

Abermule Business Park
Abermule, Powys, SY15 6ND

Reptile Survey

For: Powys CC

01 June 2017

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Gerald Longley Ecological Consultants

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

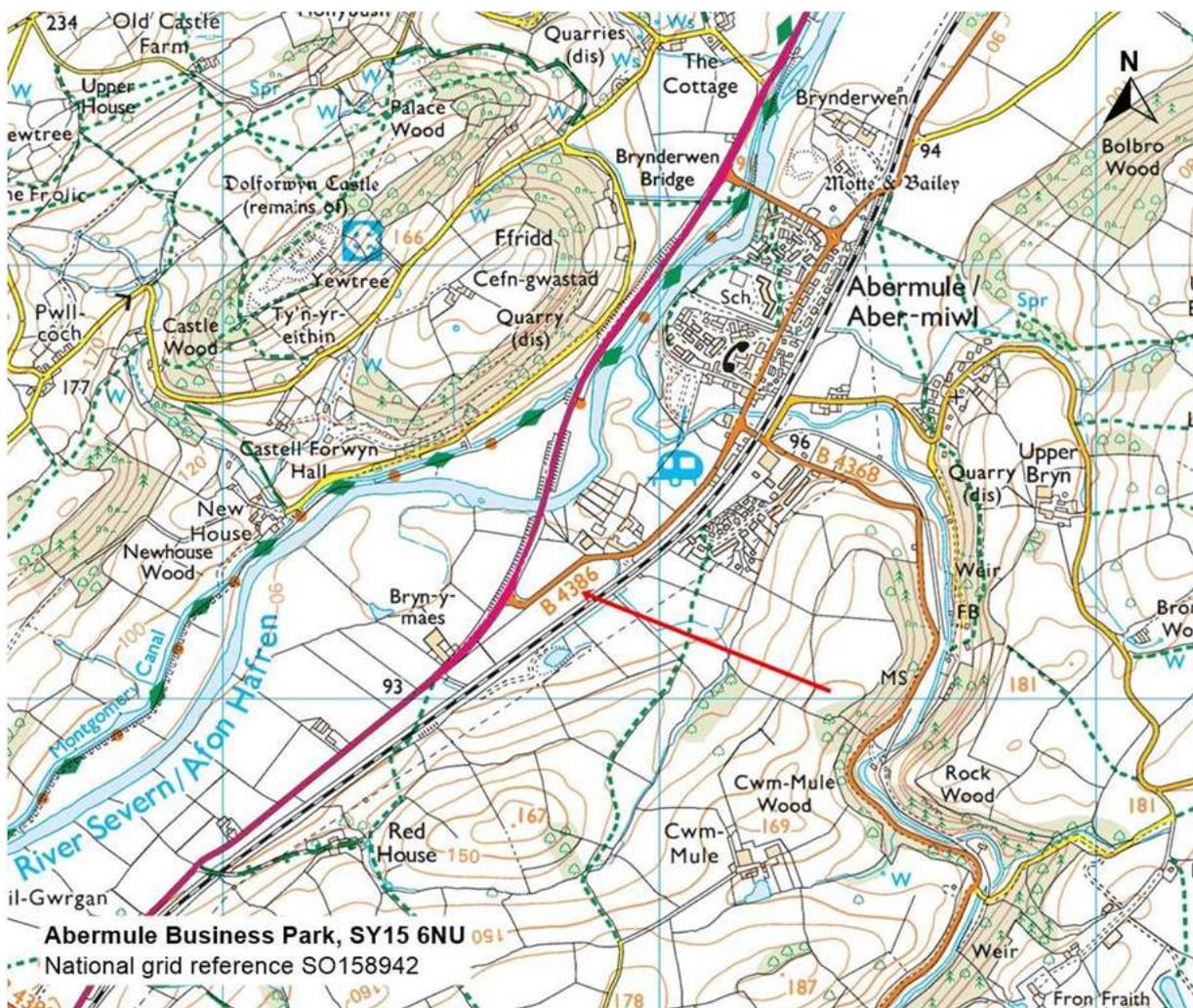
1.1 Background – Gerald Longley

Gerald Longley has been commissioned to undertake a Reptile Survey on Abermule Business Park, Abermule, Powys, SY15 6ND (Grid reference SO158942). He has more than two decades experience of wildlife surveying and, prior to working as an independent ecological consultant, held posts as Conservation Officer with Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust and Head of Shrewsbury Countryside Unit.

