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Environment Agency

River Wye Access and Interpretation

Improvements Project

Backney Bridge Canoe Launch

Environmental Report

Supporting document for Planning Application – April 2010

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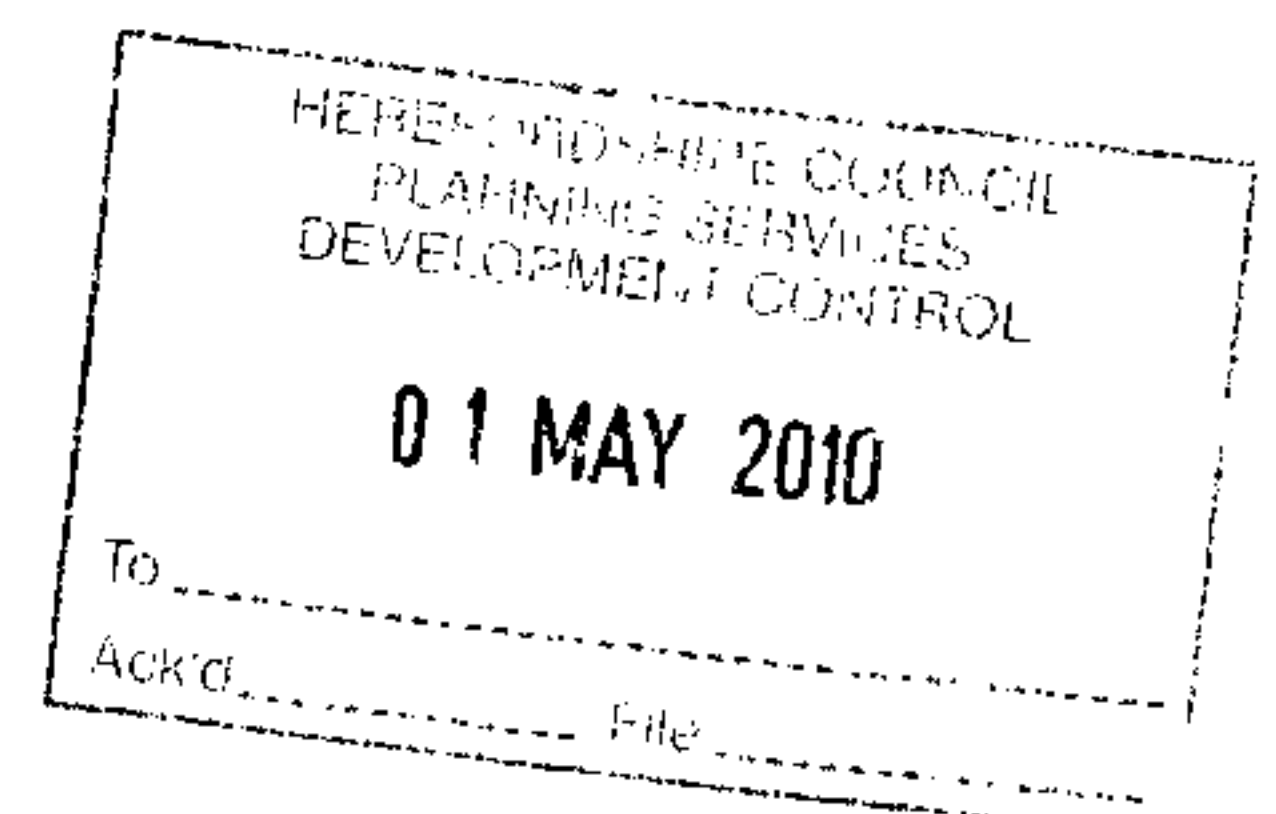
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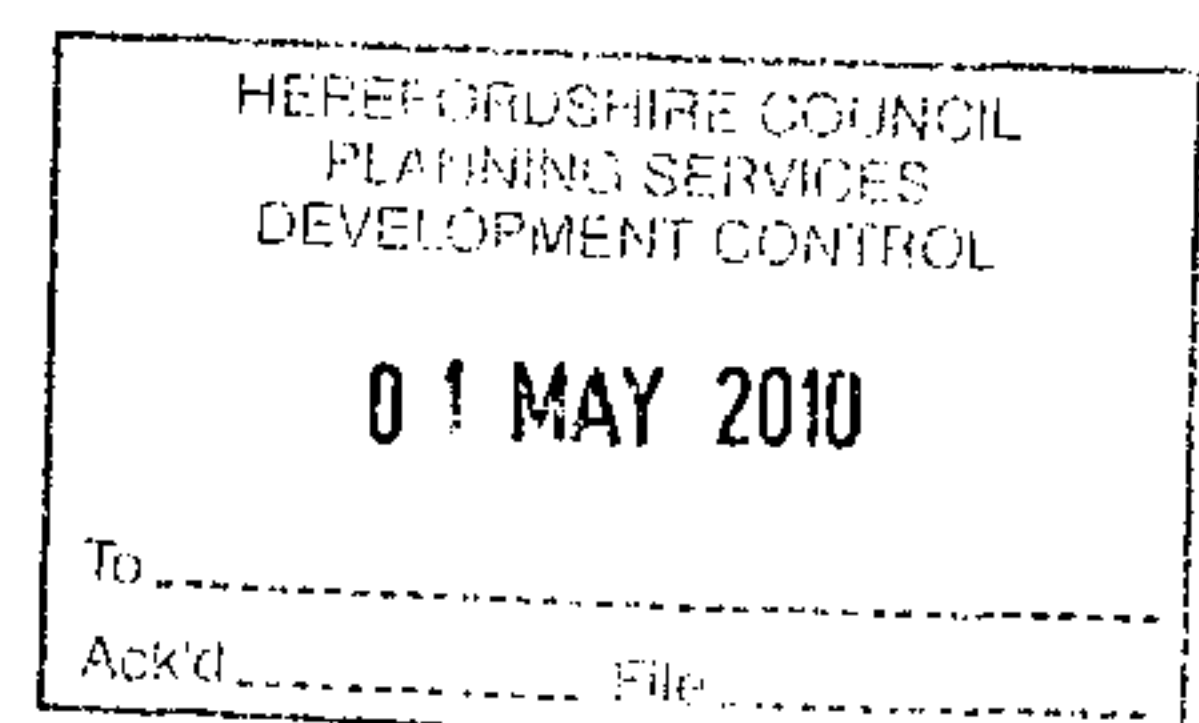
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1. Introduction

The Environment Agency (EA), in partnership with the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Herefordshire County Council, is proposing to install a new canoe launch facility on the River Wye at Backney Bridge. We are submitting an application to Herefordshire County Council for planning permission for this development. This document details the environmental matters that we have considered in preparation of this application.

The introduction of a canoe launch at the Backney Bridge site will achieve a number of aims. It will encourage sustainable use of the river as a recreational resource and will enable more people to enjoy the natural assets of the Wye Valley. In addition, the project will encourage the adoption of healthier lifestyles by supporting public participation in active outdoor recreation.

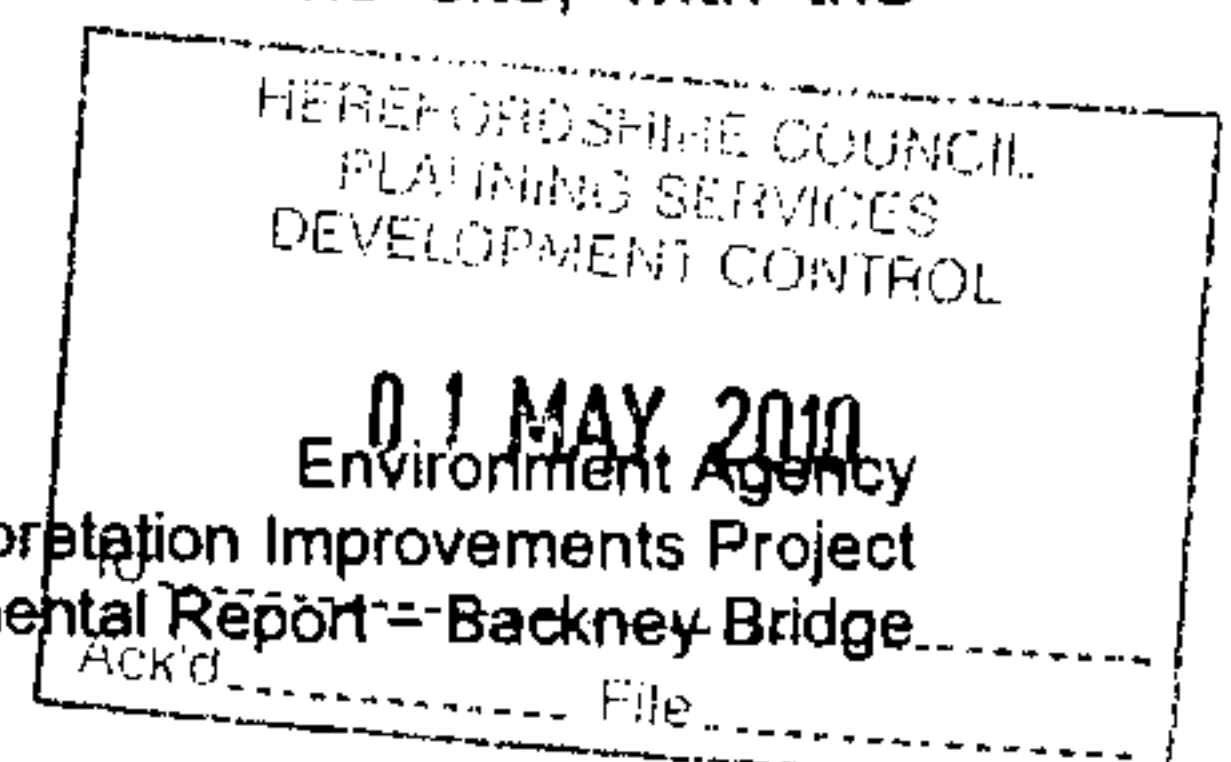
This canoe access project forms part of a wider partnership project (River Wye Access and Interpretation Improvements Project) to improve recreational access to, and sustainable use of, the River Wye. As part of this project, proposals have also been developed to undertake improvement works to two existing access facilities at Ross-on-Wye and Kerne Bridge. Permission for these proposals will be sought separately from Herefordshire County Council. However, where these proposals have the potential to act in-combination with the project at Backney Bridge to have an environmental effect, these issues have been considered in this Environmental Report.

1.1 Site Location

The project proposes to install a single, small-scale canoe launch on the northern bank of the River Wye at Backney Bridge (NGR: SO 58370 27130). The site chosen for the canoe launch is an existing picnic site owned and managed by Herefordshire County Council. The site is situated approximately two kilometres north-west of Ross-on-Wye (see Figure 1).

Backney Bridge is on the line of the disused Hereford-Ross-Gloucester Railway and the original railway bridge abutments are still present and cross the river at this site. The proposed canoe launch is to be located adjacent to, and immediately downstream of, one of the bridge abutments on the northern bank of the river (see Figure 2). The main picnic site and car park are located immediately north of the river, on the site of the disused railway embankment. Access to the river bank from the main picnic site is facilitated via a short footpath and through a single gate. Benches are present on the river bank to enable public enjoyment of the area.

The surrounding area is rural in nature and comprises a mixture of low intensity agricultural land, small pockets of woodland and private properties. The topography of the area is undulating with elevated land to the north of the river and a wide, flat floodplain located along the southern bank. Immediately to the east of the site is a small area of land used for sheep grazing, beyond which is Backney Common. Access to these parcels of land is via a gated access track located along the eastern boundary of the picnic site. There are a number of residential properties located within 500m of the site, with the nearest property located approximately 250m to the north-west.



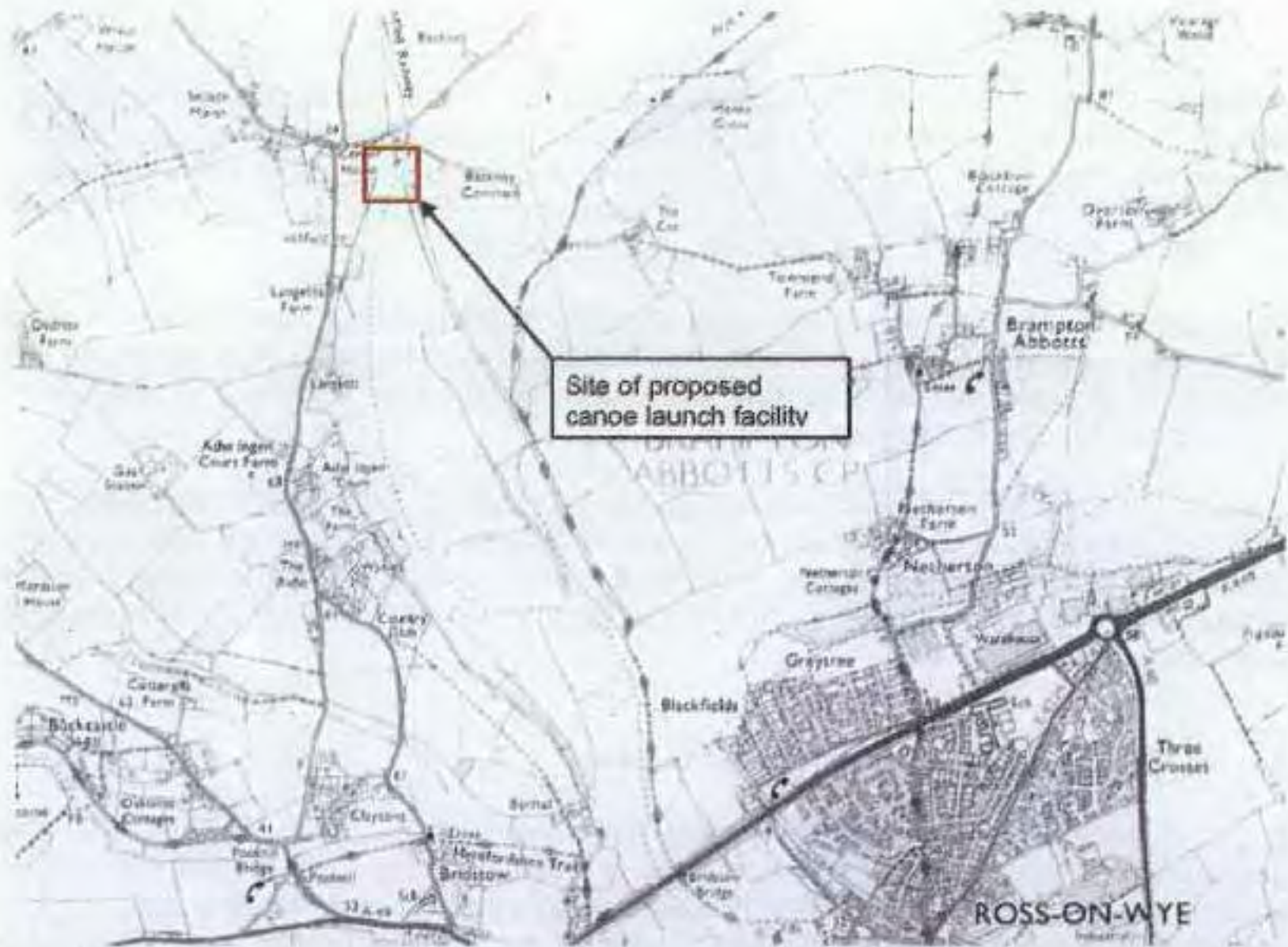


Figure 1 – Site location plan of the proposed canoe launch facility at Backney Bridge

