WORCESTERSHIRE
wildlife
CONSULTANCY

LAND AT
KERNE BRIDGE,
Nr. ROSS-ON-WYE,
HEREFORDSHIRE

Reptile Mitigation strategy

Report to
Mr Clifford Winney

Project number: 2018/061 C

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July 2019

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Title: Land at Kerne Bridge, Herefordshire – Reptile Mitigation Strategy
Submitted to: Mr Clifford Winney
Report Number: 2019/061 C

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SUMMARY

In June 2019 Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy were commissioned by Mr Clifford Winney to produce a reptile mitigation strategy for a small population of slow-worms found within land at Kerne Bridge, near Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire.

A very small population of slow-worms was found in 2017 by Focus Ecology Ltd.

For the purposes of this mitigation strategy the development site refers to the proposed grounds of land opposite Chequers Lodge, Leys Hill, Kerne Bridge as well as any external areas needed as site compounds/access roads/storage of materials.

Mitigation includes:-

- Exclusion fencing the northern boundary off from the assumed donor site to the north-west
- Intensive efforts between August and mid-October 2019 to remove the small slow-worm populations (*NB*. only three were found in 2017 by Focus Ecology Ltd). This will involve ten visits per week which is possible during the cooler months as two visits can occur daily
- If required, efforts will recommence in April 2020 and expected to last no longer than early Summer 2020
- All slow-worms to be removed to a receptor site across the road and placed into a meadow to the rear of Southbank. Written confirmation can be found in Appendix 4. Receptor site is managed as wildlife haven by keen owner.
- A single hibernaculum must be created in the receptor area and a location is outlined in Appendix 1.
- Enhancements will occur post development and the owner must select features from Appendix 3 to broaden the wildlife value of the site. As there are no formal plans at present, this are only indicative at this stage.
- A period of five years monitoring (as a minimum in years two and five) post-completion of the development to assess the repopulation of the gardens and landscaped areas by slow-worms.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Commissioning Brief

In June 2019 Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy were commissioned by Mr Clifford Winney to produce a reptile mitigation strategy for a small population of slow-worms found within land at Kerne Bridge, near Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire.

For the purposes of this mitigation strategy the development site refers to the proposed grounds of land opposite Chequers Lodge, Leys Hill, Kerne Bridge as well as any external areas needed as site compounds/access roads/storage of materials.

The intention is to translocate all slow-worms off site to land immediately across the road to a meadow at the rear of Southbank. This site does already have slow-worms and the slow-worm population on the donor site is considered to be a metapopulation of the proposed receptor site, based on low number found by Focus Ecology in 2017.

This particular document details the intended translocation operations, specifying how, when, where and what site enhancements are to be undertaken and monitoring is to occur to ensure the long-term viability of the slow-worms as regards their conservation status as far as is possible.

It is essential that this document is distributed to all those involved in the project, especially the construction team, prior to works commencing. This should ensure that if there are any potential issues, these can be resolved prior to works commencing on site.

1.2 Summary of the Proposed Development

It is our understanding that outline planning permission has been gained (Planning Application Number 174178) for the proposed erection of two residential dwellings (All matters reserved excluding access.) for land opposite Cheques Lodge, Leys Hill Road, Walford, Ross-On-Wye, HR9 5QU.

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This would necessitate the complete removal of slow-worms from the development area, into an existing reptile site just north of the proposed works, allowing excellent connectivity to the wider countryside and thus allowing them to re-populate the wider area and retain genetic integrity of the population.

2 BACKGROUND

In June 2017 Focus Ecology Limited were commissioned by Bruton Knowles to undertake a presence-absence reptile survey, following on from their recommendations within the preliminary ecological appraisal. The site is approximately 0.4ha. The reptile surveys were undertaken by Daniel Hulmes and Kathryn Oliver of Focus Ecology on 9th, 12th, 16th, 23rd, 26th and 30th June 2017.

From that survey the maximum number of three adult slow worms on any one visit it would seem that the site has a low population of both species. This assessment is based upon the information contained within Froglife Advice Sheet 10 – Reptile Survey (Froglife 1999).

A total of ten slow-worms (adults only) were encountered during the surveys with a maximum of three adult slow-worms found during any one survey day.

A table from this document is included below for reference.

