

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: Caroline Pulley
From: Matt Davies (Ecologist)
Ext: 5278

Memo number: 1

Date of previous memo: -

Date: 27/01/2022

SUBJECT: P/22/0006 | New bridge over the River Taff | Rhydycar Bridge (off Avenue De Clichy) Merthyr Tydfil

Bridge over River Taff. River well-vegetated and provides strong links to the wider environment. Nearby grassland and woodland.

Designated sites within 500m of the application site:

- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): x1, Cwm Glo A Glyndyrys – c.488m from site;
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC): x3, closest, Afon Taf;
- NRW Priority Area (Heathland and Grassland).

Priority and protected species within 500m of the application site:

- Birds (including Schedule 1¹ species);
- Invertebrates (including Section 7² species);
- Bats (closest roost record for common pipistrelle, c.187m from site);
- Otter;
- Hedgehog;
- Amphibians (including great crested newt, closest record c.941m from site).

Comments:

An onsite visit highlighted the following issues:

1. The Afon Taf is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) so this makes mitigation, compensation and enhancement all that more important for this site/scheme.
2. There was Japanese knotweed along the northern bank of the river near the existing footbridge, so robust biosecurity measures will need to be employed. Treatment of the knotweed by a specialist may be required.
3. There were no trees on either bank with obvious features that could be used by bats, however, there were gaps between the blocks making up the retaining wall on the southern bank. Some gaps appear to have potential suitability for roosting bats or nesting birds. There was a tree (near the steps leading up to the EE car park) with a potential feature that would require endoscopy, if, for instance, the tree needed to be removed. This depends where the site compound is ultimately placed and what the route is chosen from the compound to the river.

¹ Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

² Environment (Wales) Act 2016

4. Obviously as the site is over/near a watercourse there will be otter and bat issues (there are nearby records for both), so there must be no increase in current lighting levels.
5. There will be issues with nesting birds.
6. The works will need to take place in daylight hours ONLY and there will need to be a method statement outlining how the works will be undertaken with consideration for protected and priority species.
7. Any trees removed would need to be replaced with at least standard specimens (native species of local provenance).
8. There will need to be enhancement in line with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

An ecological survey by an independent ecological consultant was undertaken. The following report has been submitted in support of the application:

Ecological Constraints Report. Rhydycar Bridge, Merthyr Tydfil. Ecoleg, Document Ref: ECR-MTCBC-2101. **DRAFT**, Issue 1, 22/11/21.

I am in agreement with all of the recommendations within the report.

Moving forward, the following is required:

1. A final version of the Ecological Constraints Report (the above referenced document is in draft);
2. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This will include measures to be taken to tackle any negative impacts on otter, bats, nesting birds, fish and other aquatic life. Prevention of river pollution/silting will also be addressed and biosecurity measures will be outlined to prevent spread of invasive species. NB the aforementioned gaps between the blocks making up the retaining wall on the southern bank will need to be investigated and endoscoped by a suitably qualified ecologist (likely to need climbing skills).
3. A Japanese Knotweed specialist to tackle the onsite issue.
4. Full specifications/details of compensation measures (e.g., replacement of vegetation with native species of local provenance) need to be provided and clearly marked on plans.
5. Full specifications/details of enhancement measures (e.g., bird and bat boxes added to the new bridge) need to be provided and clearly marked on plans.
6. A statement regarding lighting.
7. Suitable bird-nesting habitat to be removed outside of the bird breeding season.

Answers to the following questions are also required:

- Will there be any in-channel works?
- Have the positions of the site compound and the route to the river been finalised yet?
- When are the works proposed to be undertaken?