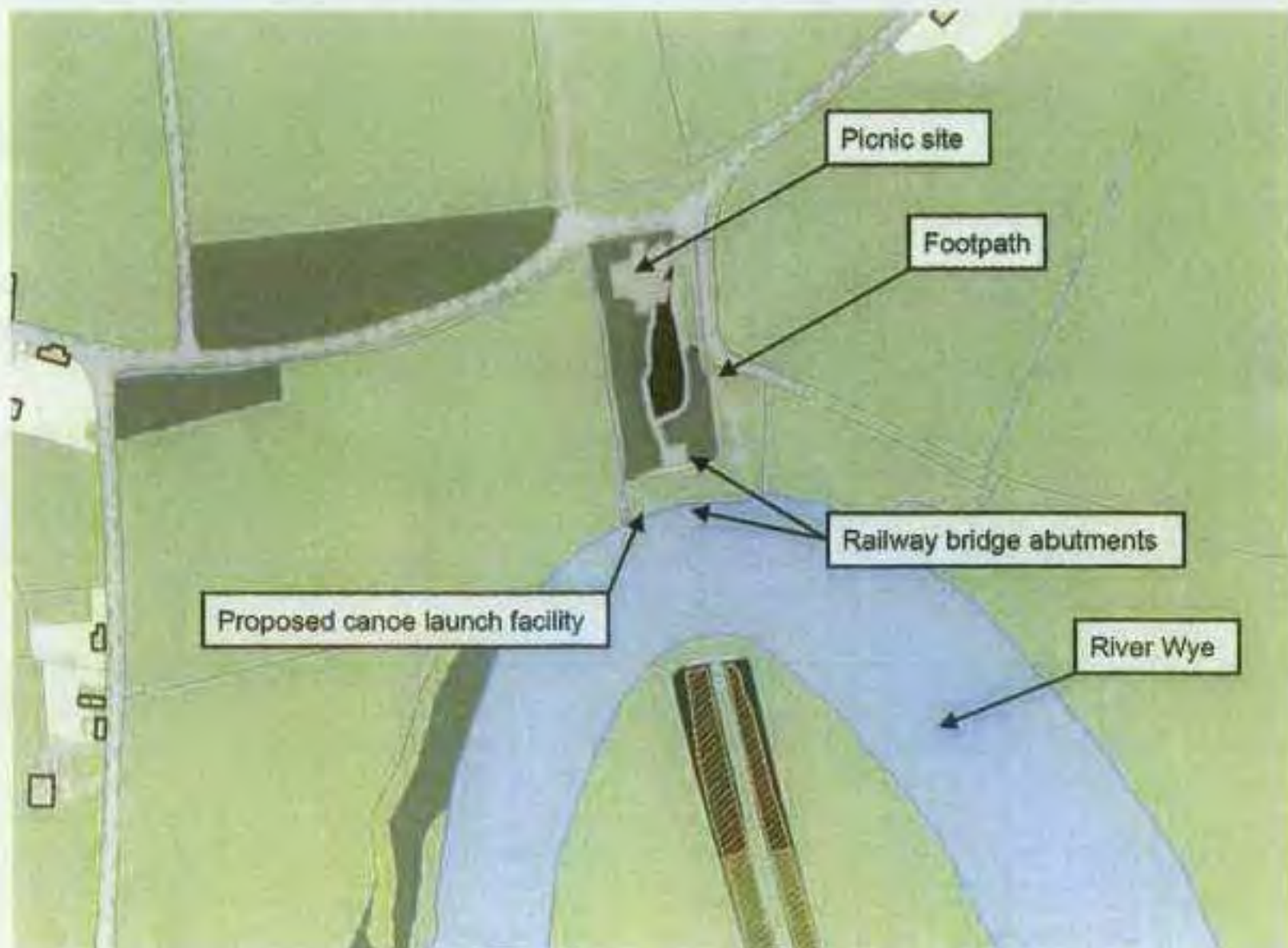


Figure 2 – Detailed location of the proposed canoe launch facility at Backney Bridge

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1.2 Regulatory Context

Under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 1999 (SI 99/293) any development that requires planning permission must be screened to consider the likely effect on the existing environment. If the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the environment an Environmental Statement must be prepared containing a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

We requested a formal screening opinion from Herefordshire County Council who confirmed that the proposed development will not require a statutory EIA as the works are unlikely to have significant adverse effects on the River Wye (see Appendix 1). Therefore, we have not undertaken a statutory EIA.

However, the Environment Agency has a duty to assess the environmental implications of all our activities and, as a matter of good practice, voluntarily undertake an environmental assessment for all of our works and activities that may result in a physical change to the environment. Therefore we have compiled this Environmental Report for submission with the planning application.

1.3 Purpose and Structure of the Document

We have assessed the likely environmental impact of the proposed project, the significance of those impacts and the mitigation measures needed to reduce the affects. This Environmental Report describes this assessment process and is being submitted in conjunction with the planning application to support our proposal for the construction of a canoe launch facility at Backney Bridge.

2. Background

2.1 Nature and Background to the Project

A public right of navigation on the Rivers Wye and Lugg extends from Bigsweir Bridge upstream to Hay Town Bridge on the main River Wye, and on the River Lugg between its confluence with the Wye and Presteigne Town Bridge.

Prior to 2002, there was no body or authority with powers to manage the use of this public right of navigation. As a result, there was a potential for conflict between recreational users. This risked damage to the landscape and nature conservation qualities of the River Wye. In 2002, the Environment Agency became the Navigation Authority for the River Wye and River Lugg under the Wye Navigation Order.

The combined length of the non-tidal navigation on the two rivers is approximately 185km. The River Wye is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The river, downstream of Hereford, flows through the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There are numerous features of historic interest located along the river and the lower Wye is designated as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. The river is also recognised as a nationally important salmon fishery.

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The River Wye and the Wye Valley are used widely for recreational purposes including, but not limited to canoeing, walking and fishing. Under the provisions of the Order, the Environment Agency has a responsibility to promote recreation and navigation on the river. The lower reaches of the River Wye, including the section between Hereford and Monmouth, are popular for day canoe trips, which occur predominantly during the summer months in the evenings and at weekends. There are several hire companies along the river with boat, kayak and canoe hire available for full or half days with or without instruction.

The need for new and improved canoe facilities is well reported and is an aspiration of the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee and the Environment Agency as the Navigation Authority for the river. A key driver for this is the need to spread recreational activity throughout the river catchment to reduce the load currently experienced by 'honey-pot' sites where recreational activity has reached its capacity. The Environment Agency has set out its responsibilities and objectives towards recreation and navigation within The Wye Waterway Plan, which was produced in broad consultation with local communities, and interest groups and organisations. One of the main aims of the Plan is to "promote better access and information for canoeists, rafters and users of small craft". This aim is reflected in a key action of the Plan to provide three additional access points onto the river by 2010.

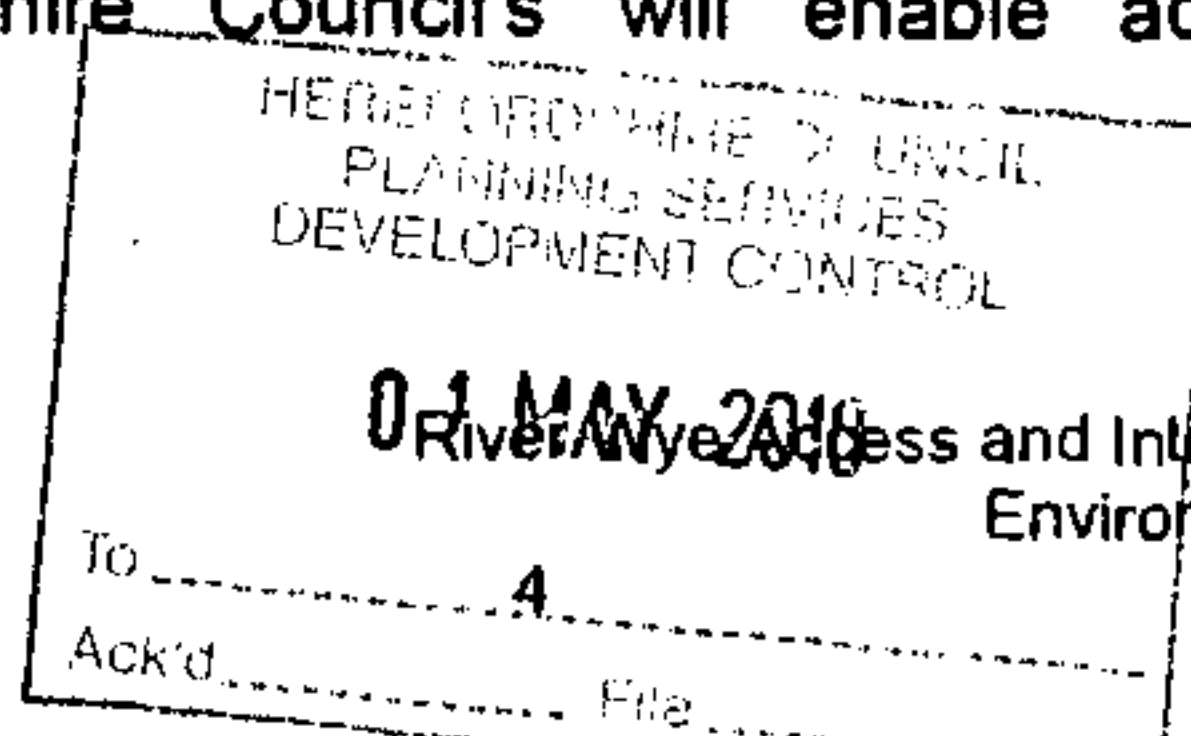
Herefordshire County Council recognises the pressure on the existing access facilities and recognises a need to develop the sites. This is highlighted in the Herefordshire Council Policy Statement for the use of the Wye and the Lugg (2006) which states, "There is broad consensus between relevant organisations and the governing bodies for sport that alternatives for further access points, principally those with disabilities, should be investigated".

Furthermore the Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2009-2014 Strategic Objective WV-R1 encourages sustainable recreation and access particularly for (amongst others) canoeing.

This River Wye Access and Interpretation Improvements Project has been developed to help achieve the aspirations of the three partner organisations and consists of the following proposals:

- Creation of a new canoe launch facility at Backney Bridge picnic site.
- Refurbishment of an existing canoe launch facility at Ross-on-Wye, to include potential for disability access and improved canoe launch facilities
- Refurbishment of an existing canoe launch facility at Kerne Bridge, to include potential for disability access and improved canoe launch facilities

In addition, installation of safety signs, interpretation panels and biodiversity enhancement works are proposed to be carried out at all three sites. The project will also include the production of informative and educational material on the Wye Valley in the form of a Canoeists Guide Book. This will be a tough, waterproof, and reusable publication provided by canoe hire operators under deposit for its return and will interpret the area's history, wildlife and geology. A canoeist's 'Code of Conduct' leaflet and posters will be produced for distribution by canoe hire operators. Use of websites including Canoe Hire operators, the AONB's and Herefordshire Council's will enable additional dissemination of educational material.



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This Environmental Report has been prepared in support of the creation of a new canoe launch facility at Backney Bridge, which will be subject to a planning application to Herefordshire County Council. Proposals for the refurbishment of existing launch facilities at Ross-on-Wye and Kerne Bridge will be developed separately and will be subject to individual planning applications and environmental reporting.

Since the publication of the Wye Waterway Plan, no new canoe launches have been built on the River Wye despite a perceived increase in the level of usage for waterborne recreation and leisure. In fact, within the surrounding area two privately owned canoe launches have recently closed at Lydbrook and Huntsham Bridge (in addition to two others further upstream) leading to an increased strain on existing sites/resources.

This Improvements Project will support the objectives of other stakeholders and strategic plans developed to promote sustainable recreational use of the river. It has also taken into account the findings of the River Wye Regeneration Study undertaken by WS Atkins on behalf of Herefordshire County Council in 2006, and the Feasibility Assessment for the Provision of Improved Canoe Access to the River Wye, also undertaken by WS Atkins in 2000 on behalf of the Environment Agency. Both studies identified the potential for a canoe access point at Backney Bridge.

2.2 Project Design

This project proposes to install a single bespoke canoe launch facility on the northern bank of the River Wye at the Backney Bridge picnic site.

The sensitive and rural nature of the site at Backney Bridge has been one of the principle factors steering the development of the proposed design, construction and management of the canoe launch. The small-scale of the proposed canoe launch and its proposed construction materials have been specifically chosen to reduce the risk of an adverse impact upon the river bank and visual amenity of the area.

The project aims to provide a facility for individuals and small groups to access and egress the river. It is not an objective of the project to facilitate large scale or commercial use of the site. The size of the access facility has therefore been minimised to deter large scale use of the site, and no improvements are proposed to improve the general access to the picnic site or from the picnic site to the river bank. Further information on the anticipated scale of use is provided in section 2.3 below.

The canoe launch comprises a single stepped staircase, located on the river bank approximately 10 metres downstream of the disused railway bridge abutment. The staircase consists of a set of 10 timber steps approximately one metre in width, which widen to a set of four concrete steps, three metres in width and faced with stone, at the base of staircase (see accompanying Drawing 09204-01_B).

The timber steps will be made from hardwood timber, sourced from a local and sustainable supplier in accordance with the Environment Agency's sustainable procurement policy. Hardwood timber is required because of its tensile strength and durability when submerged in water. The timber steps comprise a single, prefabricated unit, which will be fixed to the river bank with a series of galvanised steel ground anchors (metal pins), 1.5 metres in length. The set of concrete steps, at the base of the staircase, will form the main launching point from the staircase. The steps will be made from concrete to ensure the structural stability of the staircase. The steps will be faced with

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stone, so when exposed during low summer flows they match the appearance of the adjacent stone railway bridge abutment.

