



Technical Note

Subject	Mountain Hare Rugby and Playing Fields Pantyffyn Road, Mountain Hare, Merthyr Tydfil	Date	26.10.20
Ref		Previous versions: 29/09/20	
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Reviewed	Hugh Dixon	Date	26/10/20
Approved	Hugh Dixon	Date	26/10/20

To whom it may concern,

We are writing to you in order to discharge the planning condition on application P/20/0187 in order to discharge the following condition:

“No development will take place until a reptile management strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All construction activities shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.”

It is considered that habitat manipulation and denial is an appropriate method of clearing the site.

Background:

1. It was considered that the site has the potential to support a very small population of slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*) and possibly grass snake (*Natrix natrix*). It is less likely that adder (*Vipera berus*) is present but possible. The presence of reptiles should therefore be assumed, hence the need for a Method Statement to ensure that works are carried out in such a way as to avoid harm to reptiles and breeding birds.
2. Once the areas for clearance have been identified, implementation of this method statement will avoid having to undertake a full reptile translocation exercise as animals can be pushed into safe areas using habitat denial and manipulation techniques.

General comments:

3. Vegetation will be cleared from directly affected areas only e.g. areas that the footpath is to be built on.
4. Once cleared, the vegetation will be maintained as close to bare ground as possible by ongoing repeated cutting using brush cutters with knife blades to ensure that there is no potential for reptiles to utilise the site after the initial clearance.
5. Reptile fencing will not be required as long as the bare ground / short vegetation habitat is maintained.
6. The grassland on the site may be cut at any time of year. Any scrub and longer vegetation should only be cut during the autumn and winter months to avoid breeding birds unless otherwise permitted following a check by a suitably experienced ecologist. Should nests be identified as present, the works will not proceed until the young have left the nest of their own accord.

Method statement:

7. Vegetation will only be cut using brushcutters fitted with knife blades: the use of strimming cord will not be permitted.
8. Vegetation will be cut in three phases. The first phase will reduce the vegetation height to 150mm; the second will reduce it to ≈ 75 mm; the third phase will reduce the height to as close to ground level as possible.
9. There will be a time delay of 24 hours between the first and second cuts.
10. Vegetation to be cut will be inspected for the presence of reptiles immediately prior to every phase of cutting unless the supervising ecologist states otherwise.
11. The orientation of cutting will be designed to push animals into unaffected and retained land (figure 1



Figure 1: Direction of cutting (arrowed red) (image courtesy of Google Earth)

12. All arisings will be raked off and removed from site for disposal.
13. After clearance, should the vegetation be allowed to regrow above 150mm high, it will be cut again as described in this method statement.
14. Clearance may only take place during the reptile active season unless temperatures allow an extension or there is no potential for hibernating reptiles.
15. Potential hibernacula will only be cleared while daytime temperatures are consistently over 12°C for a period of at least seven days prior as otherwise reptiles may be killed or injured as a result of inconsistent (low) temperatures (during the day and night) and/or low prey availability. Potential hibernacula will only be dismantled by hand unless the supervising ecologist gives the approval for machine dismantling.

16. If reptiles are observed within the clearance area during the works, a decision on how to deal with them will be made on site in light of the conditions on site at the time and the state of the animals themselves. There are three options for dealing with them:

- It may be possible to leave the animals alone to find their own way into cover, depending on where they are seen, what they are doing and their apparent activity levels; or
- Capture, remove from site and take into temporary captivity until such time as they can be released adjacent to the cleared area (a vivarium has been prepared in case it is required); or
- Should conditions allow, capture and translocate the animals to a safe area immediately adjacent to the site.

17. Habitat enhancement measures will be provided in the form of a hibernacula at the location marked in black at Figure 1.

18. Habitat (e.g. hibernation sites for other species especially amphibians) can be identified and avoided by following this method statement.

19. All vegetation and site clearance will be supervised by a suitably experienced ecologist.

If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you,

Beth Evans

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