

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: Rebecca Owens
From: Matt Davies (Ecologist)
Ext: 5278

Memo number: 1
Date of previous memo: -
Date: 26/11/2025

SUBJECT: P/25/0306 | Discharge of conditions 3 (Site investigation - land stability), 4 (signed statement), 9 (Land contamination), 13 Biodiversity enhancements), 14 Reptile Mitigation Strategy), 16 (Landscaping) and 18 (Material finishes) of planning permission P/22/0018 | Land Off Winchfawr Road (to The North Of Perthddu) Heolgerrig Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1RD

ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS (RELATED TO P/22/0018)

- 13: Before the dwelling hereby approved is occupied, details of the following, together with a plan(s) showing their exact siting/location(s) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority:
 - An integrated bat box.
 - An integrated sparrow terrace.
 - Gaps in boundaries for the free passage of hedgehogs across the site.
 - A hibernaculum.

All of the above shall be installed/provided in accordance with the approved details before the dwelling is occupied and shall be retained in perpetuity.

- 14: Before any works commence on site a Reptile Mitigation Strategy (RMS) shall be submitted to an approved in writing by the local planning authority. The works shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved RMS.
- 16: No development or site clearance shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping. The scheme shall clearly identify areas of habitat on site that will be removed and those that will be retained and set out measures for their protection throughout the course of development. It shall also include details for the locations of the wildflower and lawned areas outlined in the Preliminary Ecological Assessment.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF THE ABOVE APPLICATION (P/25/0306)

1. Land East of 22 Winchfawr, Heolgerrig. Reptile Mitigation Plan prepared by East Ecology. Revision: V1. Date Issued: 27/03/2024.
2. Land off, Winch Fawr Road, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 1RD. Proposed Ecolog [sic], Planting & Finishes drawing prepared by Indigo 3d Design. Drawing Number: WF-11. Rev No: A. Date: 30/11/2022.

COMMENTS – Document 1

- The measures within the document are acceptable, however, the dates quoted in the Timetable of Work on page 3 need to be updated.

COMMENTS – Document 2

- As per Condition 16, the scheme must clearly identify areas of habitat on site that will be removed and those that will be retained and set out measures for their protection throughout the course of development. Please add this in.
- The build-in/integrated Sparrow Terrace hyperlink does not work – please amend
- The build-in/integrated Bat Box hyperlink does not work. It is also unclear what the suggested model is – please amend
- The arrows indicating the positions of the bat and bird box seem to show almost the same spot. Please could the boxes be drawn in to give a better idea of where they would sit within the wall?
- Please can the above-ground hibernaculum reference the specifications found within Document 1 (page 2)?
- All species in the landscaping scheme must be native and of local (if not Welsh or UK) provenance – amendments therefore required to the suggested shrubs. Perhaps these could instead be replaced by a native species hedge (with at least x5 native species) or a line of small native species trees.
- Please can long-term management plans be added to the document – to assist with this, they are supplied below for inclusion within Document 2.

LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT PLANS

A. Small Trees

1. Choose the right tree

- Consider your space: Assess site size and layout. Suitable smaller native tree species include holly, hazel, hornbeam, field maple, hawthorn, silver birch.
- Match with soil type: Native trees thrive when planted in suitable soil conditions. Consider the type of soil on your site (sandy, clay, or loam) and choose a species that thrives in those conditions.
- Local climate conditions: The UK climate varies, and choosing a tree adapted to your region ensures better long-term health (NB tree species as listed above would be suitable for the Merthyr area).
- Wildlife benefits: Many native trees support local wildlife by providing food, shelter, and nesting sites.

2. Planting

- Timing: The tree will be planted between mid-November and late March when roots are dormant. Planting will be avoided in waterlogged or frozen soil.
- Tree preparation: The tree's roots will be soaked in water for a couple of hours before planting. For containerised trees, the rootball will be well-watered before removal from the pot.
- Hole preparation: A hole at least double the width of the rootball will be dug deep enough to allow the root flare (where the trunk meets the roots) to be at or just below the soil surface. The soil will be loosened around the sides of the hole to encourage root growth.
- Planting: Congested roots will be gently loosened, if necessary, and spread out in the hole. The tree will be placed in the centre of the hole, ensuring the root flare is at the correct level. The hole will be backfilled with soil, gently firming to remove air pockets. The hole will be watered generously to settle the soil.
- Staking (optional): For taller, more exposed, or vulnerable trees, a stake will be inserted at a 45-degree angle to provide support and prevent wind rock which can damage roots. A flexible tree tie and a spacer will be used to avoid the tree rubbing against the stake. The stake will be driven in to a depth of at least 40cm.
- Guarding (optional): If rabbits or other animals are a concern, a tree guard or spiral will be added to protect the young trunk.

3. Establishment, aftercare and management

Years 1-5: Establishment and formative care

- Initial planting: The planting techniques as described in the previous section will be used, including choosing the right species, preparing the planting hole correctly, and providing initial support with staking and guards if needed.
- Watering: During the first 2-3 years, regular, the tree will be watered, especially during dry spells, with approximately 20 litres every fortnight, ensuring the water soaks deep into the soil to encourage a strong root system. After this, the tree will be watered only during prolonged periods of drought or extreme heat.
- Weeding and Mulching: A 1-meter diameter area around the tree base will be kept clear of weeds and grass for the first 2-3 years to reduce competition for nutrients and moisture. A 10cm deep layer of mulch (bark chips, straw) can be applied to suppress weeds and conserve moisture. The mulch will not be piled against the trunk.