This form of design has several significant benefits; most notably that the use of a prefabricated design minimises the scale of excavation and re-profiling of the river bank necessary to construct the canoe launch. The use of concrete and stone in the structure has been minimised to facilitate decommissioning of the facility at the end of its design life.

Some small-scale bank re-profiling will be necessary within the footprint of the staircase to provide the required bank profile to match the angle of the staircase. However, the design of the staircase and the choice of location for it have been chosen to minimise the amount of bank re-profiling work required. To prevent erosion of the river bank either side of the canoe launch, a biodegradable, pre-seeded fibre blanket, approximately 2 metres in width will be installed on either side of the staircase to protect the underlying river bank. The blanket will promote natural vegetation growth, which is considered the most effective control of soil erosion.

To ensure public safety at the site, and the safety of other users of the river, safety signs will be installed on the river bank close to the canoe launch to reduce the potential for an accident at the site. Warning signs will be installed at the picnic site car park and on the approach to the canoe launch, to discourage use of the canoe launch by the general public (i.e., non-canoeists). A handrail will not be installed down the staircase due to the safety risk this may present to canoeists using the launch to access or egress the river during high flows.

The provision of disability access at the site was considered during the design of the project. However, this option was not taken forward because of the comparatively large structure that would be required to facilitate access and surfacing works that would be necessary from the car park to the river bank. Given the sensitivity of this location, it was considered that such a structure would not be appropriate for this site and so the design has progressed without the provision of disability access.

Construction of the scheme is programmed to last approximately 10 days. On completion of construction, the canoe launch will be owned, managed and maintained by the Parks, Countryside and Leisure Team within Herefordshire County Council.

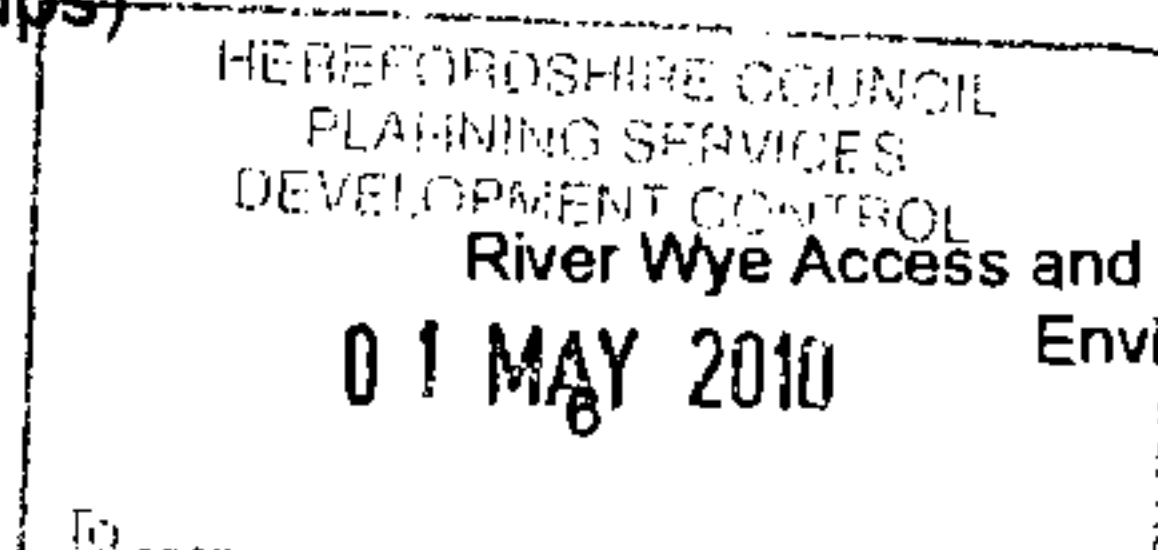
2.3 Project Objectives

The overall objective of the River Wye Access and Interpretation Improvements Project is to deliver improved canoe access at three sites on the River Wye. This includes the provision of a new access point at Backney Bridge and refurbishment of the existing access points at Kerne Bridge and Ross-on-Wye.

At Backney Bridge, the objective is to provide a new, small-scale canoe launch for use by individuals and small groups.

In doing this we aim to:

- Encourage sustainable use of the river as a recreational resource without detriment to the wildlife designations.
- Enable more people to enjoy the natural assets of the Wye Valley (particularly under-represented groups)



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- Encourage the adoption of healthier lifestyles by supporting public participation in active outdoor recreation
- Safeguard and support businesses dependant or supported by canoe recreation
- Inform and educate the public on the natural asset base, fostering care and respect for the natural environment
- Bring about environmental benefits through reduction in leisure travel by car and redistribution of visitors
- Promote harmony between river users

We anticipate that the canoe launch will be used predominantly at weekends and evenings during the summer months when the picnic site is also being used. Due to the steepness of the river bank at Backney Bridge and the position of the concrete launch steps, the launch will become submerged during moderately high river flows, at which point the structure will not be suitable for use. This will further limit use to periods when the river is experiencing relatively low flows. Given the small size of the proposed canoe launch and the limitations on use due to river flows, it is not anticipated that the site will experience a significant increase in footfall. As such, no associated transport issues have been identified and this project does not include provisions to increase car parking capacity or alter the existing site access arrangements.

It is anticipated that the relatively small size of the canoe launch will discourage commercial use of the site. Access to the Backney Bridge car park is already limited by a height restriction barrier at its entrance, preventing access to this area by canoe operators using large vehicles and trailers. Access to the river bank by vehicles is only possible via a lockable gate. Consequently, the nearest point of access for large vehicles will be in excess of 150 metres from the canoe launch. Agreement will be sought with the local commercial canoe hire operators not to use the canoe launch, so as to further discourage commercial use of the site, whilst the proposed improvements to the existing canoe launches downstream at Ross-on-Wye and Kerne Bridge will help facilitate continued commercial usage of these sites, further deterring commercial use of the proposed canoe launch at Backney Bridge. Additionally, all associated literature and website information will advise that the Backney site is unsuitable for large scale or commercial use for both access and egress.

Monitoring will be undertaken once the site has been constructed to determine the usage of the site and the canoe launch, including numbers and types of canoeists, to identify whether the objectives of the project have been met.

2.4 Construction of the Canoe Launch

Construction of the scheme is programmed to last approximately 10 days and will be scheduled to avoid the peak summer months when visitor numbers to the picnic site are at their maximum.

The proposed canoe launch has been designed to minimise the scale of construction works required to install the facility. The majority of the structure will be prefabricated, minimising the scale of excavation and re-profiling of the river bank necessary to construct the canoe launch. The use of concrete and stone in the structure has also been minimised to facilitate decommissioning of the facility at the end of its design life.

A Construction Method Statement, together with a Construction Environmental Management Plan, which will detail all measures to be put in place during construction of

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the scheme to minimise the risks to the environment and to ensure public health and safety, will be agreed with Herefordshire County Council prior to the start of construction.

The bottom steps of the canoe launch will be constructed from concrete to provide an anchor for the steps and ensure sufficient stability and durability for the structure. Any risks associated with the installation of the concrete will be managed through adherence to appropriate pollution prevention methods, to ensure that no pollution events occur. All measures to avoid an adverse impact will be set out in a Construction Environmental Management Plan, which will be adhered to at all times during construction.

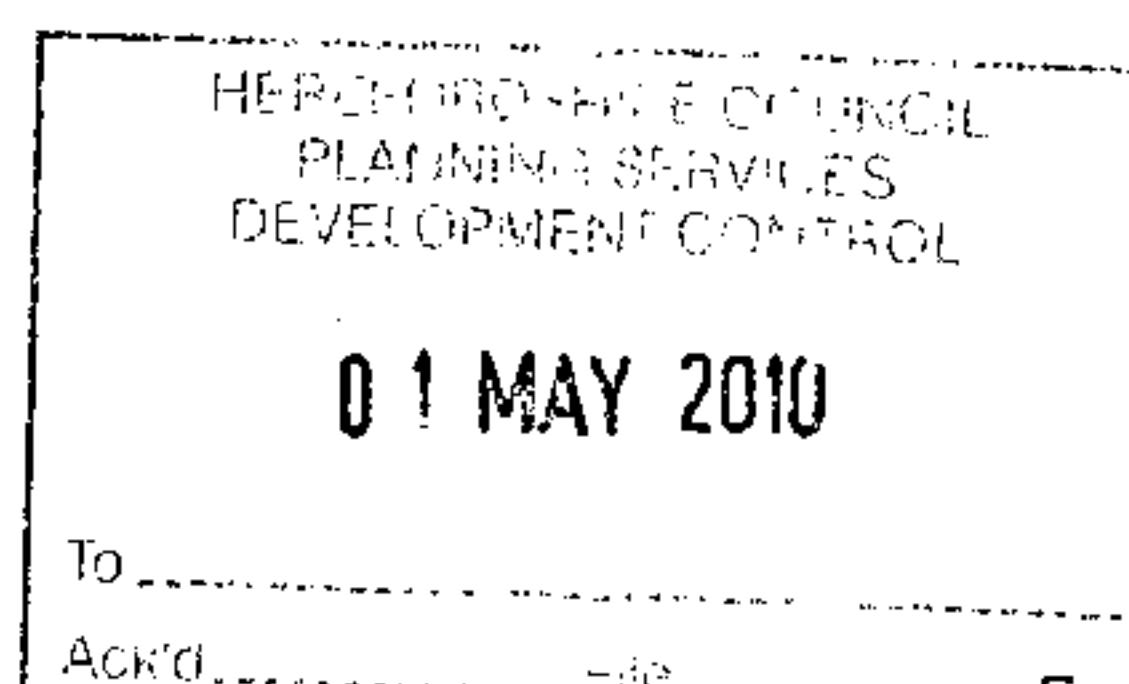
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3. Scope of the Assessment

Following an initial desk study exercise and consultation with the Environment Agency, Herefordshire County Council, Natural England and other stakeholders, a number of potential environmental issues have been identified.

Table 1 details the results of this EIA scoping exercise. Those issues identified as having the potential to cause significant effects on the environment were considered further through more detailed assessment, which is detailed in Section 5.



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Receptor	Baseline	Potential Effect
Population and Human Health	<p>The proposed canoe launch is located on the northern bank of the River Wye at an existing picnic site. The nearest residential property is located approximately 250m to the west of the proposed access facility and there are approximately 10 properties within 500m of the site.</p> <p>The river bank forms part of the Backney Bridge picnic site, owned and managed by Herefordshire County Council. The site is a popular recreational area especially during the summer months and at weekends, and access to the river bank is facilitated from the main picnic site area via a short footpath and access gate.</p> <p>The Wye Valley Walk, a long-distance walking route along the river, is located to the south of the river, and passes within 600m of the proposed access facility.</p> <p>The River Wye is used extensively for a variety of recreational activities. Canoeing, boating and rowing are popular activities and regularly occur along the section of river past Backney Bridge. Angling is also a popular recreational activity in the area and the waters immediately upstream and downstream of the site are private fisheries. There are significant benefits to human health and wellbeing associated with these recreational activities.</p>	<p>The canoe launch has the potential to make a positive contribution to UK Governmental and multi-agency objectives to improve human health and wellbeing by providing new opportunities to enjoy recreational activities on the river. This facility will be accessible to all, including the local population.</p> <p>The proposed scheme will link in with the existing picnic facilities to enhance enjoyment of the site.</p> <p>It is understood that informal access to the river currently occurs at the site. By formalising access through the provision of this access facility, safe access and egress from the river will be provided.</p> <p>No impacts on public rights of way, including the Wye Valley Walk, are anticipated and so this aspect has not been considered further. Temporary closure of the section of the picnic site adjacent to the canoe launch will be necessary in order to ensure public safety during construction of the scheme.</p> <p>Creation of a canoe access facility is likely to increase recreational usage of the site, which could conflict with other recreational users. As such, further assessment of the potential affects on other recreational users is presented in Section 5.2 below.</p>

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Flora and Fauna	<p>The River Wye is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Both sites are designated for a variety of fish species, otter and aquatic vegetation.</p> <p>There are no other sites designated for nature conservation within 2km of the site.</p> <p>An ecological walkover survey was undertaken in April 2010. Otter were noted to be using the river adjacent to the site. Vegetation at the site was considered to have potential to support bird species and bat species are also likely to be present in the vicinity. No evidence was found to indicate that the site is being used by badger, and the site is not considered likely to support water vole, crayfish or reptiles.</p> <p>The surrounding area contains extensive tree and hedgerow growth and there are extensive areas of agricultural land and grassland. These areas have the potential to support protected and notable species.</p>	Given the sensitivity of the river and associated riverine habitats for biodiversity an assessment of the potential effects of the project is presented in Section 5.1 below.
Soil / Land Use	The proposed canoe launch is located on the river bank within an existing picnic site. The surrounding area comprises a mixture of woodland and low intensity farmland. No works beyond the footprint of the canoe launch are proposed.	No significant effects identified
Water	Water quality in the River Wye is generally very good with the watercourse receiving an A rating (very good) for water quality (chemical and biological) in the most recent EA sampling assessment (2008). The river is located within the Severn River Basin District and has been assessed as at Good biological status and High chemical status under the Water Framework Directive (WFD).	Given the nature and scale of the proposed scheme, no significant effects have been identified. The scheme will not cause a deterioration in the status of the river and will not hinder the river from meeting its WFD objectives, and so no further consideration of WFD compliance is considered necessary.

