

# Preliminary Ecological Assessment



Project: Visitor Centre Newport Transporter Bridge, Newport

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## **1. Introduction**

The applicant is seeking permission to undertake a suite of works at the Newport Transporter Bridge, Usk Way, Newport. The works include the demolition of the current visitor centre and creation of a new larger building and repair works to the actual Transporter Bridge. The site is centred at ST 31681 86251 with the Transporter Bridge extending over the River Usk and landing on the east and western bank. The land within the site boundary currently consists of tarmac parking and access areas, a single detached brick visitor centre, semi improved grassland, scattered trees and shrub planting. Repair and improvement work to the actual transporter bridge is also included within the development proposals.

This report will assess the potential of the land within the site boundary to support habitats and species and the implications that any future development proposals could have on them.

### **1.1 Site Description**

The proposed development site comprises of two separate areas of land, a tarmac car park to the west of Usk Way and the current visitor centre and Transporter Bridge across both banks of the River Usk. The site is set within an urban context within the city of Newport. The Transporter Bridge historically allowed workers to cross the River Usk from the residential areas to the west of the river to employment and the industrial areas to the east. A permanent bridge would have impeded the flow of ships up and down the River Usk.

A tarmac access road leads to and from both sides of the Transporter Bridge. The area surrounding the land within the site boundary on the western bank is a mix of residential dwellings and light industrial units. The area surrounding the Transporter Bridge on the eastern bank is predominately light industrial units. A large playing field lies to the south east of the bridge.

The site sits to the south of the main expanse of Newport. Newport Docks are located approximately 400m to the south west.

### **1.2 Survey Constraints**

The site visit was undertaken during August which is within the optimum time to undertake phase 1 habitat surveys. A full visual inspection of the banks immediately adjacent to the development site boundary was undertaken on both sides of the bridge. However, due to health and safety reasons it was not possible to physically reach and inspect the banks.

A walk over survey of the bridge itself has been undertaken. While a good degree of visibility of the structure was gained it was not possible to access and closely inspect all areas of the bridge.

### 1.3 Surveyor Experience

Aislinn Harris is a full member of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Aislinn is an ecologist with 10 years experience undertaking a wide range of flora and fauna surveys. All survey work is undertaken following JNCC Phase 1 Survey Guidelines and CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2nd Ed 2017).

Aislinn is a licenced bat ecologist (S085699-1) with a wide variety of experience undertaking bat activity surveys. Aislinn was supported by two surveyors to undertake the bat surveys on the current visitor centre. Both additional surveyors have been undertaking bat activity surveys for at least 2 survey seasons and fully experienced.

## 2. Desktop Study

A data search was undertaken via South East Wales Biological Records Centre (SEWBRc) for the proposed development site and surrounding area. A 2km buffer zone was searched and records returned within 500m of site are noted below:

- Records for the presence of European eel - approximately 20m away,
- Shriill Carder Bee - approximately 230m away,
- Whiskered Bat - bat are call approximately 290m away,
- Weasel - approximately 380m away,
- Numerous bird records - dunnock, house sparrow, starling

Records of note returned for the rest of the buffer zone are detailed below:

- Brown long eared bat roost,
- Records of commuting and foraging noctule and common pipistrelle bat,
- Curlew
- Common Porpoise,
- Hedgehog
- Otter,
- Barn Owl,

### 2.1 Protected Sites

A data search for species records was undertaken for the proposed development site and surrounding area. The search also considered statutory and non-statutory protected sites.

#### Statutory Protected Sites

The proposed development site is directly adjacent to and crosses over the River Usk Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It is also directly adjacent to and crosses over the River Usk (Lower Usk) Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

### Non-Statutory Protected Sites

The Marshall's Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) lies along the eastern bank of the River Usk. The northern most tip of the SINC lies adjacent to the eastern dock of the Transporter Bridge and extends southwards along the River Bank.

There are no other non statutory protected sites within 2km of the proposed development site.

