

Updated Otter Survey Memo Report



Creating sustainable futures

Temple (Lichfield Office)
Trent Park,
1-2 The Mews,
Eastern Ave,
Lichfield,
WS13 6RN
Tel no: 01543 229049

To: Nick Wood

Our ref: T7028

From: Jessica Clitheroe, Principal Ecologist

Client: RCTBC

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Cc: David Coote, Associate Director
David.Coote@templegroup.co.uk

INTRODUCTION AND REPORT REVIEW

Temple was commissioned to undertake an otter survey following on from a PEA survey as an update to a previous survey undertaken in 2020. The survey is to inform baseline data on potential for otters to be present at and in habitats around the site of the feeder pipe bridge at Abercynon. A summary report of the update survey is below.

Information from previous Otter Survey - Undertaken 16/10/20, Report 08/21. (Redstart, 2021).

Habitat within the survey area (500 metres up and downstream of feeder pipe bridge) provided suitable conditions for otter to commute, forage, rest and breed.

Summary of evidence:

- Fresh spraint 85 metres upstream on south-east bank.
- Fresh spraint 115m upstream on south-east bank.
- Log/debris pile 55m upstream on south-east bank, potential site for holt to be established.
- Section of redundant concrete pipe on riverbank and possible gaps in rockface, opportunities for otter to establish resting sites/holts.
- No evidence for presence of otter downstream of site on either bank.

Summary of update otter survey 2023

A survey was undertaken on 21st February 2023 by Jessica Clitheroe BSc, a surveyor with over 9 years' experience, in cool dry weather. The survey was conducted 500m up and down stream in either direction from the central point of the feeder pipe bridge. Habitats on site were examined to establish any opportunities for otter to rest, feed and breed within the landscape in this area.

Surveys were undertaken looking for any evidence of:

- Spraint;
- Feeding remains;
- Foot prints
- Anal jelly;
- Holts; and
- Other resting areas such as couches.

Survey constraints included ability to examine rocks in the river itself due to not being able to enter the river; limited access to the banks on the north side of the river meaning the survey had to be done for the most part from above the river; and no access to the riverbank to the south of the river. This was however able to be surveyed by binoculars from the north side to a sufficient extent. None of the above limitations are considered to be significant however.

Results

Habitat assessment

The habitat on both side of the river was considered suitable in places for otters to be present.

To the north of the river habitats upstream were mostly stone wall and did not provide opportunities for otters to feed or rest, however downstream the banks of the river were covered with bracken and woodland with areas that provided suitable habitat for otters to rest and feed.

To the south of the river the bank was made of the remains of previous stonework with overhanging roots from trees. The bankside here was very steep with little access from the river to the woodland habitat above. However there were areas of the broken stonework that would be considered suitable for both feeding and marking of territory.

Field survey

Evidence of otter in the form of spraint was recorded on rocks approximately 30m upstream and 30m downstream of the feeder pipe bridge. The spraint in both occasions was located on rocks in the middle of the river. It was not possible to ascertain the age of the spraint as it was within the river and could not be accessed. However due to the location it is likely to be relatively fresh.

No holts or potential holt sites were recorded during the survey but an area of open eroded bank under tree roots was present at approximately 30m downstream of the bridge on the norther side of the river that could be used as a resting location.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As evidence has been found of otters within close proximity to the site, a number of otter specific measures should be put in place, including any site compounds being located away from the watercourse and any machinery and materials being locked away when not in use.

Any excavation works taking place on site will also need to be securely fenced off and covered when not in use to prevent otters accessing these areas. If areas cannot be fenced, ramps will need to be provided to prevent the possibility of otters becoming trapped.

Any work taking place within 30m of the watercourse will need to be restricted to taking place until one hour after sunrise and must be stopped a minimum of one hour before sunset.

If holts are discovered during works then an immediate stop to all works will need to occur and a 30m exclusion zone will need to be implemented. The ecologist for the Site will need to contact Natural Resources Wales for further advise before any further works in this area can continue.