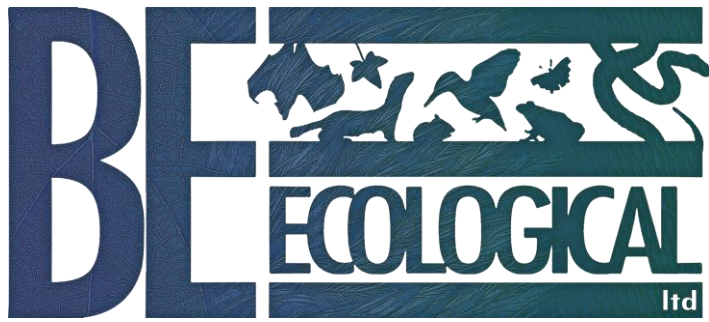




Technical Note

Subject	The Incline, Merthyr Tydfil		Date	28.09.23
Ref			Previous versions:	
Author	Beth Evans			
Reviewed	Beth Evans	Date	28.09.23	
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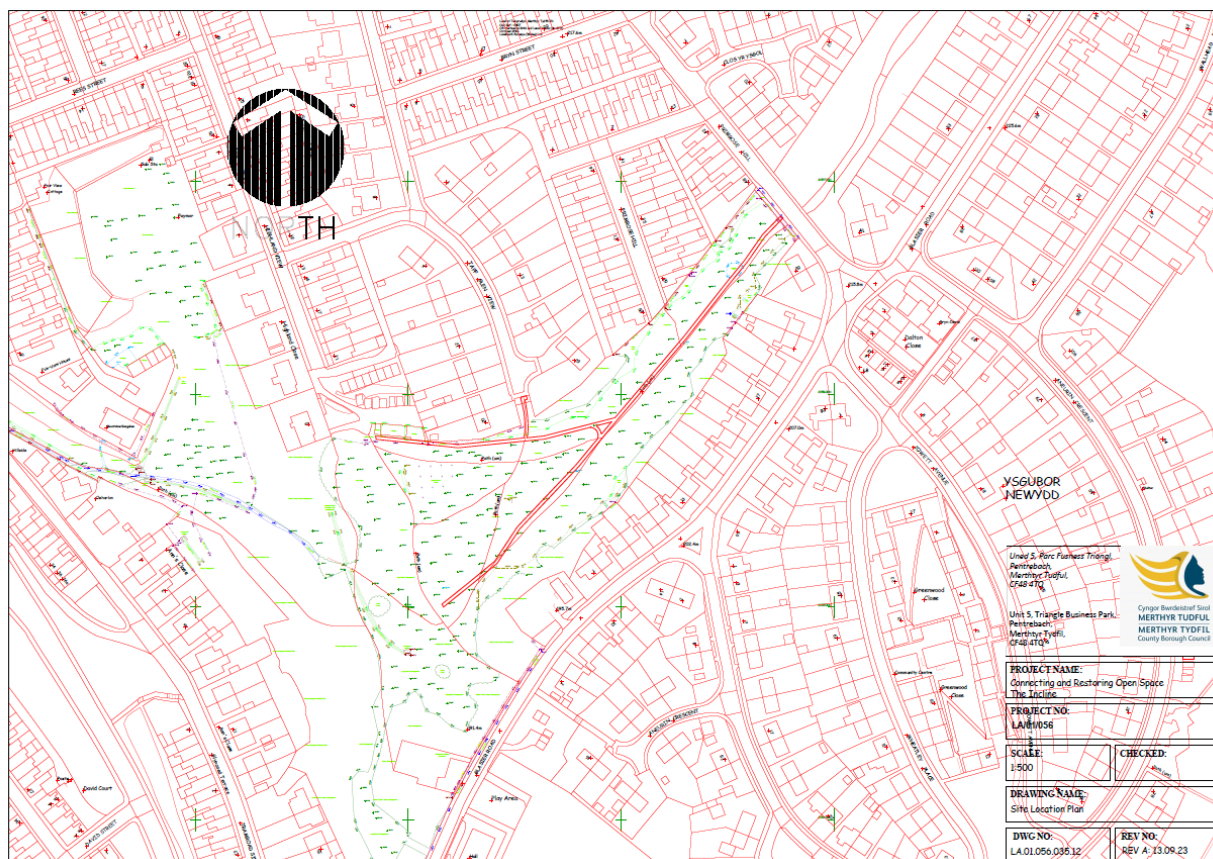
We are writing with regards to your request for a letter regarding a brief walk over, compensation measures and enhancements at the above site.

The habitat present is comprised mainly of semi-improved grassland with mature trees and patches of scrub. Japanese knotweed was noted on site. Plant species throughout the site include broad-leaved dock, ribwort plantain, geranium, common nettle, bramble, hawthorn, rosebay willowherb, creeping thistle, ivy, meadow foxtail, perennial ryegrass, cow parsley, white clover, creeping buttercup, hedge bindweed, dandelion, timothy, creeping buttercup, wild carrot, sedge sp. yarrow and cocksfoot.

Proposals for the site include the installation of a new footpath network. The footpaths will generally follow existing walkways that have been worn by members of the public and dog walkers. It is possible that some scrub may need to be trimmed back in certain areas.

The wider landscape comprises of mature trees, housing and associated infrastructure.

Figure 1: Site plan



There is some limited suitability perhaps for reptiles and amphibians (common species only) across the site, however, the areas to be impacted are worn and disturbed and it is thought unlikely that large numbers will be encountered. There is the potential for reptiles to be found across the site, however, these areas will be left as is and improved for this group through careful management. A method statement has been included to safeguard the presence of this group.