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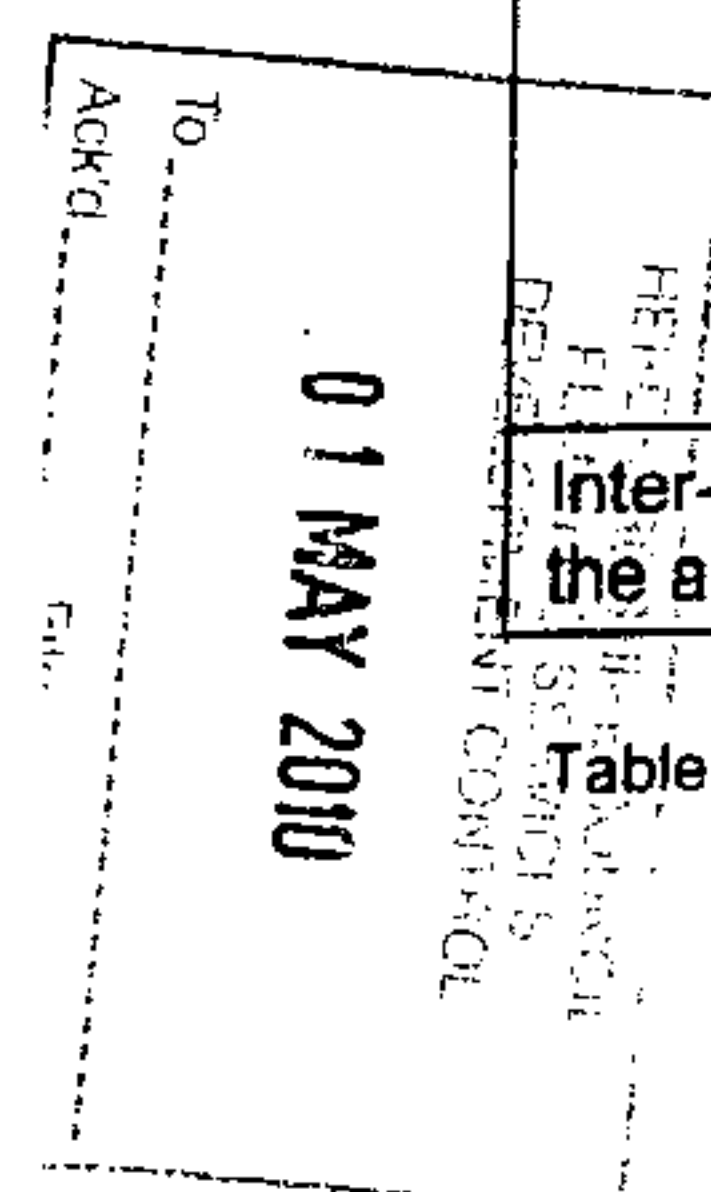
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Historic Environment	<p>There are no Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens or World Heritage Sites within 250m of the proposed canoe launch.</p> <p>The Historic Environment Record indicates that there are no sites of historic or archaeological interest within close proximity to the site.</p>	No significant effects identified
Landscape and Visual Impacts	<p>The proposed canoe launch is located on the northern bank of the River Wye at an existing picnic site. The site is located within a rural area, comprising agricultural land and scattered farm buildings and houses. The area is within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).</p> <p>The river bank at the picnic site consists of a narrow strip of improved grassland bordered to the north by a large disused railway embankment. This embankment provides a viewpoint of the area, offering panoramic views of the river corridor. Agricultural land is present to the east and west, separated from the picnic site by trees and an access track and footpath. The original stone railway bridge abutments are still present crossing the river at this point. The river bank includes a scattering of trees and scrub with more extensive stands of trees fringing the river bank downstream of the site. The river bank at this site is enclosed, with limited views of it possible.</p>	<p>Views of the proposed canoe launch will be limited in extent. Views will be possible from the river bank itself and from the picnic site viewpoint, immediately to the north. Views will also be possible from the river immediately adjacent to the launch and may also be possible from the agricultural land immediately to the east. No view of the canoe launch will be possible from the main picnic area or from any residential properties in the area due to the presence of screening features including the railway embankment, bridge abutments, ground topography and vegetation. Views of the site may be possible from the opposite river bank, but these are likely to be very limited in extent because of the presence of the railway embankment on the southern bank of the river and the bridge abutments, which provide extensive screening of the site, and due to vegetation screening present on both river banks.</p> <p>No views of the access facility are possible from any of the surrounding properties or from the Wye Valley Walk. Given the enclosed nature of the site and the small scale of the proposed canoe launch, no significant effects have been identified.</p>
Inter-relationship between the above factors	No significant effects identified	

Table 1 – Scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment

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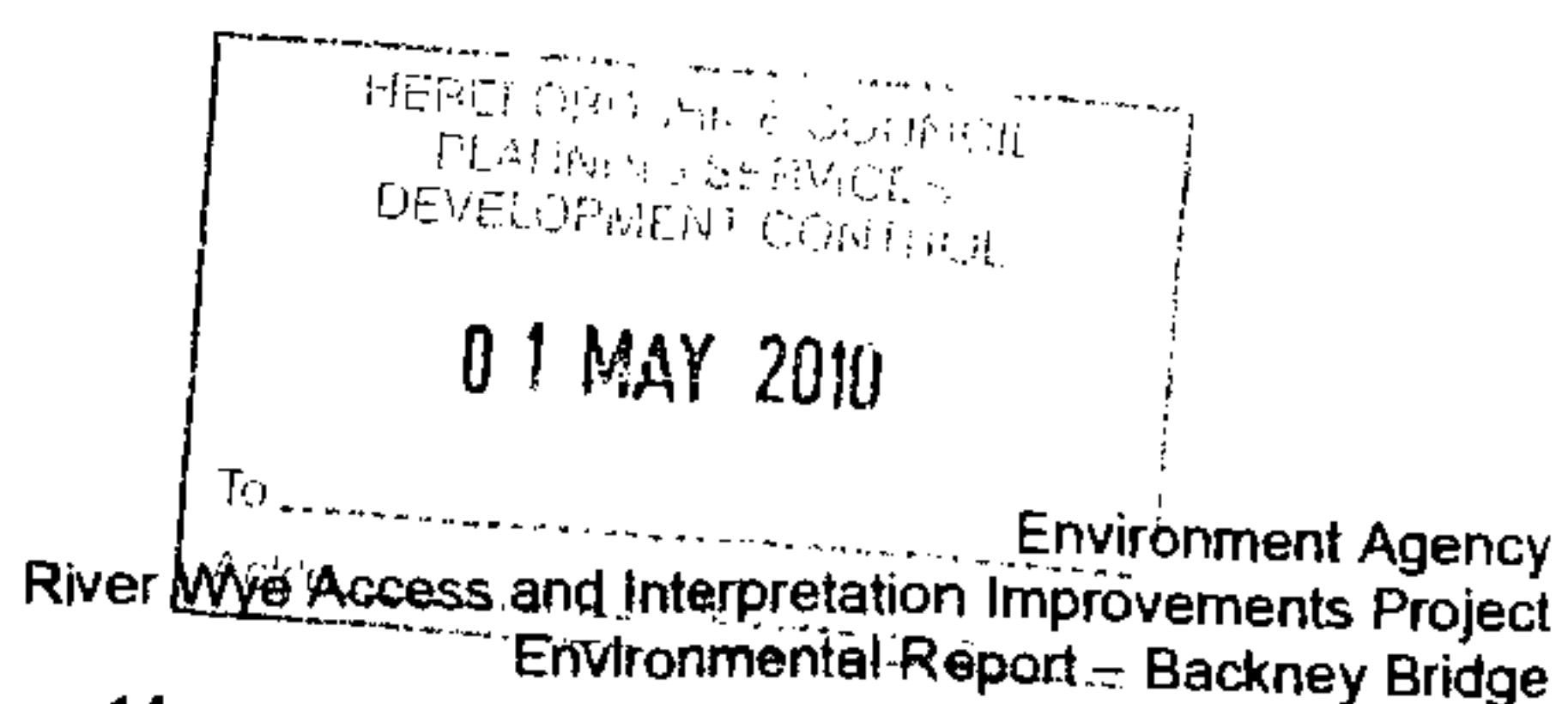
The environmental impact assessment will consider the following issues further. The assessment of potential impacts upon these features is set out in section 5 below.

- Flora and Fauna
- Recreation

As a result of the scoping exercise, no impacts upon other environmental features have been identified and so these features will not be considered further in this assessment.

4. Consultation

We have consulted with a range of stakeholders in relation to the scope of the EIA. This includes Herefordshire County Council Planning Department and Biodiversity team, Natural England, English Heritage, and the Environment Agency internal functions. A site meeting with Sellack Parish Council and with the private fishery owners was also undertaken to further identify any environmental issues to be included in this assessment. Further details of this consultation process are included in Appendix 2.



5. Assessment and Evaluation

5.1 Flora and Fauna

5.1.1 Baseline Environment

The baseline ecological information was gathered through a desk study exercise, two ecological site walkover surveys, and through consultation with the Environment Agency Biodiversity Team, Natural England and Herefordshire County Council Biodiversity Team. Information was also obtained from Herefordshire Biological Records Centre and from Environment Agency biodiversity records.

Given the small scale of the proposed works, the study area was limited to the river bank area adjacent to the site of the proposed canoe launch, and the access track and footpath from the Backney Bridge picnic site. This footpath will be used to facilitate access to the river bank for construction equipment during construction of the canoe launch, and will enable canoeists to access the facility once it is in use. The walkover survey also included the picnic site area and car park, as part of this area may be used as a temporary storage site during construction of the canoe launch, and the small stream that flows along the western boundary of the picnic site.

The results of the desk study exercise and site walkover surveys are discussed below. Professional expertise and experience were used to assess the magnitude and significance of impacts.

Designated Sites

The River Wye is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) primarily for its fish, aquatic macrophyte and otter populations. The River Wye is considered a rare example of a near natural, large western eutrophic river which, unlike many rivers of a similar type, has not been subject to significant modification from human activities.

The features of River Wye SAC are shown in Table 2 below. In addition to these features, the River Wye (Lower Wye) SSSI is also designated for grayling (*Thymallus thymallus*) and freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) species, together with a range of invertebrate species and aquatic plant communities. The river's overall diversity is a product of its underlying geology, soil type, adjacent land use and near natural fluvio-geomorphological regime.

Feature	Status	Description
Annex I and Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of the site		
Sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>)	Favourable (unclassified)	The Wye is an extensive river system crossing the border between England and Wales and the sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> population is found in the main stem below Llyswen. The site provides exceptionally good quality habitat for sea lamprey and supports a healthy population.
Brook lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>)	Unfavourable (unclassified)	The brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i> population is widely distributed in its catchment. The river provides exceptionally good quality habitat for brook lamprey and supports a healthy population.

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Environment Agency
River Wye Access and Interpretation Improvements Project
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River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>)	Unfavourable (unclassified)	The river lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> population is widely distributed in the catchment. The Wye provides exceptionally good quality habitat for river lamprey and supports a healthy population.
Twaite shad (<i>Alosa fallax</i>)	Unfavourable (unclassified)	Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i> have long been abundant in the Wye. Twaite shad often spawn at or just above the tidal limit, but in the Wye they migrate over 100 km upstream, the highest spawning site being at Builth Wells. Data held by the Environment Agency indicate that, of the three selected rivers, the largest spawning areas for this species occur on the Wye. The river has relatively good water quality, adequate flows through an unobstructed main channel and a wide range of aquatic habitats conducive to supporting this fish species. In particular, there are a number of deep pools essential for congregation before spawning.
Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)	Unfavourable (unclassified)	Historically, the Wye is the most famous and productive river in Wales for Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> , with high-quality spawning grounds and juvenile habitat in both the main channel and tributaries. The most important tributaries for spawning are included in the SAC. Although in the past non-native salmon may have been released to the system, the impact of this is likely to have been minimal. The Wye salmon population is particularly notable for the very high proportion (around 75%) of multi sea winter (MSW) fish, a stock component which has declined sharply in recent years throughout the UK. This pattern has also occurred in the Wye, with a consequent marked decline in the population since the 1980s. However, the Wye salmon population is still of considerable importance in UK terms.
Bullhead (<i>Cottus gobio</i>)	Unfavourable (unclassified)	The Wye is one of the most diverse river systems in the UK, with a range of nutrient conditions and aquatic habitats and generally good water quality. The diversity of habitat types in the Wye means that it is likely to represent most of the habitat conditions in which bullhead occurs in Britain, highlighting the conservation importance of this river.
European otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)	Unfavourable	The Wye holds the densest and most well-established otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> population in Wales, representative of otters occurring in lowland freshwater habitats in the borders of Wales. The river has bank-side vegetation cover, abundant food supply, clean water and undisturbed areas of dense scrub suitable for breeding, making it particularly favourable as otter habitat. The population remained even during the lowest point of the UK decline, confirming that the site is particularly favourable for this species and the population likely to be highly stable.
Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation	Unfavourable (unclassified)	The Wye has a geologically mixed catchment, including shales and sandstones, and there is a clear transition between the upland reaches, with characteristic bryophyte-dominated vegetation, and the lower reaches, with extensive <i>Ranunculus</i> beds. There is a varied water-crowfoot <i>Ranunculus</i> flora; stream water-crowfoot <i>R. penicillatus</i> ssp. <i>pseudofluitans</i> is abundant, with other <i>Ranunculus</i> species – including the uncommon river water-crowfoot <i>R. fluitans</i> – found locally. Other species characteristic of sub-type 2 include flowering-rush <i>Butomus umbellatus</i> , lesser water-parasit <i>Berula erecta</i> and curled pondweed <i>Potamogeton crispus</i> . There is an exceptional range of aquatic flora in the catchment including river jelly-lichen <i>Collema dichotum</i> .
White-clawed crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>)	Unfavourable (declining)	The Welsh River Wye system is the best site known in Wales for white-clawed crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> . The tributaries are the main haven for the species, particularly at the confluences of the main river and the Edw, Dulas Brook, Sgithwen and Clettwr Brook.
Annex I and Annex II species present as qualifying features, but not primary reasons for site selection		
Allis shad (<i>Alosa alosa</i>)	Unfavourable (unclassified)	No information provided

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Quaking bogs and transition mires	Unfavourable (unclassified)	No information provided
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Table 2 – Features of the River Wye SAC and their current status (status condition taken from River Wye SAC Core Management Plan (CCW, March 2008).

There are no other sites designated for nature conservation within 2km of the site.

A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the effects of the proposed scheme on the interest features of the River Wye SAC has been undertaken and is presented in Appendix 3. A summary of this assessment is included in Section 5.1.2 below.

Habitats and Flora

No notable habitats or flora were identified during the ecological site walkover surveys. As such a Phase 1 Habitat Survey (following the methodology as set out in *Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment* – Institute of Environmental Assessment 1995) was not undertaken.