1.2 Background – This Survey

The request for this work comes from the applicant's and planning team's need to establish whether the actual land take, and the consequences of building works, habitat division and species dispersal in the surrounding area, could have any effect on protected species, especially reptiles. This follows an initial survey of the site and the production of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (GLEC-0896a-01) which recommended a reptile survey as there was habitat suitable for reptiles on the site. A full citation of the law with regard to reptiles and amphibians is given in the Appendices.

1.3 Site Location



1.4 Report Summary

Abermule Business Park, Abermule, Powys, SY15 6ND

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The 3.75ha Business Park site consisted of sheep grazed fields, hedges and woodland along the south side of the broad River Severn valley, just south of the large village of Abermule. Works to construct vehicular access, an estate road, sewers and services had been carried out approximately 7-10 years previously. The site has mature, native hedgerow boundaries, and 2 areas of plantation woodland along with areas of dumped soils/concrete beside and on a section of abandoned A483 road.

The survey followed the standard techniques of using visual observation and refuges. Fifty refuges of tin (10), roofing felt (10) and Onduline sheet (30) were laid out on 18 April 2017. Seven survey visits were then made between 02 May and 01 June 2017 on days when it was warm and ideally slightly overcast or “sun after rain” conditions. The surveyor was Gerald Longley.

A desk study carried out found records for grass snake for the 1km grid square SO1694 which included the northeast tip of the site (2014). No other reptile records were found in the 2km buffer.

No reptiles and but a single amphibian (a palmate newt) were recorded during the field surveys.

As no reptiles were recorded no Mitigation Plan for reptiles is proposed. A single palmate newt was found under a log by the refuges during one of the site surveys. There was a known breeding pond for all British newt species within 100m of the site where a newt survey had been carried out in 2017 by Gerald Longley as part of the ecological assessment of the proposed works.

All seven survey visits were carried out within the optimal part of the survey window (April and May is recommended) and on mainly warm, bright days, and they were carried out over a period of a month. The ideal two week refuge “settling in” period before surveys start was observed. All surveys were carried out in ideal conditions, with temperatures over 13°C with one survey at 24°C.

It is recommended that:

1. The apparent absence of reptiles at the site means there is no ecological constraint with regard to reptiles on the proposed development. If it were to go ahead without mitigation, it is very unlikely any reptiles would be negatively affected.
2. In the unlikely event of any common reptiles being found during development work they should be translocated to a safe area nearby by an ecologist.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims of the Survey

- To establish the presence or absence of reptiles on the site itself.
- To make recommendations accordingly.

2.2 Desk Study

Local records were researched – a 2km buffer.

2.3 Site Survey

A presence/absence survey was carried out for reptiles using standard techniques based on ARC (2010), Froglife (1999 & 2000), English Nature (2004 & 1996), CCW (2008), JNCC (1998) and HCT (2007). Two complementary survey methods were used: visual observation and refuges (corrugated tin sheet, bitumastic roofing felt and Onduline roofing sheets). The former involves searching whilst quietly walking areas suitable for basking reptiles and foraging amphibians and attempting to see them. The latter involves laying out refuges in areas of suitable habitat and looking on and under them for basking reptiles and sheltering amphibians.

Fifty (50) refuges were laid out across the site in suitably sunny areas of possible reptile and amphibian foraging habitat on 18 April 2017. These were of tin (10), roofing felt (10) and Onduline sheet (30). The tin sheets were laid out at the northern end nearer the small stream as these are often favoured by grass snake, and their presence nearer the stream may have been more likely than elsewhere on the site. The felt and Onduline were laid out on the West side of the site on mainly south east facing slopes of tipped soil and by dumped materials and stored items with loose soil, logs/wood and concrete pieces.

Seven survey visits were then made between 02 May and 01 June 2017 on days when the temperature was warm and ideally slightly overcast or "sun after rain" conditions. The surveyor was Gerald Longley.



3.0 RESULTS

The 3.75ha Business Park site consisted of sheep grazed fields, hedges and woodland along the south side of the broad River Severn valley, just south of the large village of Abermule. Works to construct vehicular access, an estate road, sewers and services had been carried out approximately 7-10 years previously. The site has mature, native hedgerow boundaries, and 2 areas of plantation woodland along with areas of dumped soils/concrete beside and on a section of abandoned A483 road.

