

Outline ecological appraisal for the installation of fishing platforms on the River Wye (SAC)

Site NGR: SO5056739432

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1. Introduction

The proposed works at Belmont, Hereford will involve installing 28 new timber fishing platforms on the banks of the River Wye (SAC). Minimal vegetation management will be required to create an access route to the pegs. No trees will be removed as part of the works.

This ecological appraisal was undertaken on behalf of the Hereford & District Angling Association to give an outline of the ecological receptors on site and identify and protected species or habitat constraints.

2. Methodology

The survey focussed primarily on searching for suitable habitat and signs of the following protected species:

- Reptiles- identifying any possible hibernacula or suitable habitat.
- Otter- searching along the riverbank for signs of otter (spraint, feeding remains, holts, tracks) and suitable habitat.
- Water vole- searching for signs (latrines, droppings feeding remains, burrows), and suitable habitat.
- Badger- searching for signs of activity (droppings, tracks, setts).
- Nesting birds- The timing of the survey was unsuitable to search for nesting birds, therefore the search was restricted to identifying suitable habitat which could be used for nesting during the season.

Additional notes were also taken on existing habitat features present. The survey took place outside the optimal months for surveying water vole and identifying flora.

3. Results

Habitats

The banks of the Wye in this location has a sparse covering of trees including willow, alder, ash, oak and horse chestnut (see Picture 1). Much of the bank surrounding the fishing pegs was bare earth (see Picture 2), suffering erosion from footfall and steps being cut out of the banks to access the river. The bare earth is also likely caused by Himalayan balsam which grows here in abundance. Plants that were present by the fishing pegs included rye grass, dock, common hogweed, willow herb, reed canary grass and nettle. In between the fishing pegs were trees with a scrub layer comprised of bramble, ivy and self-set willow.

Reptiles

The banks where fishing platforms are to be installed offer poor habitat suitability for reptiles due to the extensive bare earth. Scrub layers in between these fishing platforms may provide suitable habitat for reptiles.

Otter

A thorough daytime survey was undertaken on the banks to identify any signs of otter such as feeding stations or spraints. The banks are considered suitable for otter with riverside trees providing potential lye ups or feeding stations. Despite this no signs of otter were found.

Water vole

The river here is considered poorly suited to water vole. The banks offer little marginal vegetation suitable that would be suitable as a food source

Badger

No setts or signs of badger were found within the area [REDACTED]

Nesting birds

Limited potential for bird nesting was found on the areas of bank where fishing platforms are proposed. In between these pegs are areas of scrub which could provide nesting opportunities for birds.

4. Desk Study

A preliminary desk study using records from the Environment Agency and the local records centre identified the following species as being present in the vicinity:

- Aquatic species- Brown trout, Atlantic salmon, European eel, river lamprey, brook lamprey, sea lamprey, otter, allis shad and twaite shad
- Terrestrial species- [REDACTED]

5. Recommendations

Scrub habitat

The areas of scrub in-between the fishing platforms were some of the more interesting features in the area in terms of habitat potential for otter, bats, breeding birds and reptiles. These areas of scrub are not scheduled for removal. Any vegetation management required as part of the works should take place outside of the breeding bird season (March-August inclusive).

Invasive species

The abundance of Himalayan balsam on the banks of the river was apparent. The proposed works may disturb this, potentially causing this invasive species to spread. To avoid this the plant should be pulled and removed before it is able to set seed, ideally between June and July for the pull and remove technique of eradication.

Biosecurity measures need to be in place for the duration of the works and strictly adhered to by all site operatives. As a minimum the Check Clean and Dry campaign should be followed:

1. Check your equipment and clothing for live organisms, particularly in areas that are damp or hard to inspect.
2. Clean and wash all equipment, footwear and clothing thoroughly. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.
3. Dry all equipment and clothing as some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere

Further information on biosecurity can be found at the following link

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/checkcleandry/index.cfm>

Migratory fish

The River Wye is a known salmonid river therefore works should ideally take place outside the main salmonid spawning period (October-March). If this is not possible advice should be sought from an Environment Agency fisheries officer.

Pollution control

All works should aim to avoid pollution to the watercourse. Spill kits should be present on site and damage to the banks of the river avoided.