- Pruning: Formative pruning will be used to establish a strong structure. This will involve removing broken, diseased, or damaged branches and promoting a dominant central leader. Pruning will be undertaken in winter for most native deciduous trees (NB some species like cherry and walnut may benefit from summer pruning to reduce disease risk).
- Tree Guards and Stakes: If used, tree guards will be regularly checked to ensure they are pushed firmly into the soil. The guards will be removed after 5-10 years as they can restrict growth or disintegrate. Stakes and ties will be removed after 3-5 years when the tree is established and can stand on its own.
- Pest and Disease Monitoring: The tree will be regularly inspected for signs of pests or diseases. Early detection allows for more effective treatment.

Years 5-15: Growth and continued development

- Pruning: Growth will continue to be monitored and the tree will be pruned for health and aesthetics as needed. Pruning will be used to maintain the desired shape and size, remove dead or diseased wood, and address any structural issues. Heavy pruning can stress the tree, so the tree will be pruned little and often. Removing more than 25% of the canopy at a time will be avoided.
- Soil and Nutrient Management: Soil health will be maintained by continuing to mulch annually to improve soil structure, retain moisture, and suppress weeds. Native trees generally do not require heavy fertilization, especially once established, as they adapt to the natural soil conditions. Synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, and herbicides will not be used.
- Promote Biodiversity: A thriving ecosystem can be created around the tree by adding features like nest boxes, ponds, or wildflower areas.

Years 15-25: Maturity and long-term care

- Continued Monitoring: As the tree matures, will continue to be annually inspected for signs of pests, diseases, or structural weaknesses. Changes in twig growth, leaf size and number, dieback in the crown, and signs of decay will be noted.
- Specialized Pruning: If necessary, a professional arborist for specialized pruning techniques like crown raising or deadwooding will be commissioned to address specific issues or maintain the tree's health and appearance.
- Respecting Natural Processes: The natural aging process of the tree will be considered. Older trees may develop features like stag heads (dead outer branches) which can be a natural part of their health and can support wildlife.

NB the tree will be replaced if it fails or dies at any point during the management period.

B. Grassland and Wildflower Areas

Establishment Phase (Years 0–2)

1. Seed Selection

- Use only native species seeds of local (if not Welsh provenance) will be used to maintain regional genetic diversity and support native wildlife.
- See Appendix II for a list of producers:

2. Ground Preparation

- Ground with low fertility and without perennial weeds will be used.
- Any weeds that are present will be removed from the area using repeated cultivation.
- The surface vegetation will be buried and the soil raked and then rolled or treaded to produce a firm surface.

3. Sowing

- Seed will be sown by hand in autumn or spring.
- The seed quantity will be split into two or more parts to avoid running out and ensure an even distribution.
- The seed will be rolled or treaded in to give good soil to seed contact.

4. First Year Management

- After sowing there will be a flush of annual weeds arising from the soil seed bank. This may look unsightly but will provide shelter for the sown seedlings and a resource for invertebrates. The weeds will be cut, removed and composted in early August.
- The young wildflower area will then be kept short by mowing until March of the following year.
- Any remaining perennial weeds such as docks will be dug out.

5. Management once established (2-25 years)

- In the second and subsequent years the area will be managed using traditional meadow management methods.
- The wildflower area will not be cut from spring through to early August to give the sown species an opportunity to flower and go to seed.
- In early August the area will be cut to a height of approximately 50mm and the cuttings left to dry and shed seed for up to a week. The cuttings will then be removed from the site to prevent nutrient build-up.
- The re-growth *can* then be mowed before winter (optional) to a height of approximately 50mm and again in spring if needed (again, optional). Cuttings will be removed to prevent nutrient build up.
- Introduce Yellow Rattle in the Autumn to reduce grass dominance and promote wildflower diversity.
- Rotate some uncut areas to create structural diversity.

6. Monitoring

- Track species emergence and adjust management accordingly.

- Introduce additional species via plug planting or green hay if needed.

Tips for Success

- Patience is key: Meadows take years to mature and stabilize.
- Avoid over-management: Let natural processes shape the community.
- Engage with local experts: Wildlife Trusts and Natural Resources Wales offer guidance and support.
- Seasonal Management Calendar (once established)

C. Hedgerows

1. Establishment Phase (Years 0–2)

- Site Preparation:
 - A 1.5m-wide strip of vegetation will be cleared.
 - Planting
 - The hedge will be planted from November to March
 - 2-year-old transplants (whips) will be used
 - Whips will be planted in a staggered double row, 40cm apart, with 4–8 plants per metre
 - Native woody species only will be used (at least 5 species if possible in equal amounts). For example, hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, dog rose, field maple, etc. A mix of species will produce resources for wildlife throughout the growing season. For example, early blossoming blackthorn to hawthorn and late flowering ivy.
 - Protection
 - A fence will be introduced (at a minimum distance of 1.2m from the hedge) where necessary to prevent livestock damage.
 - Guards will initially be used, but will be removed when the hedge is established
- #### 2. Years 3–10: Establishment & Early Growth
- The hedge will be lightly trimmed every 2–3 years to encourage bushy growth
 - Over-trimming will be avoided as this can cause sparse lower growth
 - The hedge will be monitored for gaps and these will be filled in with replacement planting as and when required
- #### 3. Years 11–20: Maturity & Habitat Enhancement
- Sections can be laid every 10–15 years to rejuvenate growth
 - The adjacent margins will be managed for biodiversity
- #### 4. Years 21–25: Rejuvenation & Legacy
- Older hedgerow sections will be coppiced to restart growth cycle

Any declining plants will be replaced.