### 2.2 Potential Impacts to Protected Sites

The proposed development site lies directly adjacent to and crosses over the River Usk SAC and River Usk (Lower Usk) SSSI. The River is designated as an SAC based primarily on the presence of a number of migratory and non migratory fish species and otter. The presence of watercourses of plain to montane levels with *Ranunculus fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation is also a qualifying feature for this sites designation. The SSSI is designated based on the aquatic habitats and condition of the river and its plant and animal communities that use the feature across its range.

The Marshalls SINC (LIS6) is designated for its mosaic of neutral grassland, post industrial land and wetland habitat along the banks of the River.

The development proposals could have the potential to negatively impact on all these protected features. A scheme of avoidance, mitigation and possible compensation measures will be required. A separate Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) following CIEEM guidance (2019) will be undertaken and reported.

### **3. Phase 1 Survey**

#### **3.1 Habitats**

A walkover survey of the car park and visitor centre was completed 6th August 2019. A separate site visit was undertaken on the 2nd October which focused solely the bridge structure itself. The east and west bank anchorage houses, the winch house and underneath the east bank deck were subject to a separate site visit on the 13th and 15th of January 2020. For ease of reference the land within the planning application boundary is split into different parcels.

##### **Car Park Area**

The car park area is a small small parcel of land measuring approximately 0.1ha in size. The entire footprint of this part of the site consists of **tarmac car parking**. A few tall ruderal species have established in cracks in the tarmac and pavement edging. Species such as prickly sows thistle, groundsel and herb Robert were noted in such areas.

This portion of the site is roughly triangular in shape. Usk Way forms the east and southern boundary with a close board fencing along the south eastern edge. Concrete bollards and Brunel Street form the western boundary. A small roundabout and access road are present to the north of the site.

##### **Current Visitor Centre Area**

This portion of the site lies along the western edge of the River Usk and directly adjacent to the Transporter Bridge. This area is also roughly triangular in shape and measures approximately 0.23ha in size. A single '**L**' shaped building is present which is single storey and brick built with an artificial pitched slate tile roof. Fascia and soffit boards are present around the entire building.

The southern end of the site consists of **tarmac car parking** and **access road** for traffic off Usk Way to use the Transporter Bridge. The remaining northern part of the site is primarily **semi improved grassland** which appears to be regularly mown. Species including yarrow, daisy, dandelion, white clover, bristly oxtongue, hop trefoil, creeping cinquefoil, ribwort plantain and autumn hawkbit were noted in the grassland. The very northern edge of the site is **bramble scrub** with a single tree, thought to be a species of cherry.

A small stand of **ornamental shrub planting** is present to the north western edge of the site, close to Usk Way. The planting appeared to be mostly non native with a species similar to campus grass present. Some you willow species were also present in the stand Three metal

benches and a bin were situated to the east of the shrub planting positioned for the view across the river. A metal railing runs along the river edge of the semi improved grassland and car parking.

A small portion of the land adjacent to the river sits at a lower level to the semi improved grassland and car parking in the centre of the site. This parcel of land sits approximately 1.5m lower with a timber and concrete section wall supporting the higher land. This portion is considered to be **semi improved grassland** as well but its subject to periodic flooding. The grassland has a longer sward and is thought unlikely to be routinely cut. The grassland appeared to be dominated by common couch grass and with frequent wild carrot. Some bramble scrub, hoary mustard and hemp agrimony is present on the higher edges of the grassland.

### Newport Transporter Bridge

The Transporter Bridge is a metal structure approximately 55m high which spans the length of the River Usk. A high level boom bridges the river and contains a metal track on which a moving carriage can pass to and fro. A gondola is suspended from the carriage which can carry passengers from opposite banks across the river by means of a haulage cable. The foundations of the bridge sit on the banks of the river. The foundations and retaining walls of the bridge appears to be made from stone blocks.

A motor house is located on the eastern bank. The building is a single storey structure but is raised up on a metal platform to allow traffic to flow to and from the bridge. The house is built from single skin wooden planking and houses the winch for the bridge. No attic void is present but felt tiles are present on the exterior of the roof with internal wooden sarking.

