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Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL

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County Borough Council

The Incline Wetland

Green Infrastructure Statement



MTCBC Design

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Contents

1. Introduction	2
1.1 Location.....	2
1.2 The Development.....	2
1.3 Green Infrastructure Statement Requirement	3
2. Stepwise Approach	3
3. Existing Green Infrastructure.....	4
4. Green Infrastructure Loss	5
5. Proposed Green Infrastructure	5
6. Conclusions	6
7. Construction Management	6

1. Introduction

1.1 Location



The development is located on land adjacent to Glasier Road within public open space. The area is known as The Incline and the development will be located in the south west portion of the site.

1.2 The Development

The Incline Wetland is a proposal for a new biodiversity and flood management wetland area within an existing public open space.

The Incline is a reclaimed tip area which had been left as public open space with limited management. In 2023/24 a scheme was delivered to improve the lower part of the Incline for local communities and nature. The scheme included formalising footpaths, tree planting, sculptures and treatment of invasive species.

This development will form phase 2 of these improvements and will provide two wetland basins in the lower part of the site. The wetland will have some areas of shallow permanent water and larger areas of damp and marginal settings to provide a range of habitats. An existing culvert on the site will be diverted to feed the wetlands, providing management for peak flood flows and reducing downstream flood risk.

1.3 Green Infrastructure Statement Requirement

Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 published in February 2024 requests that a green infrastructure statement is submitted with all planning applications with detail being proportional to the scale of the development. The statement should demonstrate how green infrastructure will be used for multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the development and how the 'stepwise approach' has been applied.

2. Stepwise Approach

The design for this development aims to provide an enhancement in biodiversity for the site and deliver new habitats, and improved amenity for local communities.

The stepwise approach is set out in paragraph 6.4.12 of Planning Policy Wales. It has been outlined below and annotated to show how this development has followed the approach.

Step 1 > **Avoid** – the wetland has been located in an area of the site that is heavily dominated by bramble with limited diversity.

Step 2 > **Minimise** – the layout was refined further to ensure no Section 7 habitats or priority species would be impacted. Wetland design has been developed to provide maximum variety of habitats and to be gently landscaped to provide entrance and exit routes for foraging/commuting species. No lighting will be provided as part of the scheme.

Step 3 > **Mitigate** – An ecological survey was conducted as the first step in mitigating any impacts. The timing and methods of site clearance will be selected so as not to impact on nesting birds or hibernating hedgehogs. A WPP will be drawn up for the clearance and construction works to ensure that contractors adhere to mitigations. An Ecological Clerk of Works will be assigned to ensure its implementation

Step 4 > **Compensate** – The development itself is to deliver a biodiverse wetland which will be more ecologically rich than the green infrastructure being removed. Extensive herbaceous and aquatic planting, tree planting and the installation of bird and bat boxes will be undertaken.

3. Existing Green Infrastructure

The following habitats and vegetation have been recorded on site during a survey undertaken by David Clements Ecology in August 2024 (ref.: DCE 1268).

Dense scrub

The site is dominated by dense scrub of majority bramble and very small amounts of common nettle, and rosebay willowherb.

Semi-improved Neutral Grassland

There is a small area of semi-improved neutral grassland in the centre-south of the site where the bramble thins out. Bramble and rose are abundant but give way to common ragwort, creeping thistle, upright hedge-parsley, self heal, Yorkshire fog, false oat-grass and creeping cinquefoil.

Hedgerow

There is a thick hedgerow which borders the southeast of the site. This will not be cleared to accommodate the development. The hedgerow consists of a number of semi mature trees including white poplar, aspen, willow and cherry. The hedge also includes a number of smaller trees and scrub.

Trees

There are a few small trees within the scrub area. These include hazel, rowan, hornbeam, sessile oak, aspen, holly, hawthorn, alder and willow. These are grouped towards the centre-north of the site.

Dry Ditch

In the western area of the site there is a small dry ditch leading to a large masonry, grated culvert intake. This area contains a variety of different species, including charlock, hairy tare, common ragwort, great willowherb, creeping thistle, zigzag clover, dock, creeping buttercup, lesser swine-cress, prickly sow-thistle and bramble.



4. Green Infrastructure Loss

A moderate area of the dense scrub will be cleared to accommodate the larger of the two proposed wetland basins. The smaller basin will be sited on an area of semi-improved grassland which was recently disturbed and is currently being managed as part of the previously approved footpath scheme (see BE Ecological Limited Technical Note).

A low number of the small broad leaved trees within the dense scrub may need to be removed to accommodate the larger wetland basin.

The hedgerow will be retained and will not be impacted by the proposals.

The dry ditch will be retained as an 'unmanaged' area of the site.

The semi-improved grassland to the south of the culvert intake will be retained.

5. Proposed Green Infrastructure

Aquatic habitat

The deeper areas of the wetland will provide new aquatic habitats and will be planted with a variety of deep water plants and shallower aquatic species.

Marginal habitat

Large areas of new marginal and damp habitats will be created in the shallow areas of the wetlands and the connecting swales. This will include the planting of a variety of native perennial herbaceous species and grasses.

Tree planting

Any small broadleaf trees that have to be removed to accommodate the wetland will be replanted at a ratio of 3 to 1 as recommended in the PEA by David Clements Ecology.



6. Conclusions

The proposed development will occupy a smaller area of a large public open space which has recently been enhanced. The area chosen for the wetland currently consists of dense scrub which is majority bramble and therefore limited in diversity.

A moderate area of dense scrub will be cleared to be replaced with a wide variety of aquatic, marginal and grassland habitats which will represent a significant biodiversity enhancement. Any small trees removed to accommodate the wetland will be compensated by replanting at a 3 to 1 ratio.

The proposals will result in a net benefit for biodiversity within the site through creation and long term management of habitats and provision of bat and bird boxes and hibernacula.

7. Construction Management

Site clearance works will be supervised by a knowledgeable professional acting as an 'Ecological Clerk of Works' to ensure statutory obligations are met. Any clearance works will be undertaken between November and February outside of nesting bird season.

During construction, contractors will be provided with a toolbox talk to ensure that they understand procedures and any mitigations required for habitats and biodiversity. Any retained habitats of importance will be fenced off to prevent accidental damage. Any open ditches or pipework greater than 120mm will be covered at the end of working days to prevent hedgehog ingress. 'Escape ramps' may be used in trenches if it is not practical to cover them.