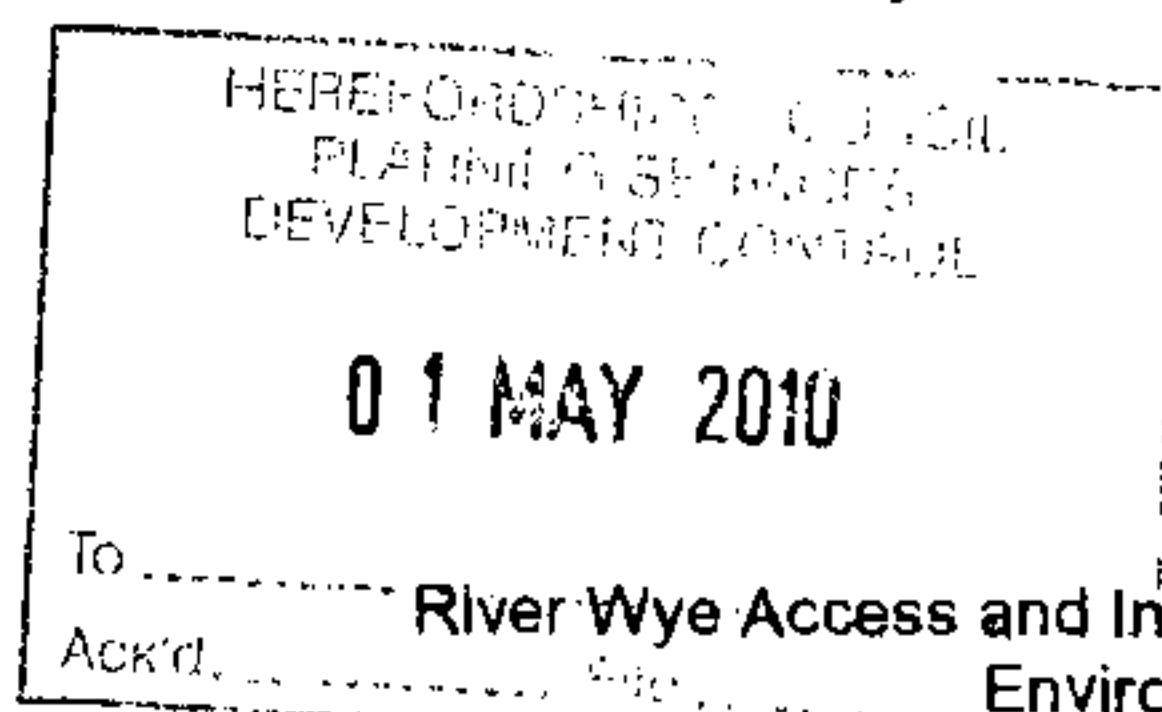
The site of the proposed canoe launch is on the northern bank of the river, immediately downstream of a stone railway bridge abutment, which forms part of the river bank in this location (see photograph 1). The river bank in this area forms part of the Backney Bridge picnic site and is managed by Herefordshire County Council for recreational purposes. It consists of a narrow strip of improved grassland approximately 12m in width, bordered to the north by a large retaining bridge abutment which supports a disused railway embankment (see photograph 2). At the foot of this abutment is a small area of bramble scrub habitat. The river bank is regularly mowed by Herefordshire County Council and is used as a picnic area and for angling, and is also used informally as a canoe launch area.

To the west of the proposed canoe launch is a line of trees fringing a small stream that enters the River Wye immediately downstream of the canoe launch. Further to the west is an agricultural field consisting of improved grassland. To the east of the site is a small field of improved grassland used for grazing, beyond which is Backney Common. There are several small trees located on the river bank close to the site of the proposed canoe launch, with more extensive stands of trees fringing the river bank downstream of the site.

Beyond the river bank, the land use is predominantly agricultural, consisting of areas of improved and semi-improved grassland bordered by hedgerows, trees and interspersed with small areas of woodland. Private dwellings and associated gardens are also located in the surrounding area (see photograph 3).

The main area of the picnic site is located on the disused railway embankment. Areas of woodland and scrub habitat are present on its eastern and western flanks, with an area of managed improved grassland in-between. An access track and footpath, running from the entrance to the car park area along the eastern boundary of the picnic site, are bordered to the east by a line of trees and bushes.

The project may require the removal of a single alder tree, located on the river bank adjacent to the site of the proposed canoe launch. This tree may need to be removed to facilitate construction of the canoe launch.



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Photograph 1 – Location of proposed canoe launch facility at the Backney Bridge picnic site



Photograph 2 – Aerial photograph of the site at Backney Bridge

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Photograph 3 – Aerial photograph of the site at Backney Bridge including surrounding area

Protected and Notable Species

Information was obtained from the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre and from the EA biodiversity records on protected and priority species, other species of conservation concern, locally important species and all other notable species occurring within 2km of the site. This information indicates that there are no biodiversity records relating to the proposed site of the canoe launch or the picnic site. There are several records relating to the area around the picnic site, associated with agricultural land to the north and east. Table 3 below includes information on these records.

Species	Date recorded	Status	Grid reference
Grey partridge	2000	Priority	SO 584 272
Linnet	2002	Priority	SO 584 272
Snipe	2003	Priority	SO 585 272
Peregrine	2004	Priority	SO 584 273
Snipe	2004	Priority	SO 584 273
Yellowhammer	2004	Priority	SO 584 273
Bullfinch	2004	Priority	SO 584 273
Yellowhammer	2003	Priority	SO 584 273
Yellow wagtail	2004	Priority	SO 584 273
Linnet	2004	Priority	SO 584 273
Needle spike-rush	2006	Priority	SO 5847 2710

Table 3 – Records on protected and priority species, other species of conservation concern, locally important species and all other notable species occurring within 2km of the site.

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One record of particular relevance to this project is that of the Needle spike-rush (*Eleocharis acicularis*), recorded at a site within the river channel approximately 120m upstream of the site of the proposed canoe launch.

Consultation with Natural England, the EA Biodiversity Team and the Biodiversity Team at Herefordshire County Council was also undertaken on the scope of the ecology assessment (see Appendix 2 for consultation response). Consultation with the Environment Agency Ecological Appraisal Team was also undertaken which highlighted the potential for the rare mayfly *Potamanthus luteus* on this stretch of the River Wye.

An ecological walkover survey of the proposed works area was undertaken by the EA Biodiversity Team and National Environmental Assessment Service on the 5th February 2010 and repeated on the 23rd March 2010. The walkover survey aimed to identify the presence of, or potential for, protected and notable species and habitats at the site, with a view to determining the need for further specialist surveys.

Badger (Meles meles)

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 consolidates previous badger legislation and, in addition to protecting the badger itself against being killed, persecuted or trapped, makes it an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct badger setts.

The ecological walkover surveys did not identify the presence of badger in the study area. No evidence of badger activity, including setts, footprints, hairs, feeding areas, latrines and badger paths, was identified.

Water vole (Arvicola terrestris)

Water voles and their resting places are fully protected in England under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to deliberately, capture, injure or kill them or to damage, destroy or obstruct their breeding or resting places.

The ecological walkover surveys did not identify the presence of water vole in the study area. Water vole are considered unlikely to be present because of the high river flows in the River Wye at this location and the lack of appropriate vegetation at the site.

Reptiles

No evidence of reptile species at the site was recorded. However, reptiles may be present in the study area associated with the bridge abutments or main picnic site. The area of improved grassland, where the canoe launch is to be located, is not thought likely to support reptiles.

White-clawed crayfish (Austropotamobius pallipes)

There are no records of this species within the study area and their presence is considered highly unlikely. White-clawed crayfish are generally found on the tributaries of the River Wye rather than the main river as main river flows are often too fast.

Freshwater pearl mussel (Margaritifera margaritifera)

The ecological walkover surveys did not identify the presence of freshwater pearl mussel in the study area and this species is not known on this section of the river. Given the scale of the proposed scheme and the limited in-channel works, any potential effects are considered negligible.

Potamanthus luteus

This rare mayfly species is listed as an IUCN Red Data Book 2 species. It is associated with sections of the river channel with mobile sections of shingle or a mix of larger stones

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with loose shingle in between. The section of river channel adjacent to proposed canoe launch does not contain any shingle material and so it is unlikely that this species will be present adjacent to the canoe launch site.

Bats

All species of bat and their breeding sites or resting places (roosts) are protected under Regulation 41 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence for anyone intentionally to kill, injure or handle a bat, to possess a bat (whether live or dead), disturb a roosting bat, or sell or offer a bat for sale without a licence. It is also an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter, whether they are present or not.

The ecological walkover surveys did not identify the presence of bats in the study area. However, the stone railway bridge abutments include a small number of deep holes and crevices that could be used by bats and bats are likely to forage along the river and within the study area. This project does not involve any works to the bridge abutments, or within 10m of them, and given the scale of the proposed works at this site, the likelihood of any adverse impact on bats using the abutments is considered to be negligible.

The project may require the removal of a single alder tree present on the river bank in order to facilitate construction of the canoe launch. This tree does not have any ivy covering and has only a few, shallow cracks or rot holes and is considered to have little or no potential for bats.

Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

Otter receive protection under both the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Otters and their resting places are fully protected, and it is an offence to deliberately, capture, injure or kill them or to damage, destroy or obstruct their breeding or resting places. It is also an offence to disturb otters in their breeding or resting places.

Otter are a feature of the River Wye SAC and SSSI. Works or activities that can be expected to cause significant disturbance to otter can only proceed under licence.

During the ecological walkover survey on the 5th February 2010, two juvenile otter were observed playing in the section of river adjacent to the proposed canoe launch site. A subsequent specialist otter survey was undertaken by the EA Biodiversity Team on the 16th February 2010, to further determine the potential risks that the proposed scheme could have upon otter.

This specialist otter survey examined the study area and extended this area to include the river bank upstream and downstream of the proposed canoe launch location for a distance of approximately 500m. The aim of the survey was to identify evidence of use by otter. No sightings of otter were recorded during the survey. Several otter spraints were recorded on a large tree located immediately downstream of the proposed canoe launch site but no resting places or holts were identified during the survey. Better habitat for otter holts was recorded approximately 500m upstream and 250m downstream of the proposed canoe launch site, with several potential breeding sites also identified downstream. Potential for otter holts was also identified associated with the disused railway embankment on the opposite side of the river to the canoe launch.

Breeding Birds

The study area includes a variety of habitats that provide suitable nesting opportunities for a variety of breeding birds. The trees present along the river bank and within the picnic site are

likely to be used by breeding birds, and the disused bridge abutments are also likely to provide suitable nesting opportunities. Anecdotal evidence also indicates that the study area is used each year by nesting sand martin (*Riparia riparia*).

Fish

The River Wye is designated as a SAC due in part to its significant fish populations. Historically, the river is the most famous and productive in Wales for Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*), with high-quality spawning grounds and juvenile habitat in both the main channel and tributaries. There has been a marked decline in the salmon population since the 1980s due in part to fishing pressures, pollution, barriers to migration and the loss of suitable spawning habitat. However, the salmon population in the river is still of considerable importance in UK terms.

At the Backney Bridge site, the river provides suitable habitat to support migrating salmon and trout and fishing for these species and there are private fisheries upstream and downstream of the railway bridge abutments.

The River Wye also supports important populations of other fish species including twaite shad (*Alosa alosa*), bullhead (*Cottus gobio*) and three lamprey species. The river also contains good populations of coarse fish species including chub (*Leuciscus cephalus*), barbel (*Barbus barbus*), pike (*Esox lucius*), grayling (*Thymallus thymallus*), dace (*Leuciscus leuciscus*) and roach (*Rutilus rutilus*). This stretch of the river is a popular coarse fishing area and there are private coarse fisheries upstream and downstream of the bridge abutments.

Non-native species

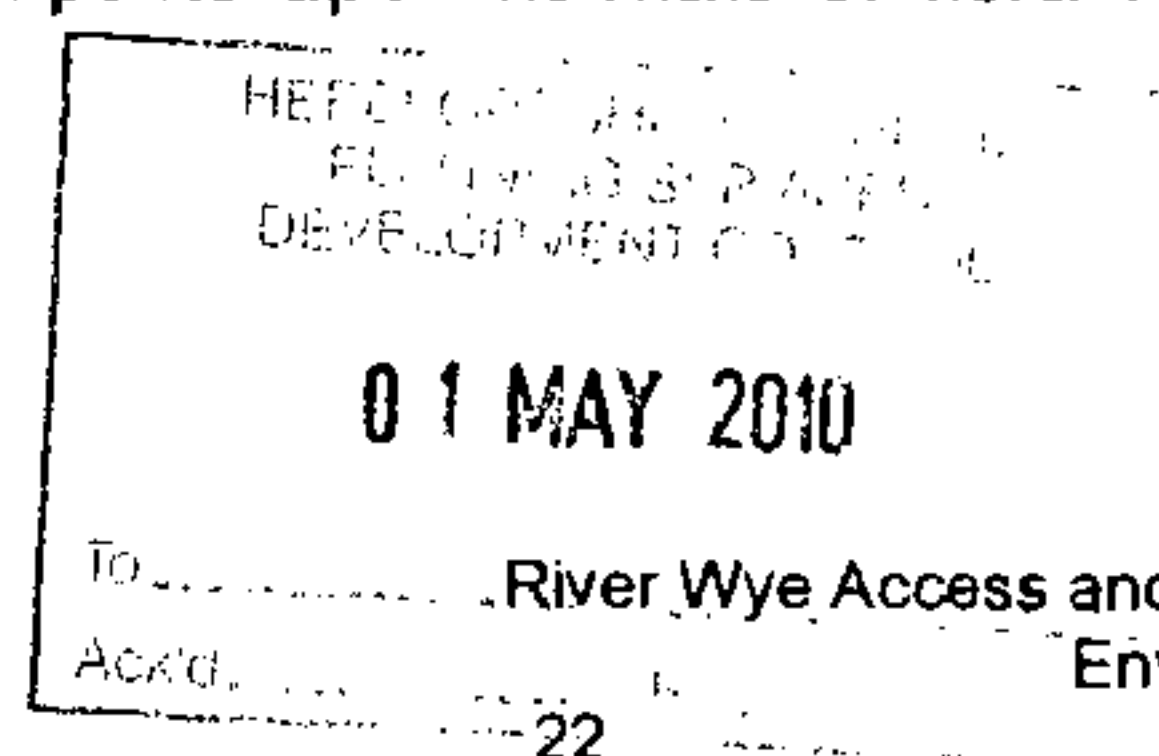
No non-native species i.e., Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, etc, were recorded within the study area.

5.1.2 Assessment and Evaluation of Environmental Effects

The scheme proposes to install a single set of timber and concrete steps on the river bank at the site. The extent of the works is limited in size and is restricted to the footprint of the steps. All construction works are to be undertaken from the river bank and within the area of improved grassland that forms the bank in this area. The steps will be constructed off site and placed in situ to reduce disturbance. Access to the river bank for construction equipment will be via the existing footpath from the picnic site car park. There is no requirement to create a new access point or access track to facilitate access to the site for construction equipment. The construction works are therefore limited to the area of river bank immediately adjacent to the site of the proposed canoe launch. Given the small scale of the projects and the construction works, the potential for impacts associated with the project are greatly reduced and likely to be limited in extent.