### Anchorage Houses

Two stone built double storey structures are present on the east and western banks of the bridge to help with the stability of the bridge. Both buildings have the exact same layout and internal structure. The anchorage houses are stone built and rectangular in shape with a flat roof. Two sets of cables from either side of the bridge lead into two separate chambers in the building. A grilled entrance cover allows human access into the chamber each set of cables are sunken into. Internally the cables extend downwards to anchor points. The floor of the chamber is concrete with the steps allowing human access along the entire chamber. The side walls and roof of each chamber of stone with good condition mortar.

### Eastern Deck

Repair works to the eastern deck are required. A full visual inspection underneath the access deck has been completed. Silt and mud have built up underneath the deck over the years

which allows clearance underneath the lowest part of the deck metal work of approximately 1m. There is no vegetation underneath the deck only mud. Whilst the metal work of the deck is in visibly poor condition, the stonework around the walls and metal appeared tight.

A full list of species recorded can be found in Appendix 1. No invasive non native species were identified within the site boundary.

### 3.2 Great Crested Newts

Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are a European protected species and are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In summary, they are protected from:

- Deliberate capture, killing and injuring,
- Deliberate disturbance of a breeding site or resting place,
- Deliberate taking or destroying of eggs,
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

Great crested newts (GCN) are listed on schedule 5 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 which protects them from intentional or reckless disturbance or obstruction when using a structure or place for shelter and / or protection. It is also an offence to sell, offer or expose for sale a great crested newt. Great crested newt and common toad are listed in section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes them key species to sustain and improve biodiversity.

There are no records of Great Crested Newt (GCN) within 2km of the site.

No ponds are present within the proposed development site. The habitats within all areas of the proposed development site are thought to be unsuitable for use by GCN as they provide negligible protection from predation, foraging or commuting use. The periodic flooding of the longer grassland along the river edge makes this habitat unsuitable for use as well.

Given the lack of local GCN records and negligible suitability of the habitats within the development site boundary it is thought unlikely that GCN are present within the site. No further recommendations will be required for this species.

### 3.3 Dormice

The dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) is a European protected species and is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In summary, they are protected from:

- Deliberate capture, killing and injuring,
- Deliberate disturbance of a breeding site or resting place,
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

Dormouse are listed on schedule 5 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 which protects them from intentional or reckless disturbance or obstruction when using a structure or place for shelter and / or protection. It is also an offence to sell, offer or expose for sale a native dormouse. Dormouse is listed in section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes them a key species to sustain and improve biodiversity.

There are no records for dormouse within 2km of the site.

The proposed development site is considered to have negligible potential for use by dormice as it lacks suitable habitat to support this species. The site is also highly isolated from any adjacent habitat suitable for use by dormouse such as woodland or dense bramble scrub.

Given the lack of dormouse records within the area and the negligible suitability of the habitats within the site boundary, it is considered highly unlikely dormice are present within the site boundary. No further surveys are recommended for this species.

### 3.4 Bats

All British bats are a European protected species and are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In summary, they are protected from:

- Deliberate capture, killing and injuring,
- Deliberate disturbance of a breeding site or resting place,
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) also protects all species of British bat and their roosting locations. British bats are protected from intentional or reckless disturbance and or obstruction of their roosting places. Barbastelle, bechstein, noctule, brown long eared, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, greater horseshoe and lesser horseshoe bats are also listed in section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes them a key species to sustain and improve biodiversity.

### Tree Assessment

Trees within the site boundary were subject to ground level assessment for the likely potential presence for bats during the phase 1 survey. Any trees felt to have potential for roosting bats would be subject to a further detailed survey following current BCT Guidelines (2016).

The scattered trees within the proposed development site boundary are all mature and of a similar age. It is considered possible that they were planted as part of a soft landscaping scheme for the current visitor centre when built. No visible gaps and cracks suitable for roosting use were noted within the trees during the site visit. The trees were all well spaced out allowing good visibility around each tree.

### Building

As detailed above, there are two buildings present within the site boundary. The building on the western bank is currently used as a **visitor centre** for the Transporter Bridge. An internal and external survey of the building was completed 6th August to assess the potential suitability of the building for use by bats. Whilst in general the condition of the building was thought to be good, a few gaps were noted underneath slightly raised tiles scattered across all elevations of the roof. Given the potential access points into the building and the proximity of the structure to the River Usk, the building as assessed as having moderate potential for roosting use by bats.

