the ground, to avoid entanglement. Aggregates/constructional materials should be stored on pallets as opposed to the storing on the ground.
- If in the event a GCN is found work must cease; the Ecologist will be made aware of the finding and will appraise the situation providing further advice. Site staff must be made aware that if GCN are found there is a correct procedure in place to follow, and failure to halt works may result in committing an offence. At no point should any person handle a GCN or suspected GCN. Unlicensed handling is illegal and untrained handling may cause the newt unnecessary stress and injury.

A Guide to Timings

Operation	Months												Notes
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Early understanding													
Toolbox Talk	Prior to any works or site preparation											Soon as possible for early understanding	
Appoint Wildlife Champion	Following toolbox talk											-	
Pre-works													
Buffer zone demarcation & signage	Pre-habitat manipulation & hand search											To avoid encroaching in sensitive area	
Hibernaculum creation	Prior to any habitat manipulation											To provide a receptor area for translocated animals	
Hand-search on site by Ecologist			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Prior to habitat manipulation
Habitat Manipulation			Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y			Staggered, as described, to allow animals to move away
Establishment of buffer zones during management	During habitat manipulation											Specifics To be sanctioned by LPA	
Breeding Bird Checks			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				Where birds are found to be breeding on site, buffer zones established temporarily until the birds have fledged the nest
											Recommended timeframe	Y	

Identification Aids

Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)



Identification Tips

- Largest Newt in the UK, up to 16cm in length,
- Big & Black,
- Rough, Warty skin,
- Orange/yellow colouring on Belly,
- Irregular black blotches on Belly,
- Toes banded Black/orange,
- Male has a jagged crest on its back and a separate smoother crest along tail, white stripe on tail too

DO

If a GCN is discovered during works, **STOP ALL WORKS** in the area, inform your site manager and contact the project ecologist **IMMEDIATELY**.

DON'T

Do not touch or handle a GCN they are very delicate – and it is against the law. Penalties for breaking the law include unlimited fines, imprisonment and seizure of equipment.

DO NOT RISK BREAKING THE LAW

Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*)



Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*)



DO

If any reptile is found during works, **STOP ALL WORKS** within the area and inform your site manager and contact the project ecologist **IMMEDIATELY**.

DON'T

Do not touch or handle a reptile, they are very delicate. Penalties for breaking the law include unlimited fines, imprisonment and seizure of equipment.

DO NOT RISK BREAKING THE LAW

Toolbox Talk Audit Form

Tyrer Ecological Consultants Ltd



Site:		Ecologist(s):	
<p>I can confirm I have attended the toolbox talk held by the named ecological consultant. I confirm I am aware of the legislation in relation to reptiles as well as other herptile species that may be in the locale. I confirm I will endeavour, to the best of my capability, to follow the measures outlined in the RAMS to protect all animals from harm, and know what to do if I encounter reptiles.</p>			
Name:		Signed:	
Company:		Date	
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