Habitats and Flora

The footprint of the proposed canoe launch is limited in size and all construction works will be limited to the area of improved grassland immediately adjacent to the canoe launch. It's likely that a single alder tree may need to be removed to facilitate construction of the canoe launch, but the loss of this single alder is not considered significant. Given the scale of the proposed works, no adverse impacts upon habitats or flora are expected as a result of the proposed works.



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Protected and Notable Species*Otter (Lutra lutra)*

Otter were observed using the section of river immediately adjacent to the proposed canoe launch site and are likely to use the river bank within the study area. However, no otter resting places or holts were identified within 250m of the proposed canoe launch site. The site is already used for recreational purposes and is likely to be already subject to disturbance from people using the picnic facilities, and from anglers and canoeists informally accessing the river from this site. Disturbance may increase as a result of the site being used formally as a canoe launch area, but given the existing disturbance at the site and the small scale of the proposed scheme, it is considered that the proposed canoe launch will not present a significant risk to otter.

Breeding Birds

Breeding birds are likely to nest in the study area. However, given the small scale of the proposed scheme and the limited vegetation removal required to facilitate construction of the canoe launch, the impact of the scheme on breeding birds is considered to be negligible.

Fish

Several fish species are known to be present in the river at Backney Bridge. This includes salmon and trout, and several coarse fish species. The proposed scheme could cause disturbance to these fish species due to canoeists accessing and egressing the river at this point. However, any such disturbance is likely to be temporary in nature and localised in extent, and will only occur whilst the canoe launch is being used. This section of the river currently experiences a considerable level of disturbance due to existing recreational use, which includes canoeing, rowing, boating and angling, and due to noise and activity from the picnic area on the river bank. Disturbance will increase as a result of the site being used formally as a canoe launch area, but given the existing disturbance at the site and the small scale of the proposed scheme, it is considered that the proposed canoe launch will not present a significant risk to the fish species in the river.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

A Test of Likely Significant Effect has been undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994. The assessment is included in Appendix 3 to this report.

The assessment identified several potential impacts that could have the potential to have a significant effect on the interest features of the River Wye SAC. These effects include disturbance through use of the canoe launch and during its construction, and impacts caused by an impact upon water quality in the river during the construction of the project. However, the assessment concluded that the potential scale or magnitude of these potential effects are not likely to be significant because of the existing recreational uses of the canoe launch site and the river, and because of the small scale of the proposed scheme and the sensitive scheme design that has been produced. The proposed scheme therefore will not be likely to have a significant impact on the interest features of River Wye SAC.

5.1.3 Mitigation, Management and Monitoring

Immediately prior to construction, an ecological walkover survey of the study area will be undertaken to identify the presence of any breeding birds at the site of the proposed canoe launch. The single alder tree, which is to be removed to facilitate construction of the canoe launch, will be surveyed for breeding birds prior to its removal. If any occupied nests are

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found within this tree, it will not be removed until the nest has become unoccupied. No further mitigation or management measures are considered necessary.

Although there is negligible potential for any bat roost to be present within the alder tree to be removed, should any bats be disturbed by the proposed works, all works will cease immediately and Natural England will be contacted for their advice.

To further reduce the risks of any impact upon otter that may be present in the area during construction, no construction works will take place between one hour before dawn and one hour after dusk. The project proposes to install an artificial otter holt at a suitable site upstream of the proposed canoe launch as an environmental enhancement for this species. The EA Biodiversity Team will identify a suitable maternity site and seek landowner agreement for the erection of the otter holt.

Bird and bat boxes will also be installed on trees in the vicinity of the canoe launch.

To minimise any risk to salmonid fish species during construction of the scheme, any in-river works will be undertaken between 15th May and 15th October to reduce the risk of disturbance to spawning fish.

5.1.4 Residual Effects

No residual effects have been identified.

5.2 Recreation

5.2.1 Baseline Environment

The River Wye, including the stretch of river adjacent to Backney Bridge, is a well used recreational resource. The picnic site is a popular recreation site for walkers and families, particularly during weekends and bank holidays. The site is also currently used informally as a canoe launch point, evidence for which includes rutting of the river bank at a number of locations due to canoes being dragged down into the water. Swimming is also known to occur from the picnic site. The river is used frequently by Ross Rowing Club, who practice between Ross and Backney Bridge, and is also used by a variety of motorised boats.

Angling is also a popular recreational activity in the area and the waters immediately upstream and downstream of the site are private fisheries. Both salmonid and coarse fishing takes place along this stretch of river. The Wye and Usk Foundation actively promotes salmonid and coarse fishing in this area, with salmon fishing possible between March and mid October, and coarse fishing available between June and March. The Foundation's website notes that "Canoe traffic can be heavy from 10am to 4pm at weekends during the warmer months, and especially during bank holidays"¹.

Environment Agency salmonid catch-return records for the Backney angling 'beat', which covers the area downstream of the railway bridge abutments for approximately X kilometres, indicate that few salmon are caught along this section of the river. Records for the last seven years indicates that the number of salmon caught each year in this area averages approximately 3 (see table 4).

¹ http://www.wyeuskfoundation.org/fishing/obs/beat_details.php?beat=backney

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Year	Number of salmon caught
2009	2
2008	0
2007	10
2006	0
2005	2
2004	6
2003	2

Table 4 – Environment Agency catch-return records for the Backney 'beat'.

This does not necessarily indicate angling activity, but is an indicator of the importance of this stretch of the river for the salmon population of the river. These figures would suggest that this stretch of the river is not significant for the salmon population, when considered within the context of the population of the river.

This stretch of the river is known to be a popular coarse fishing area. The annual coarse fishing season is between mid June and mid March.

5.2.2 Assessment and Evaluation of Environmental Effects

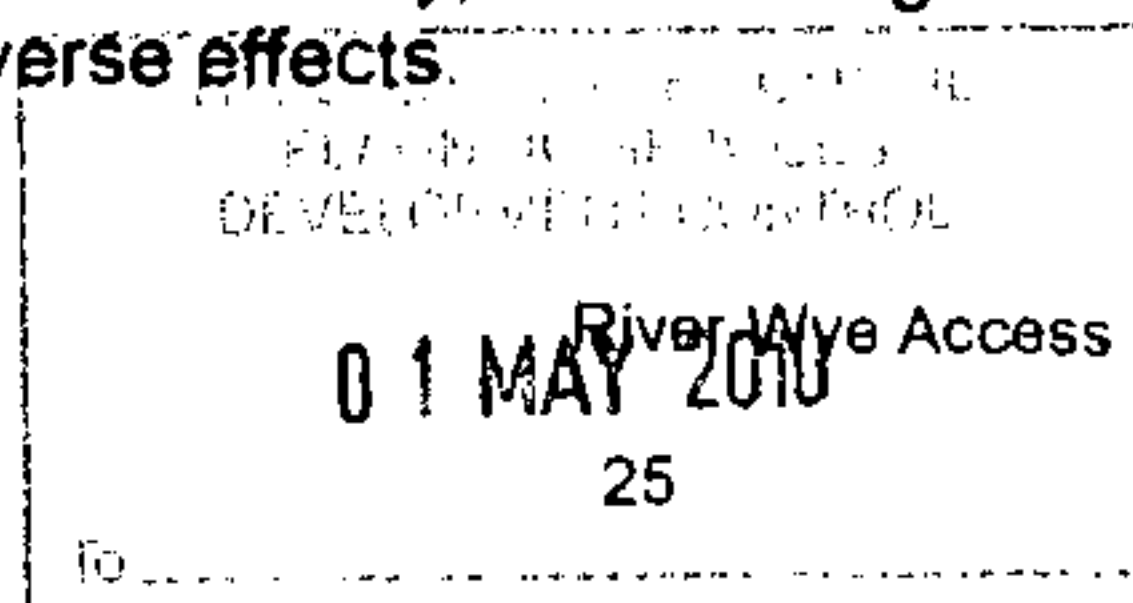
It is a key objective of this project to promote better access for canoeists along the river and therefore it is anticipated that the construction of a formal canoe launch facility at the site will encourage further use of the site for canoeing. However, the scheme has been designed to provide access for individuals and small groups, and large scale and commercial use of the canoe launch is not anticipated. The project is therefore unlikely to cause a significant increase in footfall at the site and will not cause a significant increase in river traffic along this section of the river. Use of this section of river for canoeing and other waterborne activities is already frequent and widespread, and existing recreational activities are known to co-exist without significant problems occurring.

EA catch-return records, which are an indicator of angling activity, indicate that the numbers of fish caught in this section of the river are relatively low. This may be due to the general decline in fish populations that is occurring throughout the Wye river system, which is due to various pressures upon the fish populations and their supporting habitat. The river near Backney Bridge is popular for coarse fishing despite a perception that the river experiences frequent use by canoeists. As such, it is not anticipated that the provision of a canoe launch at this site will have a significant adverse effect on angling in the area.

5.2.3 Mitigation, Management and Monitoring

A key aim of this project is to promote harmony amongst river users. Monitoring will be undertaken once the site has been constructed to determine the usage of the site and the canoe launch, including numbers and types of canoeists, to identify whether the objectives of the project have been met.

The monitoring programme will identify any significant adverse effects on the recreational usage of the site or the river. If necessary, further mitigation measures will be implemented to avoid or reduce any such adverse effects.



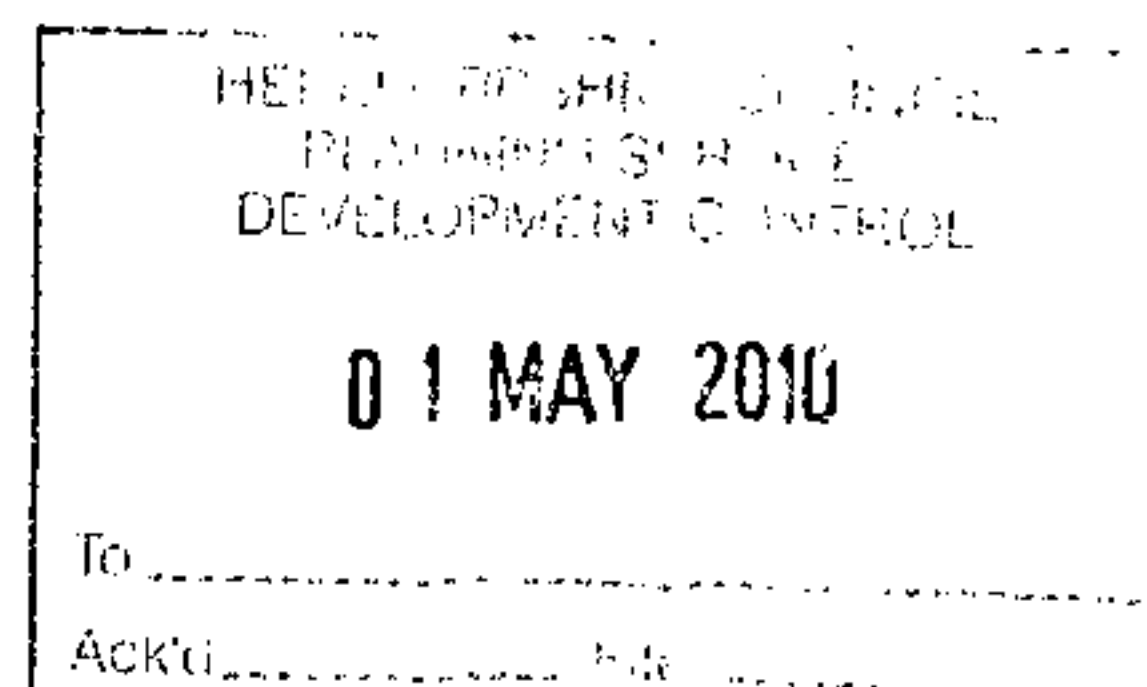
5.2.4 Residual Effects

No residual effects have been identified.

6. Conclusions

We are proposing to install a small scale canoe launch on the River Wye at the Backney Bridge picnic site. The need for new and improved canoe facilities on the river is well reported and is an aspiration of the Wye Navigation Advisory Committee and the Environment Agency as the Navigation Authority for the River. The project will also contribute towards a key objective of the Wye Waterway Plan to promote better access and information for canoeists, rafters and users of small craft.

Overall, there are no significant adverse impacts on the environment as a result of the proposed project. The installation of a new canoe launch will have a number of positive benefits by encouraging sustainable use of the river as a recreational resource and enabling more people to enjoy the natural assets of the Wye Valley. In addition, the project will encourage the adoption of healthier lifestyles by supporting public participation in active outdoor recreation.



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SE/101043/F

Appendices

BETTINGHORE COUNCIL PLANNING SERVICES DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
01 MAY 2019	
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Appendix 1 – EIA Screening Opinion from Herefordshire County Council

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01 MAY 2010	
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HUTCHINSON COUNTY PLANNING SERVICES DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
01 MAY 2010	
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HEREFORDSHIRE
COUNCIL

ADOPTED SCREENING OPINION

Under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)
(England and Wales) Regulations 1999:-

SITE:	Backney Bridge, River Wye		
GRID REF:	SO 6838, 2712	DATE:	15 February 2010
DEVELOPMENT:	Proposed new canoe launching facility and river access		

Part II, Regulation 4: **SCREENING DETERMINATION**

The proposal is not listed in Schedule 1.

The proposal is listed in Schedule 2.

SCREENING CRITERIA

The Regulations – SI 1999/293, as amended 2000 and 2008	Schedule 2, (10) Infrastructure projects and (12) Tourism and Leisure
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SCREENING OPINION

The site is sensitive in that it affects the River Wye Site of Special Scientific Interest / Special Area of Conservation (SSSI/SAC) and the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site would utilise land which is part of an existing picnic area with vehicular access. The proposed development is an Environment Agency project in partnership with the Wye Valley AONB.

The proposal is small-scale and falls well below the thresholds in the Regulations. Natural England and the Environment Agency Planning Liaison have both expressed the view that the works are unlikely to adversely effects on the River Wye. In terms of subsequent use of the facility, this is understood to be non-commercial and that footfall will be limited.

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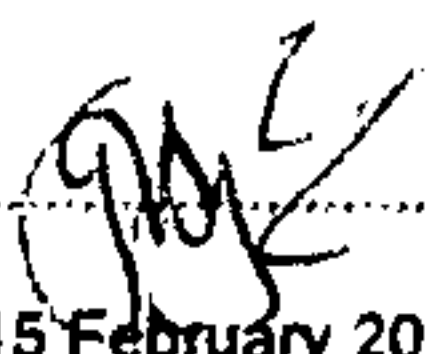
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The applicant has stated that a non-statutory environmental impact assessment will be undertaken, irrespective of this Screening Opinion.

Therefore the application will NOT require a statutory Environmental Statement to be submitted.