	Low population *Score 1*	Good population *Score 2*	Exceptional population *Score 3*
Adder	<5	5 - 10	>10
Grass snake	<5	5 - 10	>10
Common lizard	<5	5 - 20	>20
Slow-worm	<5	5 - 20	>20

Figures in the table refer to maximum number of adults seen by observation and/or under tins (placed at a density of up to 10 per hectare), by one person in one day.

It is important to note that the survey undertaken was predominantly for presence/absence only and it was by no means definitive, particularly in terms of its ability to assess the size of any population present.

There is currently no scientifically robust method for estimating the population size of slow-worms. Mark-recapture is the most commonly used method for estimating population abundance in mobile animals but it has been used with limited success with slow-worms (Smith, 1990, Platenberg, 1999). This is because slow-worms violate the assumptions of most of the available mark-recapture models, most probably due to a large proportion of the population being uncatchable at any one time because they are underground or in dense vegetation (Platenberg, 1999).

Given that the site appeared to support a small breeding population of slow-worms as well as the need to operate within the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it was deemed necessary to retain and enhance an area of suitable habitat within the site for reptiles, which would be translocated to this area. Although

considered highly unlikely, should the number of reptiles found on site during within-site translocation prove larger than expected a contingency plan involves translocation to a suitable site within a back-up site in nearby Goodrich (see below). However, measures will take place to avoid population fragmentation and ensure that viable breeding populations will be allowed to occur.

3 SURVEY AND MITIGATION PROCEDURE

The following sections detail the measures and procedures undertaken to date that are aimed to both provide mitigation whilst allowing for the development to proceed in a timely manner. The exact dates cannot be given at this stage as the length of the planning process and therefore when the development could start is not known.

This strategy is subject to approval and agreement by Herefordshire County Council. The actions and proposals outlined below follow best ecological practice applicable to this site and situation.

Based on the information previously gathered and the overall size of suitable habitat available the site was assessed to hold a small population. The translocation strategy is therefore based on removing all slow-worms available for capture from the donor site between the months of mid-August to mid-October of for 2019 to effectively clear the proposed development area. This will involve intense visits for the period of time available between now and October 2019. Should the site not be cleared before the end of this period, it will recommence in April 2020 and expected to be complete by early Summer 2020, if required.

Ideally, assuming a small number are found, these will be placed in the very nearby receptor area across the road to the rear of Southbank (a flower rich meadow managed by the owner of the property as a wildlife area); this will also allow reptiles to disperse to the wider countryside and written consent can be found in the appendices. This site has excellent connectivity to the wider countryside and is considered to be the actual donor site for slow-worms present on the proposed worksite. The lane between the donor and receptor sites is hostile to reptiles traversing it but they may have been washed onto site due do the sloping topography in storm conditions. As such, only the northern section of the site will have reptile exclusion fencing to prevent other slow-worms going onto site pre- and during the construction phase of the prosed development. Should more than 120 animals be found then another receptor site may used – some southfacing field near a wood owned by the client in nearby Goodrich, although it highly expected that this will not be necessary.

4 LEGISLATION

All native British reptiles are protected against intentional killing and injury under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985. In England, Scotland and Wales, slow-worm, common lizard, adder and grass snake are also protected against killing, injury and sale, barter or exchange.

5 CAPTURE AND TRANSLOCATION

5.1 Within-site translocation

Prior to any capture and translocation of reptiles, the field will be partially isolated on the northern edge to prevent slow-worms entering the site from the assumed donor area across the lane. The lane acts as sufficient barrier on the western edge whilst the woodland and fenced border along the south are also considered sufficient barriers. The exclusion fencing will run for approximately 31m. By eliminating the chance of re-colonisation it is possible to clear the overall area more effectively. After weeks clearance habitat manipulation via the use of brush cutters in unsuitable weather conditions (i.e. very warm or very wet) will be used to remove suitable vegetation to force the slow-worms to use the artificial refugia. A plan of the site is provided in Appendix 1.

It is essential that the retained receptor area is kept solely for the use of reptiles and no site materials or vehicles should be left in this area. The owner has agreed to this.

Before and during construction it is essential that the reptile fence is checked on a daily basis by the ecologist/site foreman to ensure that it is intact and therefore acting as an effective reptile barrier. Should any breaches in the fence be found, these must be repaired within the same day. Should any breaches in the fence be found during construction works, then an ecologist should inspect the construction site for reptiles and any found will be placed in the retained area.