The **motor house** building is present on the eastern bank of the river. An internal and external inspection of the building was completed on the 2nd October and 13th January. The building is raised off the ground on a metal frame. A narrow walk way around the building allows access around the structure but makes it difficult to see the roof line. The roof can only be viewed from the transporter bridge itself. A narrow gap in the roof for winch cables to access into the building is present. The walls of the building are single skim and provide no suitable roosting location for bats. The roof of the building appears to have gaps between the wooden parking and roof tiles. No evidence of the presence of bats was found at any point during the inspection of this building. The works proposed to this building are cosmetic and will not affect the roof line. Based on the scope of the works and the limited potential for bats to be present a precautionary approach to works on this building is recommended.

All areas in both **anchorage houses** were fully inspected for the potential presence of bats. The external masonry and walls are in very good condition with no potential gaps or cracks suitable for bats present. The metal entrance covers, into the sections where the support cables are sunken, have an access hatch of approximately 1m by 1m which is grilled. The space between the grills is approximately 5cm. Some of the metal work around the cables has degraded also creating suitable access into the interior for bats. The stone work inside the anchorage house is also in excellent condition. No gaps in the masonry on the walls or ceiling were noted. No bat droppings or insect wings were found on the internal floors either. Whilst the structures would appear superficially suitable for hibernation use and occasional summer use by bats, given the lack of evidence of presence and the good condition of the walls it seems highly unlikely the buildings are used by bats. However, whilst unlikely the potential

presence of bats cannot be ruled out. Therefore a precautionary approach to works on these buildings are recommended.

As per BCT survey Guidelines (2016) two activity surveys were completed on the building. The survey methodology and findings are detailed in section 4 of this report.

### Transporter Bridge

A scoping survey of the Transport Bridge was completed on 2nd October 2019. The scoping survey assessed the suitability of the bridge for roosting use by bats. The vast majority of the bridge was visually inspected during the site visit, using binoculars where necessary. In general the structure is single sheet metal frame for with very few gaps or cracks suitable for roosting use by bats. There are some sections of metal work on the bridge that form a box, generally around different bridge sections joining. However, these box areas are large and not the crevices generally used by bats. The metal work all appears to be very tight with no suitable crevices. Given the height of the bridge the temperature variations along it are likely to be extreme. The bridge appears to have been tightly designed to prevent water ingress etc and to keep the bridge stable.

Lighting is currently present within the transporter bridge. Flood lighting is present at the base and top of both towers and on the boom directed back towards the towers. Lighting levels along the bridge structure are also thought to make it less attractive for roosting use by bats.

The bridge itself is assessed as having very low potential for use by roosting bats. Whilst dedicated bat surveys are not recommended on the bridge, some precautionary measures in respect to bats are recommended.

### 3.5 Otters

The common otter (*Lutra lutra*) is a European protected species and is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In summary, they are protected from:

- Deliberate capture, killing and injuring,
- Deliberate disturbance of a breeding site or resting place,
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

Otter are listed on schedule 5 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 which protects them from intentional or reckless disturbance or obstruction when using a structure or place for shelter and / or protection. It is also an offence to sell, offer or expose for sale an otter. Otter

is listed in section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which makes them a key species to sustain and improve biodiversity.

There are numerous records for otter along the River Usk however the closest record is just over 1km from the proposed development site. Otter are one of the primary species for designation of the River Usk SAC and taken into consideration for the SSSI designation so although there are no closer records to the proposed development site it is felt safe to assume this species are very likely to move up and down the section of river around the proposed development site.

Otters tend to prefer secluded locations for their holts to help prevent them being disturbed by other animals. Whilst the presence of otter in an urban location would usually not be expected apart from on the odd occasion, it is thought otter move along this section of the river frequently. Given the size of the River Usk and the presence of the city of Newport adjacent to it, it is considered likely that otters in this area may have become accustomed to a higher level of disturbance than usual. Also the height of the river banks in this area reduce the presence of humans immediately adjacent to the river channel, allowing otter to potentially move up and down the river without too much disturbance.