River Wye SAC

As the site here falls within the River Wye SAC, consultation with Natural England will be required.

6. Ecological enhancements

The site should be enhanced for the benefit of biodiversity by implementing the following measures:

- Improving the structure of the scrub by increasing the area and planting a more diverse mix of species such as hawthorn and goat willow.
- Planting black poplar in areas adjacent to the river.
- Creating wildflower areas using locally sourced seed. This will help the project align with the aims of the National Pollinator strategy by improving habitat for pollinating insects.
- Continue a Himalayan balsam eradication programme.

7. Appendices



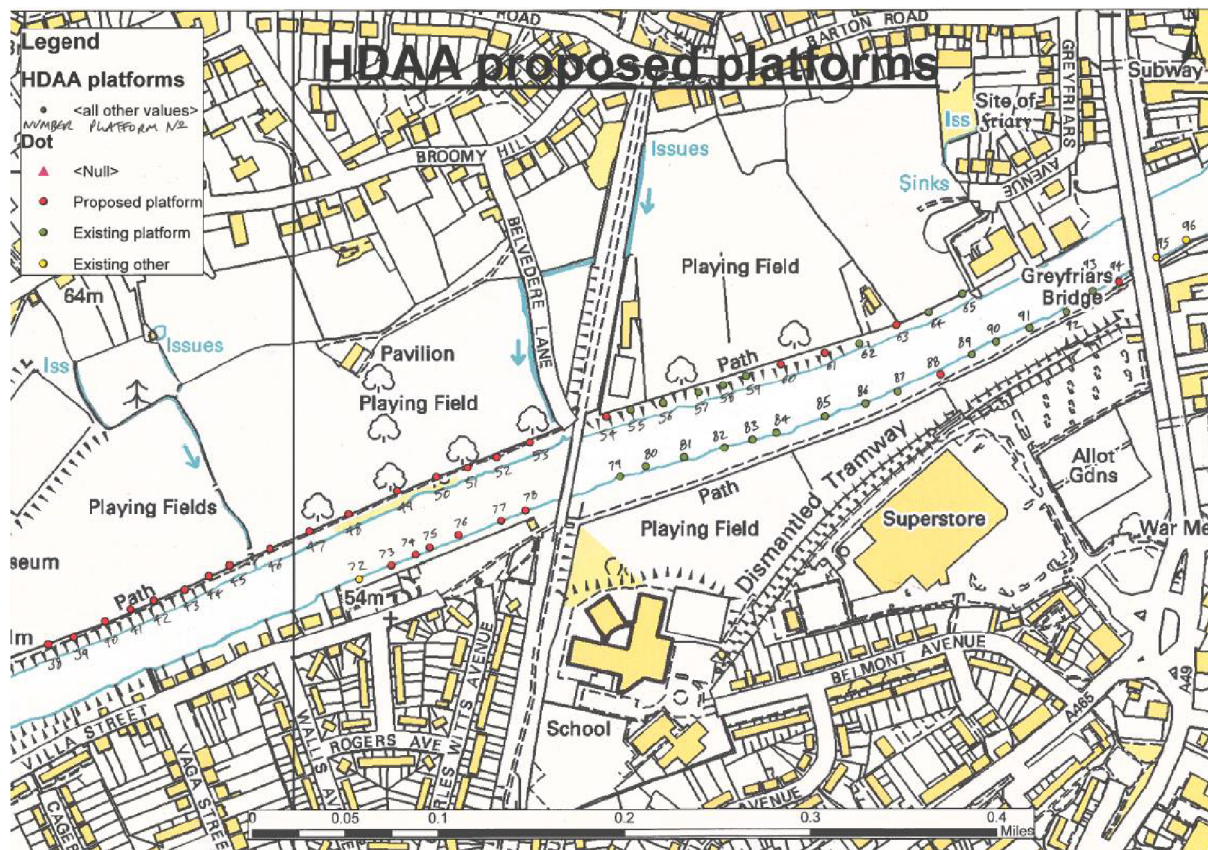
Picture 1- Typical bankside vegetation between fishing pegs.



Picture 2- Example of a fishing platform previously installed on site.



Picture 3- View of steps being cut into the river bank to access the river.



Map 1- Map showing proposed platforms to be installed on the banks of the Wye.