The fencing will include heavy duty UV resistant polythene dug into the ground approximately 450mm and affixed to wooden stakes as well as rigid plastic fencing dug into the ground approximately 300mm supported on plastic posts. Different fencing types will be used depending on the ground conditions encountered within the gardens; both types are effective reptile exclusion barriers.

To facilitate the capture and translocation, a high density of suitable roofing felt refugia (0.5m^2 squares) will be placed in field where the prosed works are due to occur. The refugia will be laid across the site at a density of no less than 100 per ha as per the Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland's (HGBI) advisory notes for Amphibian and Reptile Groups (HGBI 1998). Artificial refugia will number between 125 to 200.

A minimum of 60 trapping visits will be undertaken in suitable weather conditions (i.e. air temperatures 10°C - 21°C and preferably dry) between mid-August and mid-October of 2019. Due to the late stage in the year, an intensive effort will occur namely 10 visits a week so ensure that reptiles are found. As the days at this time of year are cooler that June and July, two visits a day are possible. Visits can be

undertaken in damp conditions after rain but not during heavy periods of rainfall or during periods of very hot or very cold weather. The depletion and therefore likely absence of slow-worms will be indicated by finding no reptiles over a period of five consecutive days in suitable weather conditions.

Once all the capture and translocation works have been completed the turf strip/removal of topsoil undertaken by the appointed development contractor must be supervised by an experienced ecologist from Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy. This is to ensure that any remaining reptiles are removed prior to the commencement of any ground works taking place.

As a precaution during construction works it is recommended that all trenches are covered overnight or provided with ramps to prevent common reptiles from becoming trapped. Although reptiles should be excluded from the site by the reptile fencing, as a precaution in case the fencing gets damaged, it is recommended that any building materials be stored on pallets and any demolition materials be stored in skips/similar containers rather than on the ground, thereby preventing these areas from being used as reptile shelters.

5.2 Off-site translocation

Th meadow at the rear of Southbank is approximately 0.2 Ha but is not restricted and connectivity to the wider landscape is very possible. The south-facing is located on Leys Hill. The owner Mrs Jan Sheldon has agreed to receiving the reptiles and does not cut the meadow. The site is a keen and experienced nature conservationist.

6 ENHANCEMENT AND MONITORING

The following will be undertaken to ensure features suitable for use by reptiles are incorporated within the development, thereby providing the opportunity for slow-worms to naturally repopulate the gardens and landscaped area of the new development once completed and established. Other features such as installation of bird/bat boxes and planting of native species of trees and shrubs around the site boundaries for dormice will of course provide opportunities for these specific groups but contribute in general to an enhanced environment for wildlife.

- One hibernaculum will be installed in the retained receptor area in the north-western corner of the site. Purpose built hibernacula can be constructed by using log/hardcore piles, which are then covered by soil with vegetation allowed to colonise. This will create ideal gaps and crevices for foraging and hibernating reptiles (and amphibians). A hibernaculum design is provided in Appendix 4.

- Creating a vegetation mosaic suitable for use as cover for feeding, basking and shelter within the landscaped areas using a mixture of native and ornamental ground cover species.

- Links of longer vegetation (long grass, etc.) to any compost areas/bins;

- The inclusion of a compost bin within the garden of each new property;

- Maintain connectivity as far as possible across the site to neighbouring gardens by ensuring there is permeability at ground level around the edges and between gardens;

- A period of five years monitoring (as a minimum in years two and five) post-completion of the development to assess the repopulation of the gardens and landscaped areas by slow-worms.