3.1. Desk Study

A desk study carried out found records for grass snake for the 1km grid square SO1694 which included the northeast tip of the site (2014). No other reptile records were found in the 2km buffer.

No records of protected species, sites or habitats were found for the proposed development site itself.

3.2 Site Survey

No reptiles and but a single amphibian (a palmate newt) were recorded during the field surveys.

Detailed results are in Table 1.

Table 1: Reptile Survey			
Abermule Business Park, Abermule, Powys, SY15 6ND			
Refuges (50) laid out 18 April 2017			
Date/time	Temp. (°C)	Records under refuges	Direct observations
02/05/2017 11.01-11.59	14	none	none
05/05/2017 10.04-10.58	13	none	none
11/05/2017 11.37-12.31	17	none. 1 palmate newt under log	none
21/05/2017 09.55-11.20	14	none	none
26/05/2017 10.24-11.01	24	none	none
29/05/2017 10.31-11.35	20	none	none
01/06/2017 12.43-13.46	18	none	none

4.0 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Reptiles

Reptiles were not recorded during this site survey.

The presence of reptiles seems extremely unlikely given the lack of records made during these surveys carried out in mainly good weather conditions. Therefore no Mitigation Plan for reptiles is proposed.

4.2 Terrestrial Amphibians

A single palmate newt was found under a log near the felt and Onduline refuges during the site survey visit 11 May 2017.

4.3 Constraints

Six of the seven survey visits were carried out within the optimal part of the survey window (April and May is recommended) with only one outside this period and that only a day after on 01 June. They were on warm, bright days, and they were carried out over a period of more than thirty days. The ideal two week refuge “settling in” period before surveys start was observed. All surveys were carried out in ideal conditions, with temperatures at or over 13°C in all surveys and with one survey at 24°C.

As with all wildlife surveys, the data collected is only a representation of the species and species presence markers found during the actual dates of the survey. There are other seasons and many species are mobile or transitory.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The apparent absence of reptiles at the site means there is no ecological constraint with regard to reptiles on the proposed development. If it were to go ahead without mitigation, it is very unlikely any reptiles would be negatively affected.
2. In the unlikely event of any common reptiles being found during development work they should be translocated to a safe area nearby by an ecologist.

6.0 REFERENCES

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7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 Reptile and Amphibian Legislation

All native amphibian and reptile species are protected in England and Wales by specific laws to varying degrees. Amphibians and reptiles fall into three groupings with differing levels of protection:

- Widespread amphibians
- Widespread reptiles
- European protected species

Widespread Amphibians

The palmate newt, smooth newt, common frog and common toad are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, but are protected by Section 9(5) only. This refers to trade in animals (prohibition of sale and advertising for sale, etc.). Hence these species are not legally protected from killing, injury or development, although other considerations may be taken into account (e.g. existing site designations, planning guidance and Biodiversity Action Planning).

Widespread Reptiles

Four reptile species, slow-worm, viviparous (or common) lizard, grass snake and adder have additional protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Their inclusion on Schedule 5 gives 'partial protection' via Section 9(1) from intentional killing & injuring.

Section 10(3)c of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 offers a defence in situations where killing and injury are an incidental result a lawful action and could not reasonably have been avoided. Interpretation can be difficult, but courts have taken the view that activities, such as development, that lead to injuring or killing reptiles, can constitute an intentional act if insufficient care to avoid harm was taken.

European Protected Species

These are strictly protected species, great crested newt, natterjack toad, sand lizard and smooth snake, which are protected by a combination of both the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Schedule 5 - full protection) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (listed on Schedule 2). The latter are domestic implementation of the European Commission's "Habitats Directive" 1992, hence the term.

Protection of these "European protected species" differs from that of the widespread reptiles in that not only are they protected from killing and injury, but also from disturbance and capture. Additionally, the habitat of European protected species is legally protected, from damage or destruction. The development of a site where European protected species occur can therefore go ahead only if licensed by Natural England/Natural Resources Wales.

Note that the natterjack toad, sand lizard and smooth snake are rare species, occurring in a few specific locations, so they only infrequently coincide with building development issues. In contrast, the great crested newt has a large range in England and is hence more likely to occur in areas subject to building development. The great crested newt's strict protection stems from a decline throughout its European range – England is a stronghold area for the species.

7.2 Field Equipment used for Survey

Escort Mini temperature data logger (recording once per minute)
Silva compass

8.0 SITE PICTURES





