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CAWDOR GARDENS, ROSS-ON-WYE

REPTILE TRANSLOCATION STRATEGY

for

ROSS CHARITY TRUSTEES

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1 INTRODUCTION

A reptile survey carried out in the summer of 2016 showed that slow worms are present on the proposed development site at Cawder Gardens, and the results suggest that the population is large. A strategy is therefore required to avoid killing or injuring reptiles during construction. This will involve a mixture of on-site and off-site translocation.

2 FENCING

The working area will be fenced to prevent reptiles entering the area. The fencing will consist of a strong plastic semi rigid sheet of 1.2mm sheet thickness and 600mm tall with an anti-burrow design. It will be attached to timber posts at 1.5 m intervals using steel rebar fixing staples. Before instillation commences a site meeting will be held with an ecologist, who will supervise instillation and assess the fencing once installed and identify any need for modification.

The fencing will be monitored throughout the working period and repaired as necessary.

3 RECEPTOR SITES

The southern edge of the Cawdor Gardens site will be retained as a wildlife corridor. It will be protected by Heras fencing (or a comparable barrier) throughout the construction phase. Signs reading “Wildlife area, no access” will be fixed to the fence at 15m intervals. The following enhancement measures will be carried out:

- Trees overhanging the area will be cut back and their crowns raised, in order to reduce shading.
- Patches of bramble and other scrub will be cut back, reducing the overall coverage of the scrub across the wildlife corridor to 10%.
- Two hibernacula will be constructed under ecological supervision: at each location an area 1m wide by 2m long to a depth of approximately 700mm will be excavated with the long axis should be oriented east-west so that one of the long sides is south-facing. Turf will be stripped and saved. A mixture of split logs, bricks and rocks will be used to fill the excavated void and mound to a maximum height of 500mm. Logs will be stacked at 90^{o} to each other to ensure that small voids are created. The hibernacula will be covered lightly with ballast, a layer of topsoil and the turf

.

The on-site receptor area will be smaller than the area that will be lost, and currently supports slow worms. Therefore, despite the enhancement measures outlined above, off-site translocation will be required. The number of slow worms that can be

accommodated in the wildlife corridor will be assessed by an ecologist at the outset of the operation, but it is likely to be in the order of ten to twenty animals.

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust has been consulted regarding an off-site receptor site and have suggested a number of their sites. The most suitable appear to be within The Doward complex of sites, where there are areas of open habitat that currently lack populations of reptiles. The status of these areas means that their long term management can be assured. Enhancement works will be carried out at the receptor site; the details of these will be fully developed at the time of the works and a plan will be submitted to the local planning authority. They will include localised scrub clearance to increase the area of suitable habitat, which will have wider biodiversity benefits, and creation of hibernacula.

Management plans will be drawn up for both receptor sites and will be submitted to the local planning authority for approval.

4 TRANSLOCATION

Two hundred refugia, in the form of squares of roofing felt, will be laid in suitable habitat and left to bed in for a period of two weeks.

Following this they will be checked for slow worms until seven consecutive checks are made in suitable weather conditions without slow worms being found. The translocation will be carried out within the period March to September. It will be suspended during any periods of hot, dry weather when the animals become hard to find.

Slow worms found will be placed in a suitable container and moved to the receptor site where they will be released in suitable habitat on the same day.

A record of the translocation operation will be kept and a report submitted to the local planning authority.

5 SITE MANAGEMENT

Construction activities will not commence until the translocation has been completed to the satisfaction of the ecologist and local planning authority.

Before construction begins a destructive search will be carried out: piles of rubble and similar features will be dismantled under ecological supervision and any animals found will be translocated. The reptile fence will be maintained between the working area and wildlife corridor, and along any other boundaries where deemed necessary by the ecologist. All removal of reptile fencing will be carried out under ecological supervision.

The site manager and any other personnel will be thoroughly briefed by the ecologist on the necessity of reptile protection. A tool box talk will be given to all contractors working on the site.

The reptile fence and the Heras fence, with signs, will be checked daily and will be maintained between the wildlife corridor and the construction area throughout the working period.

6 REPORTING

The site will be visited during the five years following construction in order to ensure that habitats remain suitable. Refugia will be left in any part of the site where reptiles were found, and these will be checked for animals. Any habitat management identified will be carried out.