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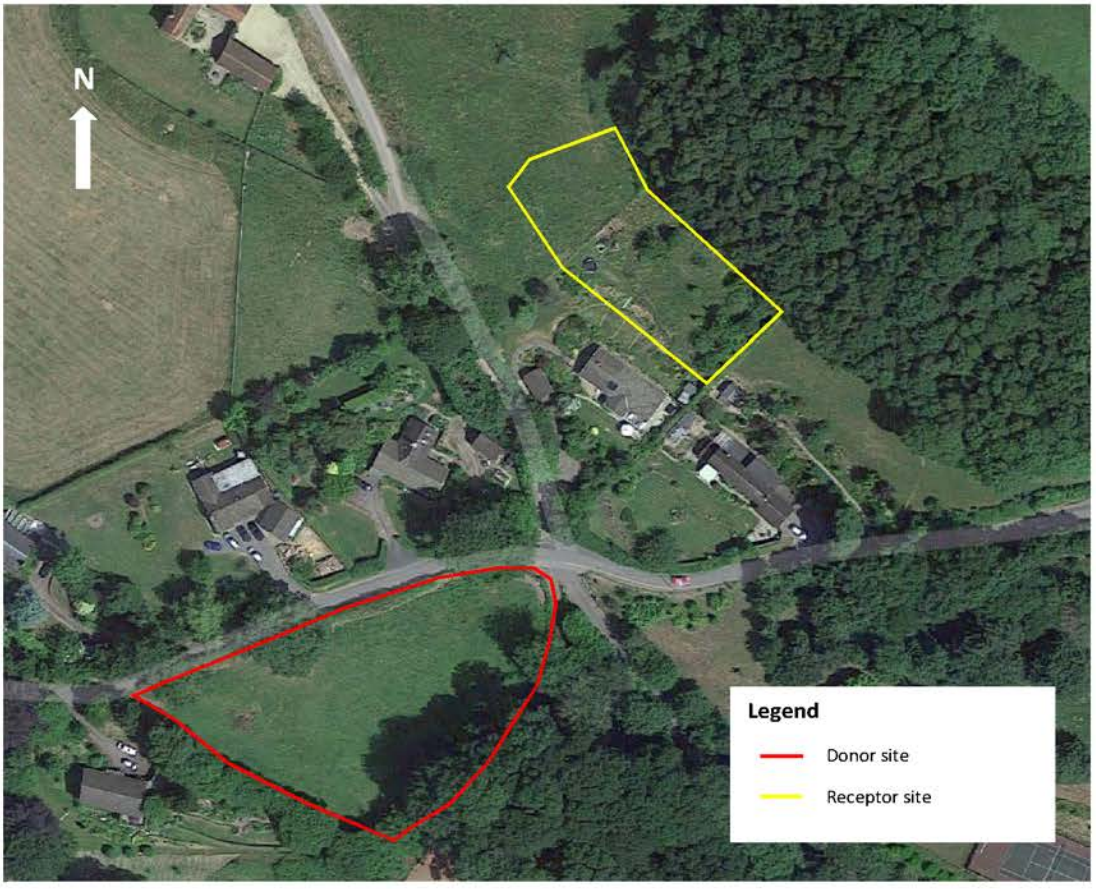
Smith, N.D. 1990. The Ecology of the Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* in Southern England. Unpublished MPhil Thesis, University of Southampton.