Signed 

Title: Director of Regeneration.

Date: 15 February 2010

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01 MAY 2010
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Appendix 2 – Consultation Record

RECEIVED BY PLANNING DEPT DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
01 MAY 2010
To:
Ack'd:

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PLANNING DEPARTMENT
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

01 MAY 2010

To.....
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Date	Organisation	Contact	Consultation type	Date response received	Key comments
09/12/2009	BCU	Chris Hawkesworth	Meeting	n/a	Supportive of project; May be able to provide BCU financial or in-kind contribution
05/01/2010	Herefordshire CC	Rob Hemblade / Simon Withers / James Bisset	Meeting	n/a	Supportive of project – Herefordshire CC strategy identifies need for additional access facilities; Confirmed that Herefordshire CC are landowner at each site; Each site managed by Arney; Compost toilet not required at Backney – additional picnic benches and better disabled access in picnic area are more appropriate; no known heritage issues at Backney site; EIA Screening Opinion required for the three sites.
21/01/2010	Herefordshire CC	Simon Withers (Planning Team Leader)	Letter - EIA Screening Opinion request	15/02/2010 (email and letter from Debby Klein)	Confirmed statutory EIA not required. Consulted with EA and NE who also confirmed statutory EIA not required.
22/01/2010	Natural England	Elisabeth Dack	Email - consultation	18/02/2010 (email response)	<p>We do not believe that the works proposed will have a significant adverse effect on the SAC as long as they are carried out sensitively and so full EIA and Habitat Assessment may not be necessary. This however will depend on any change to the scale of the proposals.</p> <p>Natural England are generally supportive of the principle of improving and enhancing the canoe access facilities on the Wye and have indeed been involved with the EA Navigation team and their discussion of the waterway plan and 5 year navigation plans which include the need for creation of new access.</p> <p>Key concern here is around the location of the new facility on the outside bend of the River where erosion will be fastest. Other issues that should be addressed as part of the assessment process include ecological loss and potential damage through use, also taking into account any impact or change if boat access were to increase dramatically. The effect on the landscape should be considered given that it is within the AONB. Natural England will want to consider the materials to be used and the construction style and methods to ensure there is limited or no impact on the SAC and SSSI features.</p> <p>Ecological assessment should include the species of the river designation – Otter, Crayfish, Fish including Salmonids, naturalness of the river type, invertebrate assemblages and river vegetation.</p>

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HEREFORDSHIRE CC

SE/101043/F

Date	Organisation	Contact	Consultation type	Date response received	Key comments
27/01/2010	Herefordshire CC (Biodiversity)	Joanne Hackman	Email scoping consultation	03/02/2010	I would suggest as a first step to inform the desk study the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre should be contacted to see if it holds any records for the 3 sites. The search should cover legally protected species and UK and Herefordshire BAP priority habitats and species.
				10/02/2010	<p>We would recommend that at each site a Phase 1 habitat and protected species survey is undertaken. This should cover at least 30m upstream and downstream of each location.</p> <p>The Phase 1 Habitat survey should be presented in map form with an accompanying description of the results. Features of particular value should be highlighted as Target notes. The location of any invasive plant species should be noted. We are aware that Les Smith of the Herefordshire Botanical Society has noted an <i>Eleocharis acicularis</i>, Needle Spike-rush, population at Backney Bridge GR SO 5847 2710. " It is upstream of the former bridge on the right bank at the down stream end of the gravel bed which is exposed at low river levels. It is just upstream of a small tributary which enters upstream of the bridge. The rush flowers only when the colony is exposed and was flowering profusely this year (2006) during the prolonged low river level". This plant has been identified as a species of Conservation Concern in the Herefordshire Biodiversity Action Plan Audit.</p> <p>Surveys should cover at least otters, bats, badgers and water vole. In the specific case of otters the survey should be extended to a cover an area 100m upstream and downstream of each site. It should cover otter resting sites, spraints etc with locations mapped as a Target note.</p> <p>Each site should be assessed for roosting and hibernating bats. All mature trees along the river bank and likely to be affected by the development plus any other suitable structures to be assessed by means of at least a daytime inspection using binoculars. Any signs of badger activity should be noted including locations of setts, and an assessment of the suitability of sites as foraging habitat.</p>

ACKNOWLEDGED

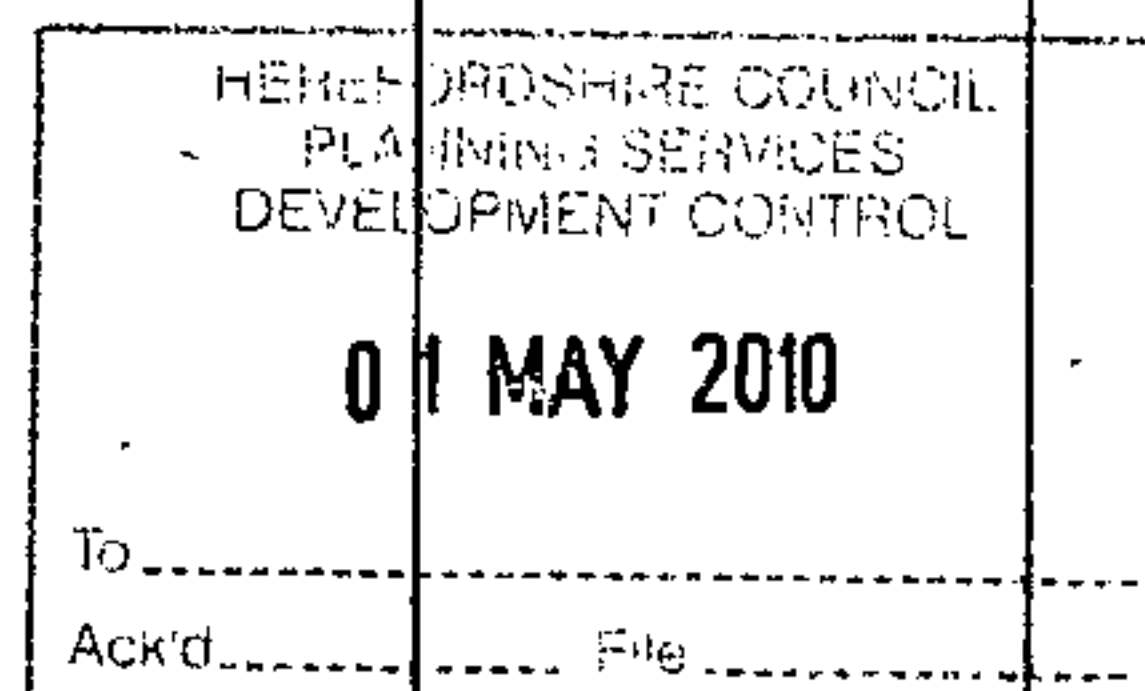
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COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT

Environment Agency
River Wye Access and Interpretation Improvements Project
Environmental Report – Backney Bridge

SE/101043/F

Date	Organisation	Contact	Consultation type	Date response received	Key comments
					<p>It is likely that the sites support breeding and over-wintering birds typical of such a riparian location. Incidental records of birds identified by sight and song should be recorded. Any nest sites or signs of nesting activity should be recorded.</p> <p>With regard to white-clawed crayfish it is our experience at other sites that Environmental Agency and Natural England do not recommend undertaking specific surveys where populations are already known because of bio-security risks associated with the spread of crayfish plague. However you would need to be able to demonstrate that there won't an impact upon the local population in order to be able to inform the Habitats Regulations Assessment. Similarly with the other designated features of the Special Area of Conservation you would need to demonstrate no impacts. Please note that freshwater pearl mussels may also be present.</p> <p>The Impact Assessment should assess the likely impact of the proposals on valuable ecological features and make recommendations for further survey and mitigation works including any licence requirements. Examples of such mitigation might include careful timing of works to avoid obstructions to fish migration and spawning habitat, the bird nesting season and works to trees when bats are present, also the installation of straw bales downstream to catch any sediment generated from the works. It should also include recommendations for dealing with any invasive plants. Finally and importantly any opportunities to enhance the the site for biodiversity, for example through coppicing or pollarding works, provision of bird (grey wagtail) and bat boxes, an artificial otter holt etc. As a section 28G authority the Council can seek enhancement opportunities for SSSIs through the planning process.</p>
27/01/2010	EA (FRM ASM)	Mike Walsh	Email	27/01/2010	Any proposals that require works within the actual channel or within 7.00m of the top of bank of Main River will require the formal consent of Environment Agency Wales. This will be in addition to any formal Planning Permission required by the relevant Local Authority.
27/01/2010	EA (Planning Liaison)	Graeme Irwin	Email screening and scoping consultation	12/02/2010 (email)	I am of the opinion that the works would not require a statutory EIA and would say that significant adverse effects on the Wye would be unlikely..



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Date	Organisation	Contact	Consultation type	Date response received	Key comments
27/01/2010	EA (EAT)	Mel Lacan	Email scoping consultation	10/02/2010 (email)	We have recent records of the mayfly <i>Potamanthus luteus</i> on the stretches of Wye you are talking about, which is a RDB2 species. Its distribution is fairly restricted to mid & lower Wye.
27/01/2010	EA (EM)	Andrew Osbaldiston	Email scoping consultation	01/02/2010	Having looked at the likely design characteristics from the Lazonby steps project, I would assume that there is a limited amount of engineering/construction work involved and much of this would be within the river bank rather than within the main watercourse (although obviously a need for flood drainage consent). On this basis our comments would be limited other than some standard comments aimed at pollution prevention (eg PPG5 works and maintenance in or near water) that would be included within our response from flood drainage).
27/01/2010	EA (NEAS)	Jen Richards	Email	27/01/2010	The canoe accesses at Backney will not impact on any designated sites I suggest that English Heritage be consulted at this scoping stage.
27/01/2010	EA (GW&CL)	Kay Roberts	Email	27/01/2010	From a Groundwater and Contaminated Land viewpoint we'd have no requirement for an EIA, unless the proposed site were located on land potential effected by historical contamination. Looking at two of the sites this is unlikely, though a historical check of land use should be undertaken.
23/02/2010	Private Fishery (Backney)	John Large	Letter	13/03/2010 - letter from David Wyatt (solicitor)	Raised concerns regarding effects of project on fishing pools.
23/02/2010	Private Fishery (Backney)	Colin Bateman	Letter	08/04/2010 - letter	Raised concerns regarding impact on fishery, commercial usage of the site and how this could be restricted, disturbance from camping.
01/04/2010	Custodian of Backney picnic site	Gordon Lewis	Telephone conversation		Stated that picnic site planning permission includes condition preventing canoe launching. Identified that the lane adjacent to the picnic site is owned by Backney Common Association and that access unlikely to be agreed.
01/04/2010	Sellack Parish Council	Hilary Fordyce	Telephone conversation		Concerns raised that the project will result in increased noise, disturbance and traffic movements.
07/04/2010	Farmer and local resident	Alan Ripley	Telephone conversation		Raised concerns regarding impact of project on fishing pools, increased traffic, noise and camping.
07/04/2010	Private Fishery (Backney)	Paul Cutts	Telephone conversation		Raised concerns about the impact of the project on the SSSI, the fishing pools, his commercial interests and health & safety.

01 MAY 2010

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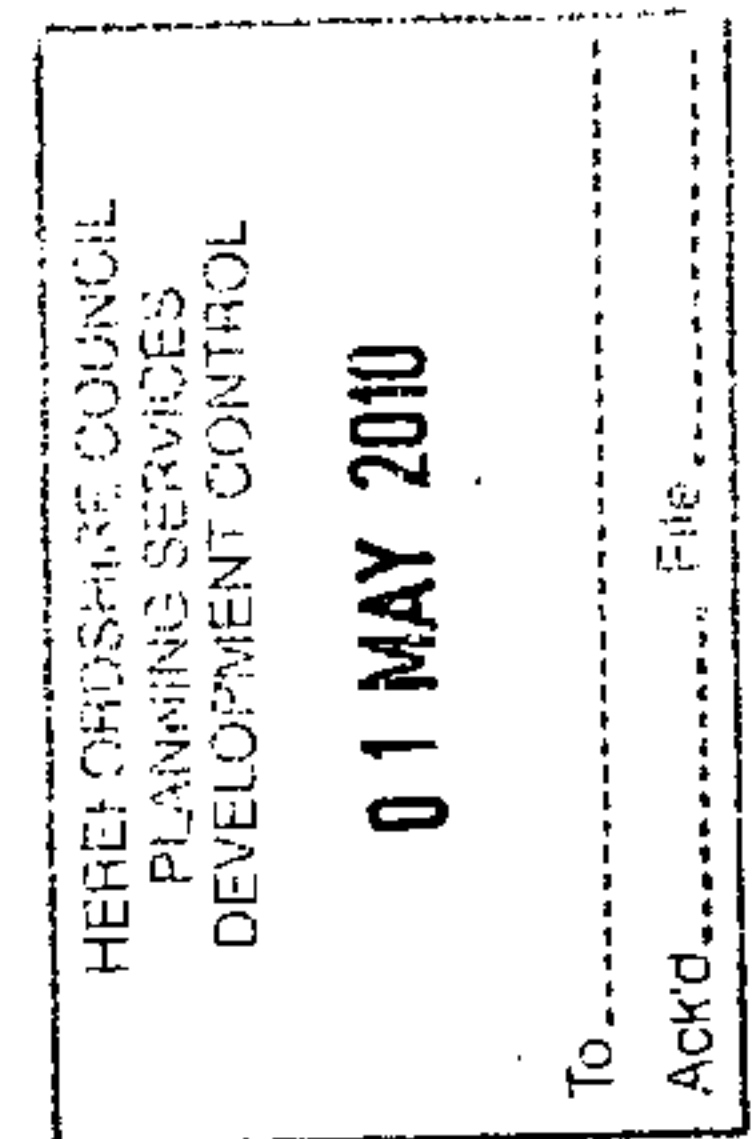
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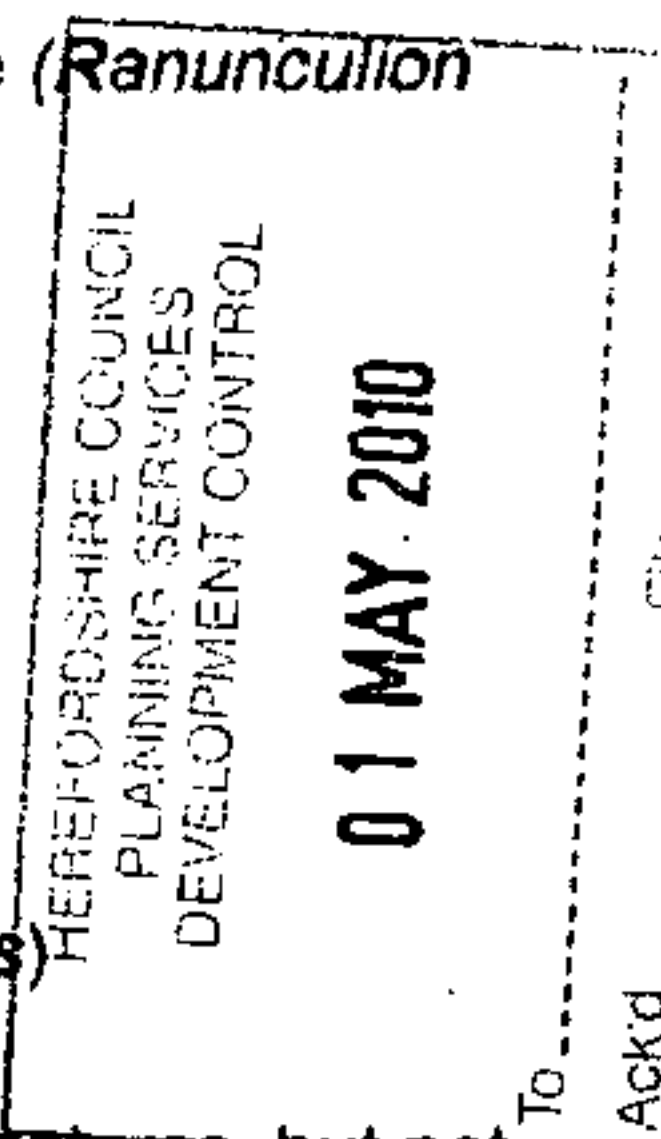
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Appendix 3 – Test for Likely Significant Effect (Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994)