Invertebrates will use the site, however, this is likely to be limited to common and widespread species only. In addition to this, the site is to be largely retained.

It is possible that nesting birds may be present within areas of scrub should they require removal. Should any suitable nesting bird habitat require removal, the habitat will be removed outside of the breeding bird season (March-August).

There is no vegetation on the site that is suitable for roosting bats. Bats will be able to continue foraging over the site on completion of the development.

No other evidence or potential for any other protected species was found on site

Due to minor nature of the proposals, it is considered unlikely that there will be any impact on protected species providing that the clearance is undertaken in line with a method statement and under ecological supervision.

There is Japanese knotweed present on the site. This will need to be treated by an appropriately qualified contractor.

Compensation/Enhancements

A small strip either side of the footpath (approximately 0.5m) will be seeded with a wildflower mix

The site will be seeded with Emorsgate EM2. <https://wildseed.co.uk/product/mixtures/complete-mixtures/general-purpose-meadow-mixtures/standard-general-purpose-meadow-mixture/>

Preparation of ground

A seed bed will be created by first removing any weeds via manual cultivation. The bed will be dug to bury any surface vegetation, the area will then be raked and compacted to form a firm surface.

Sowing

The seeds will be sown either in autumn or spring. The seeds will be sown by hand at a rate of 4g/m². The seed will be sown on the surface and firmed down but not covered.

Year 1 management

Weeds will not be removed until mid to late summer, in order to provide shelter for seedlings. In late summer (early August), the weeds will be cut, removed and placed in compost piles around the wider site. Perennial weeds such as dock will be dug out by hand. The young meadow will then be strimmed short (50mm) through to the end of March the next year.

Management once established (years 2-5)

The grass cutting regime would be designed to allow wildflowers to seed the area for the following season. The wildflower strip will be cut twice per year for at least five years using hand tools once in March/April and again no earlier than 15th July in order to mimic hay meadow management. The cut following the 15th July will reduce the height of the meadow to approximately 50mm, arisings will be left in place on site to dry and seed for at least 3 days but no more than 7 before being removed from the area. Re-growth will be strimmed back to 50mm through to late autumn/winter and again in spring if required.

In addition to the above, there will be enhancements for the remaining site in the form of management. Enhancement will then include maintenance and management of the remaining grassland to benefit both reptiles and invertebrates, for example with a grass cut once or twice a year. Cuttings would be removed and used to create onsite compost areas (to benefit reptiles). The grass cutting regime would be designed to allow grasses and wildflowers to seed the area for the following season. These habitats will be cut twice per year using hand tools once in March/April and again no earlier than 15th July in order to mimic hay meadow management. The site will be overseeded with yellow rattle in order to reduce the growth of more vigorous grass species.

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

Thank you,

Beth Evans

Director/Principal Ecologist

Tel: 07527 049 134 | [Email: info@beecological.co.uk](mailto:info@beecological.co.uk)

Company Registration Number: 10409300

VAT Number: 308749576

APPENDIX A – METHOD STATEMENT FOR SITE CLEARANCE

1. A suitably experienced ecologist will be on call for the duration of clearance works.
2. Vegetation will be cleared from directly affected areas only and the area minimised wherever possible.
3. All vegetation and brash removal will preferentially be undertaken during the winter months i.e. between November and February inclusive.
4. If this is not possible, all areas to be cleared must be subject of a finger-tip search by an ecologist immediately prior to and during any clearance work; the ecologist should also be present while all post hole excavation (or other ground breaking should it be required) is being undertaken.
5. Should evidence of breeding birds, in particularly nests, be recorded, no clearance may be undertaken within 5m of any nest site until such time as the nest is vacated naturally.
6. No spraying of vegetation to be carried out. Vegetation will be maintained close to ground using repeated cutting only. 1x Hibernaculum will be added to an area of the garden remaining unaffected by the development. Materials already onsite (e.g., brash, logs) will be used.
7. Woody vegetation will be cleared (ONLY IF NECESSARY) to ground level using a chainsaw with all arisings stacked in unaffected areas NOT on areas of tall vegetation (over 300mm). Where necessary, stumps and roots will only be removed by machine (under ecological supervision) once the clearance is complete.
8. All woody vegetation will be checked by the ecologist prior to cutting for the presence of bird nests.
9. Vegetation will be cut in three phases. The first phase will reduce the vegetation height to 150mm; the second will reduce it to ~50mm; the third phase will reduce the height to as close to ground level as possible.
10. All vegetation cutting will be directional. This ensures that any animals present will be pushed from the site into adjacent retained habitats.

11. After clearance, if the vegetation is allowed to regrow above 150mm high, it will be cut and raked as described above.

12. Where necessary, potential hibernacula (brash, log piles, stumps, roots etc) will only be cleared during the active season (March-October) while day time 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.

13. If a bird's nest is observed on the site, the ecologist will assess it to determine whether or not it is active, the species concerned, the lifecycle state of any occupants and provide advice on next steps.

14. 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.

15. Habitat and the unlikely presence for other species (e.g. dormice, otter, great crested newts & other amphibians etc.) can be identified and avoided by following this method statement.

16. In the event that a European Protected Species is observed during the clearance,, all work will stop, and the ecologist consulted. It will be necessary to consult with Natural Resources Wales; further surveys and a development licence may be required before work can recommence.

NOTE: should it be required, a Natural Resources Wales development licence for European Protected Species is likely to take up to 40 working days to be issued following submission

Plate 1- photograph of worn paths



Plate 2- photograph of site



Plate 3- photograph of site facing main road