Appendix 1:Donor Site and Proposed receptor site location plan with mitigation



SITE AT KERNE BRIDGE

2019/061

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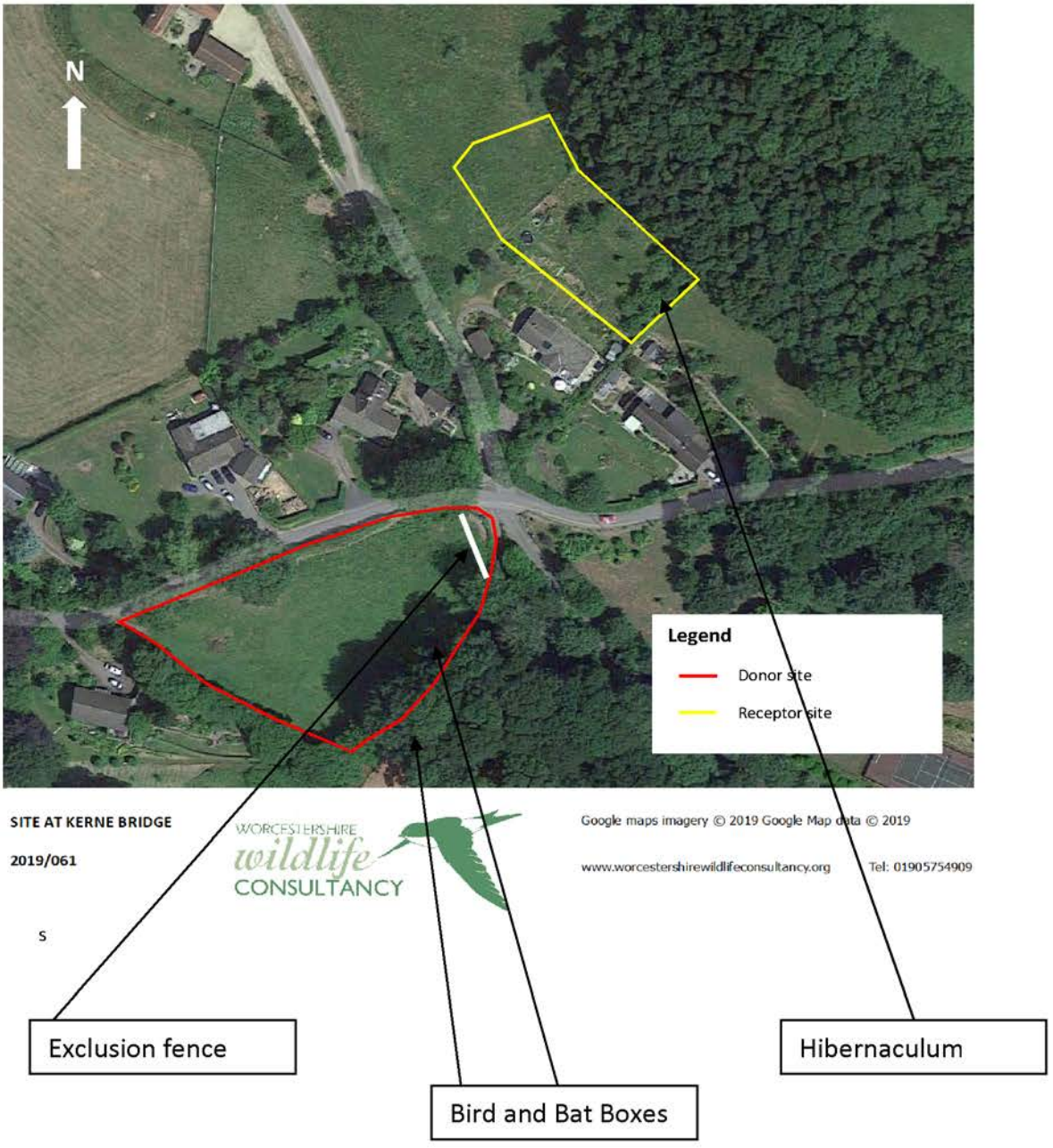
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Legend
Donor site
Receptor site
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Exclusion fence
Bird and Bat Boxes
Hibernaculum

Appendix 2: Site photographs

Donor Site

Plate 1. The main field

Plate 2. Southern view of the site

Plate 3. Lower end of the garden.

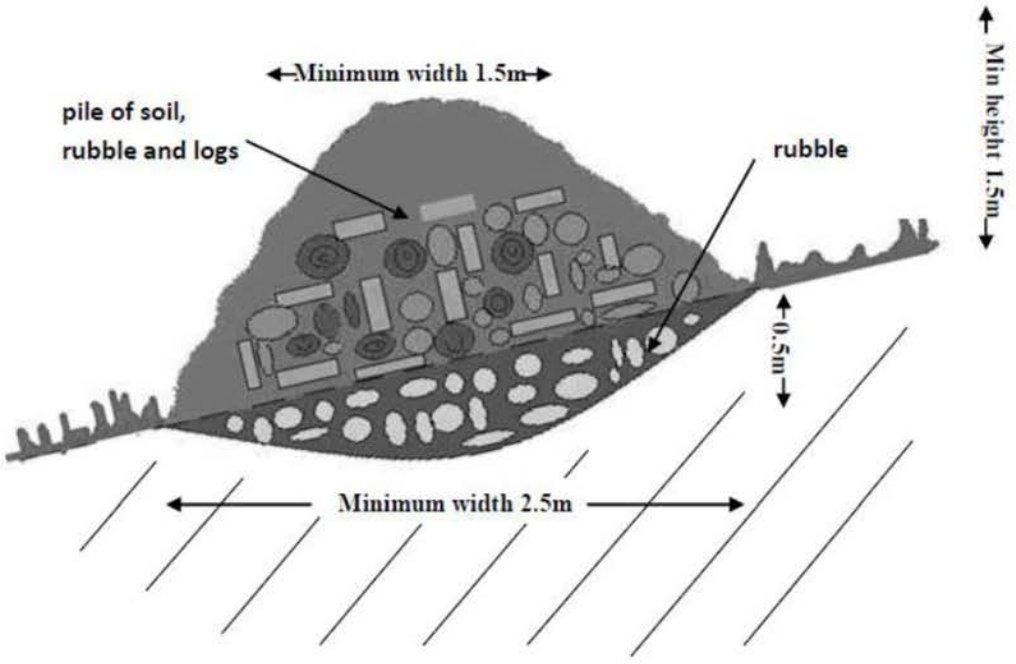
Plate 4. Slow-worms found in initial visit in July 2019 by WWC

Plate 5. The lane that runs along western and northern boundary – considered to be a significant barrier.