Form HR01: Proforma for new applications within Stage 2 criteria.		 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY	
ENVIRONMENT AGENCY RECORD OF ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON A EUROPEAN SITE (STAGE 2)			
PART A			
To be completed by relevant technical/project officer in consultation with Conservation/Ecology section and NE			
1. Type of permission/activity:	Construction of a new canoe access launch at the Backney Bridge picnic site.		
2. Agency reference no:	NEAS130018		
3. National Grid Reference:	SO 58370 27130		
4. Site reference:	Backney Bridge picnic site, Herefordshire		
5. Brief description of proposal:	The project proposes to install a single, small-scale canoe launch on the northern bank of the River Wye at Backney Bridge. The site chosen for the canoe launch is an existing picnic site owned and managed by Herefordshire County Council. The site is situated approximately two kilometres north-west of Ross-on-Wye.		
6. European site name(s) and status:	River Wye Special Area of Conservation (SAC)		
7. List of interest features:	<p><u>River Wye SAC</u></p> <p>Annex I and Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of the site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water courses of plain to montane levels with the (<i>Ranuncullion fluitantis</i>) and (<i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i>) vegetation ▪ Sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) ▪ Brook lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) ▪ River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) ▪ Twait shad (<i>Alosa fallax</i>) ▪ Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) ▪ Bullhead (<i>Cottus gobio</i>) ▪ Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) ▪ White-clawed crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) <p>Annex I and Annex II species present as qualifying features, but not primary reasons for site selection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allis shad (<i>Alosa alosa</i>) ▪ Quaking bogs and transition mires 		
8. Is the proposal directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site for nature conservation?	No		
9. What potential hazards are likely to affect the interest features? (Refer to relevant sensitivity matrix and only include those to which the interest features are sensitive).			
Are the interest features potentially exposed to the hazard?			
Sensitive Interest Feature:	Potential hazard:	Potential exposure to hazard and mechanism of effect/impact if known:	



<p>Sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>), Brook lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>), River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>), Twaite shad (<i>Alosa fallax</i>), Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>), Bullhead (<i>Cottus gobio</i>), Allis shad (<i>Alosa alosa</i>), White-clawed crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) and Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</p>	<p>Disturbance</p>	<p>Otter are known to use this stretch of the river although no otter holts or resting areas were identified during an ecological site walkover survey. Limited suitable vegetation is present to enable otter to create holts or laying-up areas close to the canoe launch site, however it is feasible that the species could use the upper reaches of the bank to leave the river during high flows. Only minor vegetation clearance may be necessary and no areas of overhanging root systems or areas of dense vegetation will be affected.</p> <p>The SAC fish species are likely to be present in the section of river adjacent to the Backney Bridge site at specific times of the year. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the shallow section of river upstream of the bridge abutments is used by salmonids in spring and summer for spawning.</p> <p>The site is already used for recreational purposes and is likely to be subject to disturbance from people using the picnic facilities, and from anglers and canoeists informally accessing the river from this site. Some additional localised disturbance may occur when the canoe launch is being used as canoeists access and egress the river.</p> <p>Disturbance during construction could also occur due to the presence of and noise from, construction equipment, and from lighting of the river bank.</p>
<p>Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>), Sea lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>), Brook lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>), River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>), Twaite shad (<i>Alosa fallax</i>), Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>), Bullhead (<i>Cottus gobio</i>), White-clawed crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) and Allis shad (<i>Alosa alosa</i>).</p>	<p>Decline in water quality in River Wye causing disturbance, injury and mortality</p> <div data-bbox="787 2389 1260 2671"> <p>HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PLANNING SERVICES DEVELOPMENT CONTROL</p> <p>01 MAY 2010</p> <p>To</p> <p>ACK'D</p> </div>	<p>The construction has the potential to cause sediment release or pollution from construction materials and machinery. This could affect water quality in the River Wye which could in turn affect the SAC fish species and subsequently otter.</p>

10. Is the potential scale or magnitude of any effect likely to be significant?**a) Alone?**

The proposed canoe access scheme will not have a significant impact on the River Wye SAC. The reasons for this are outlined below.

- Facilitating canoe access to the river at the Backney Bridge picnic site could increase disturbance. Some localised disturbance may occur when the canoe launch is being used as canoeists access and egress the river. However, the site is already used for recreational purposes and is likely to be subject to disturbance from people using the picnic facilities, anglers and from canoeists informally accessing the river from this site. Recreation on the river, such as canoeing, rowing or boating also regularly takes place along this section of the river, but disturbance caused by these activities is usually temporary in nature at any one site as the activity quickly moves upstream or downstream. Disturbance may increase as a result of the site being used formally as a canoe launch area, however given the small scale of the access structure, which will deter large numbers of people from using it over a short period of time, and the existing disturbance at the site, it is considered that the use of the canoe launch is not likely to cause significant additional disturbance to the river in that area.
- Disturbance during construction could occur due to the presence of and noise from, construction equipment, and from lighting of the river bank. However, given the temporary nature of any disturbance and its limited duration, any disturbance caused is not likely to cause a significant effect. No significant impacts from vibration are expected due to the small scale and temporary nature of the work. To further minimise the risk of disturbance, construction works will not be carried out between one hour before dusk and one hour after dawn. During these times, all construction equipment will be removed from the river bank. Any site lighting required will be positioned so that no light falls onto the adjacent river bank. The installation of protective fencing around the works area will also be undertaken to prevent otters from accessing the construction site. All measures to avoid adverse impact on otters and their habitat will be set out in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority, which will be adhered to at all times during construction.
- The risk of sediment or pollutant release into the river occurring during construction has been minimised through careful design of the canoe launch. The scale of in-river working has been minimised through the use of a prefabricated timber structure, which comprises the majority of the access structure, and which avoids the need for significant bank re-profiling. The bottom steps of the canoe launch will be constructed from concrete to provide an anchor for the steps and ensure sufficient stability and durability for the structure. However, any risks associated with the installation of the concrete will be managed through adherence to appropriate pollution prevention methods, to ensure that no pollution events occur. All measures to avoid an adverse impact will be set out in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority, which will be adhered to at all times during construction.

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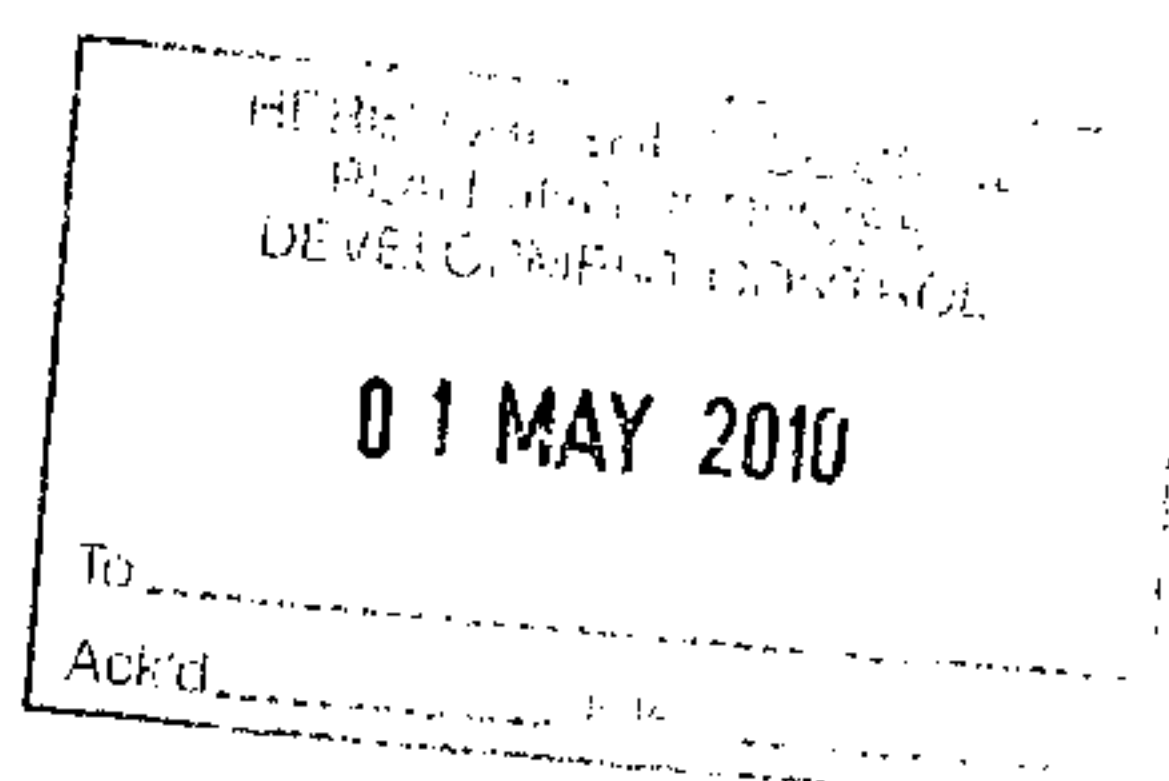
<p>b) In combination with other Environment Agency permissions and/or other plans or projects?</p>	<p><i>Flood Defence Capital Projects and Maintenance Works</i> At present, no flood defence maintenance works are planned for the River Wye in 2011.</p> <p><i>Severn River Basin Management Plan</i> The proposed works within this plan are to be completed on the Severn Estuary, which is over 50km from Backney Bridge. Therefore there will be no in combination effects on the proposed scheme.</p> <p><i>Severn Estuary Flood Risk Management Strategy</i> The Severn Estuary lies over 50km to the south of Backney Bridge and as a result it is not envisaged that any proposed schemes within this strategy will have an in combination effect with the proposed scheme.</p> <p><i>Wye and Usk Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMP)</i> This plan does not identify any proposed schemes on the River Wye during the 2011. Therefore there will be no in combination effect with the proposed scheme.</p> <p><i>Severn Shoreline Management Plan Scoping Report (2009)</i> The Severn Estuary is located over 50km to the south of Backney Bridge and as such, it is envisaged that the proposals within the Severn Shoreline Management Plan will not have an in combination effect with the proposed scheme.</p> <p><i>River Wye Salmon Action Plan</i> The Salmon Action Plans does not identify any proposed schemes and therefore there will be no in combination effect with the proposed scheme.</p> <p><i>Wye Waterway Plan</i> The Plan aims to ensure sustainable development of river for the benefit of wildlife and people and a core objective of the plan is to contribute to enhanced biodiversity in the waterway corridor, whilst increasing recreational use of the river. This includes an objective to provide three additional access points on the river by 2010 (see discussion below). The Plan does not include any other actions that could act in-combination with the proposed scheme.</p> <p><i>Ross-on-Wye and Kerne Bridge Canoe Access Projects</i> The Wye Waterway Plan includes an objective to provide three additional access points onto the river by 2010. The proposed canoe launch at Backney Bridge is being proposed to help fulfil this objective. In support of this objective, the Environment Agency also proposes to refurbish two existing canoe access points at Ross-on-Wye and Kerne Bridge to facilitate better and safer access to the river and to provide assisted disability access. As a result of this work, use of these sites may increase and this may facilitate greater numbers of canoeists to access the river. However, both sites are already well used and it is not anticipated that the refurbishment of the access facilities is likely to lead to a significant increase in canoe numbers on the river. As such, the proposed works at these two sites will not have an in-combination effect with the proposed scheme at Backney Bridge.</p>
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HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
PLANNING SERVICES
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

01 MAY 2010

SE/101043/F

	Hereford Canoe Access Project The Environment Agency has recently secured planning permission to install a new canoe access on the River Wye in the centre of Hereford. The canoe access is located approximately 30km upstream of the Backney Bridge site, and so given the significant distance between the two sites and the small scale of the project at Backney Bridge, there will be no in combination effects with the proposed scheme.	
c) In combination with permissions and/or plans/projects of other Competent Authorities?	Holme Lacy Canoe Access Project Herefordshire College of Technology has recently applied for planning permission for the construction of a wooden platform at the rivers edge to provide a canoe launch and landing point at its site in Holme Lacy, Hereford. The Holme Lacy site is located approximately 30km upstream of the Backney Bridge site, and so given the significant distance between the two sites and the small scale of the project at Backney Bridge, there will be no in combination effects with the proposed scheme. No other permissions, plans or projects that the proposed scheme could act in-combination with have been identified.	
11. Conclusion: Is the proposal likely to have a significant effect 'alone and/or in combination' on a European site?	The proposed canoe launch at Backney Bridge will not have a significant impact on the interest features of River Wye SAC. This is due to the relative small scale of the proposed works and the sensitive design of the canoe launch.	
Name of EA Officer:		Date:
NE comment on assessment: (If the NE officer disagrees with the conclusion of 10c, please include details of the other Competent Authorities which should be consulted).		
Name of NE Officer:		Date:
IF THE PROPOSAL IS LIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT AN APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT WILL BE REQUIRED (see part B for suggested scope).		



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