RECEPTOR SITE

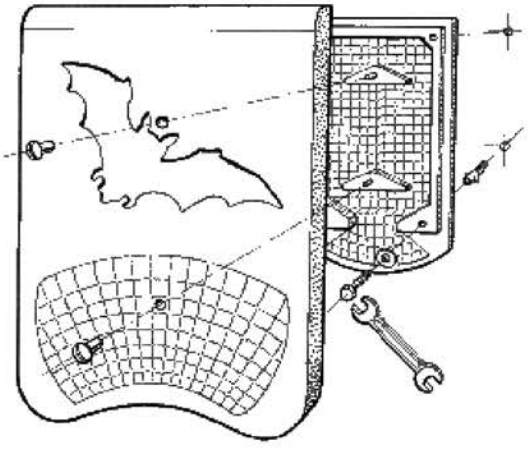
Plates 1-2 View of receptor area showing variety of habitats, grass in fields to be left ungrazed to allow it to grow tall

Appendix 3: Hibernacula specification



Cross section of proposed slow worm hibernaculum © Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy 2013

Schwegler 1FF bat box

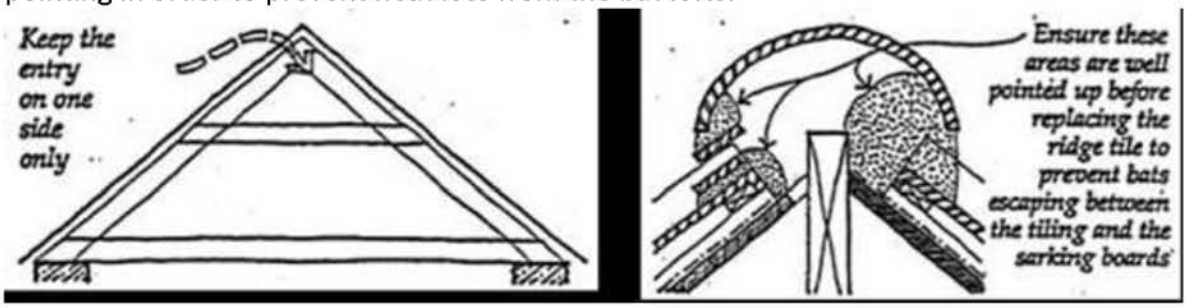


Schwegler 1WQ Summer & Winter bat box

	Schwegler 1FR Maintenance-free long bat box for installation into a wall.
	Schwegler N27 Bat box for buildings or underneath bridges.
	Schwegler 1FE Build into a wall to provide access to existing cavities.

Cross section of modified ridge tile

Raised ridge tiles are easily modified standard ridge tiles, which are installed leaving a narrow slit on one side (ideally south for this site) of the roof aspect (see diagram below). Ridge tiles will be fitted to allow crevice-dwelling bats to access the space under the raised ridge tile but access to within roof spaces will be prevented by pointing in order to prevent heat loss from the bat lofts.

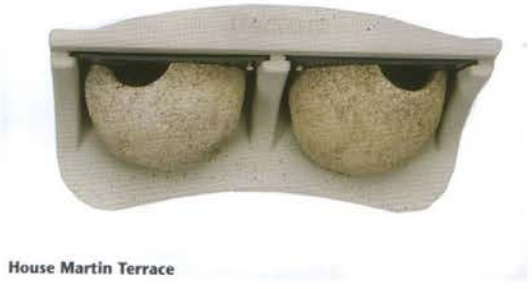


Diagrammatic view of ridge tile and cross section through ridge tile showing access point (taken from Scottish Natural Heritage 1996). Bitumastic lining must be used near/on the ridge beam to ensure bats can only have contact with this type of membrane to avoid any possible entanglement with a breathable membrane.

Schwegler 2FN bat box for installation in trees

Various designs of swift boxes

House sparrow terrace box



House Martin terrace box

Examples of a insect hotels

Hedgehogs

An example of a homemade hedgehog house, which can be used either for hibernation or summer use if near a regular food source

Planting Choices for Wildlife

Many wildlife species benefit greatly from considerate planting choices that still meet our practical and aesthetic needs. Plants and trees provide food for wildlife as well as places to nest and rest. Vegetation providing a variety of these functions creates an environment more beneficial for wildlife.

Non native species

Native species provide the best habitat for UK wildlife but there are also many non-native species, which are single flowering and/or provide fruits/nuts/seeds that can be used as food sources for insects, birds and small mammals. When using these non-native species in planting schemes, care should be taken to avoid invasive species such as Cotoneaster and Rhododendron. This is especially important when sites are adjacent to open countryside particularly nature reserves.


Fire thorn *Pyracantha coccinea*

Uses of Wildlife Planting

Wildlife value can be easily incorporated into visually pleasing and useful green areas and amenity spaces, such as borders, grass verges and tree screens.

Attractive Borders: Well selected decorative borders can be valuable for many insects and birds. Native plants can be mixed with single flowering ornamental species to add aesthetic interest and increase the flowering period of a planting scheme.

Shrubs and hedges: Native spiky species like blackthorn and hawthorn are effective barriers when used in hedges. They also provide an attractive feature at all times of year especially when in blossom and fruit. Bushy areas of foliage provide useful nesting and feeding areas for birds and small mammals, as well as foraging/commuting corridors for bats.

Grasses mixes and verges: Leaving uncut areas of suitable grasses provides great wildlife value and is economical to manage. Diverse grassy areas and verges also create an attractive human environment with different flowers and colours. There are a range of native grass and flower mixes for various soil types available on the market.


Wild flower grass mix

Species Selection

There are wildlife friendly species suitable for all situations, from fields, verges, shady corners or small gardens. Listed below are native wildlife friendly plant species organised by type and suitability for different locations.

Large Trees

Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*
Beech *Fagus sylvatica*
English Elm *Ulmus procera*
Oak *Quercus robur* or *Q. petraea*
Small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*
White willow *Salix alba*
Wild cherry *Prunus avium*


White willow

Medium/small trees

Alder *Alnus glutinosa*
Aspen *Populus tremula*
Crab apple *Malus sylvestris*
Field maple *Acer campestre*
Holly *Ilex aquifolium*
Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*
Silver birch *Betula pendula*
Yew *Taxus baccata*


Tussocky grassland

Native shrubs

Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*
Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*
Elder *Sambucus nigra*
Guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*
Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*
Hazel *Corylus avellana*


Blackthorn

Plants for shady areas

Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon*
Betony *Stachys officinalis*
Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*
Bugle *Ajuga reptans*
Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*
Ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea*
Lily of the valley *Convallaria majalis*
Lords-and ladies/cuckoopint *Arum maculatum*
Nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*
Primrose *Primula vulgaris*
Sweet violet *Viola odorata*
Wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*

Plants for marshy areas & pond edges

Bugle *Ajuga reptans*
Hemp agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*
Marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*
Marsh woundwort *Stachys palustris*
Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*
Purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*
Ragged robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*
Water avens *Geum rivale*
Water forget-me-not *Myosotis scorpoides*
Water mint *Mentha aquatica*
Water violet *Hottonia palustris*
Yellow flag *Iris pseudacorus*

Beneficial cultivated plants (generally non-natives)

Grecian windflower *Anemone blanda*
Angelica *Angelica archangelica*
Aubretia *Aubretia deltoidea*
California poppy *Eschscholtzia californica*
Candytuft *Iberis sempervirens*
Christmas rose *Helleborus niger*
Cosmos *Cosmos bipinnatus*
Evening primrose *Oenothera biennis*
Fleabane *Erigeron spp.*
Forget-me-not *Myosotis spp.*
French marigold *Tagetes patula*
Globe thistle *Echinops ritro*
Grape hyacinth *Muscari botryodes*
Hollyhock *Althaea rosea*
Honesty *Lunaria rediviva*
Ice plant *Sedum spectabile*
Lenten rose *Helleborus orientalis*
Tree mallow *Lavatera spp.*
Michaelmas daisy *Aster nova-belgii*
Mint *Mentha x rotundifolia*
Perennial cornflower *Centaurea montana*
Perennial sunflower *Helianthus decapetalus*
Phlox *Phlox paniculata*
Poached-egg plant *Limnanthes douglasii*
Red valerian *Centranthus ruber*
Snapdragon *Antirrhinum majus*
Spring crocus *Crocus chrysanthus* and hybrids
Sweet alyssum *Lobularia maritima*
Sweet bergamot *Monarda didyma*
Sweet William *Dianthus barbatus*
Tobacco plant *Nicotiana affinis*
Wallflower *Cheiranthus cheiri*
Alpine rock-cress *Arabis alpina*
Winter aconite *Eranthis hyemalis*
Yellow alyssum *Alyssum saxatile*

Native wildflowers for borders

Agrimony *Agrimonia eupatoria*
Betony *Stachys officinalis*
Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*
Chicory *Cichorium intybus*
Chives *Allium schoenoprasum*
Common poppy *Papaver rhoeas*
Corncockle *Agrostemma githago*
Cornflower *Centaurea cyanus*
Corn marigold *Chrysanthemum segetum*
Cowslip *Primula veris*
Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis*
Dame's-violet *Hesperis matronalis*
Devil's-bit scabious *Succisa pratensis*
Field scabious *Knautia arvensis*
Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*
Goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea*
Great mullein *Verbascum thapsus*
Greater knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*
Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*
Herb-robert *Geranium robertianum*
Lady's bedstraw *Galium verum*
Marjoram *Origanum vulgare*
Meadow cranesbill *Geranium pratense*
Common mallow *Malva sylvestris*
Oxeye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*
Primrose *Primula vulgaris*
Red campion *Silene dioica*
Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis*
Spiked speedwell *Veronica spicata*
Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare*
Teasel *Dipsacus fullonum*
Toadflax *Linaria vulgaris*
White campion *Silene alba*
Wild thyme *Thymus drucei*
Yellow loosestrife *Lysimachia vulgaris*


Marjoram


Cornflower


Perennial sunflower

Trees and shrubs

Common name	Scientific name	Use
Apple	*Malus domestica*	Orchard , group planting
Blackthorn	*Prunus spinosa*	Hedgerow
Common hawthorn	*Crataegus monogyna*	Hedgerow
Crab apple	*Malus sylvestris*	Hedgerow
Damson	*Prunus domestica* ssp *insititia*	Hedgerow, orchard, group planting
Dogwood	*Cornus sanguinea*	Hedgerow
Field maple	*Acer campestre*	Hedgerow, specimen
Guelder rose	*Viburnum opulus*	Hedgerow
Hazel	*Corylus avellana*	Hedgerow
Holly	*Ilex aquifolium*	Hedgerow
Midland hawthorn	*Crataegus laevigata*	Hedgerow
Pear	*Pyrus communis*	Orchard, hedgerow, group planting
Pedunculate oak	*Quercus robur*	Hedgerow , specimen
Plum	*Prunus domestica*	Orchard , group planting
Rowan	*Sorbus aucuparia*	Hedgerow, specimen
Small-leaved lime	*Tilia cordata*	Hedgerow, specimen
Spindle	*Euonymus europaeus*	Hedgerow
Wayfaring tree	*Viburnum lantana*	Hedgerow
Wych elm	*Ulmus glabra*	Hedgerow

Note: This list is merely indicative and a selection of species should be chosen

Appendix 4:Wildlife planting

8th July 2019

Mrs J Sheldon
Southbank
Leys Hill
Ross-on-Wye
Herefordshire
HR9 5QU

Mr Joshua Evans BSc (Hons)
Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy
Lower Smite Farm
Smite Hill
Hindlip
Worcestershire
WS3 8SZ

Dear Mr Evans,

Ref: C J Winney Development Site, Leys Hill – proposed slow worm receptor site

This letter is authorisation that I, Jan Sheldon, agree to the use of Southbank, Leys Hill as a receptor site for slow worms.

The terms and conditions on which this authorisation is granted is in accordance with the proposal of the slow worm translocation document prepared by Worcestershire Wildlife Consultancy on behalf of Mr C J Winney of C J Winney in regard to the above-mentioned location.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Jan Sheldon
Owner
Southbank
Leys Hill
HR9 5 QU

Appendix 5: Ecological experience

Joshua Evans BSc (Hons) MCIEEM *Consultancy Ecologist*

Joshua joined the team in 2008, previously working as an independent consultant, prior to that he worked for the National Trust and Forestry Commission as an ecological surveyor. For the last 22 years he has worked in both the conservation and consultancy sector. Many of these years were in woodland conservation and management. He is an experienced ecologist with particular expertise in terrestrial invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles and bats and holds Natural England (NE) and Natural Resources Wales licences for bats, dormice, great crested newts, white-clawed crayfish and barn owls.