No evidence of the presence of otter was noted during the site visit, however access along the river bank was restricted. Vantage points along the river bank were gained to view the habitats however, it is possible some parts of the bank and bridge footings could not be seen. No footprints were visible in mud and no otter spraint was observed along the river or within the site. The retaining walls supporting the higher areas of land along the river edges on the bridge footings appeared to be intact with negligible potential for a holt location. The river is also tidal and any suitable locations along the bank and retaining wall are likely to periodically flooded making them less attractive for use.

An inspection underneath the eastern deck of the transporter bridge was possible on the 13th January 2020. Footprints were noted in the mud underneath the bridge which are thought to be from otter. The deck and masonry supports were inspected for any signs of use by otter for breeding or resting. The structures do not offer any gaps or cracks suitable for mammal use.

Whilst it is though unlikely that a holt or resting up site for otter is present within the site boundary or adjacent habitats, the potential cannot be ruled out based on the site visit completed to support this report. Otters do use the river to commute and forage and the footprints underneath the eastern deck provide clear evidence they are in the area. As such a series of precautionary measures are recommended to ensure otter movement along the river will not be impacted on.

### 3.6 Badger

Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. In summary they are protected from:

- Taking, killing or injuring;
- Cruelty;
- Interfering with a badger sett;
- The selling and possession of badgers;
- Marking or ringing.

Badgers are also listed on schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended.

Badgers tend to have a variety of setts with different uses and functions within the territory for the family unit. In general there is usually a main sett which the family will use the most. There are then annex, subsidiary and or outlier setts which depending on family structures and environmental pressures may be used at different times of the year. As female badgers tend to have their cubs over winter the disturbance and damage of badger setts is prohibited between December and June inclusive. NRW are the licensing body for any actions which may contravene the above legislation.

No records for the presence of badger within 2km of the proposed development site.

No evidence of the presence of badger, such as sett, latrine or digging, was noted within or habitats adjacent to the proposed development site. Badgers favour a dry sloping site for digging their setts preferably within woodland or even under a large hedgerow bank. Badgers are creatures of habit and tend to follow regular pathways between their setts and foraging grounds. Due to the lack of evidence of presence within the site and no local records, it is considered highly unlikely that badger are present. No further surveys for this species are recommended.

### 3.7 Birds

All breeding birds are protected under schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended. Under this Act it is an offence to:

- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.
- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

Enhanced protection is afforded to species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, this additional protection makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

The mudflats underneath and around the bridge could potentially be used by wading birds for feeding. No birds' nests were directly noted during the walkover survey however the trees and scrub could be used for nesting.

Four old birds nests were visible in both towers on the east and west banks of bridge. Access to the top of the towers was not allowed during the site survey but the structure and size of the nest would indicate a crows nest. Anecdotal evidence from maintenance staff suggest that crows and a Peregrin falcon use the bridge from time to time. There were some gaps suitable for bird nesting within the Transporter Bridge structure itself. The gaps were mainly associated with metal box like structures where struts join the main boom. Some pieces of metal in the towers create sort of platforms within the structure which also could be used for nesting or temporary respite. However the height of the bridge and the extreme weather experiences at this height are thought to make the structure less suitable for nesting. Precautionary measures for nesting birds are detailed in the recommendation section of this report.

### 3.8 Reptiles and Amphibians

Reptile such as the slow worm, common lizard, adder and grass snake are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(as amended). They are protected from killing, injuring and sale. They are also listed in section 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006.

The four widespread species of amphibian i.e. the smooth and palmate newts, common frog and common toad, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(as amended) by Section 9(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This section prohibits sale of these species. Our common native amphibians are only protected from sale.

No records for the presence of any reptile or amphibian species has been returned within 2km of the site by the data search. However, the lack of records may be as a result of under recording rather than an absence of these species in the local area.

Reptiles prefer a mosaic of habitats with diverse vegetation structure creating open areas and nearby cover to provide protection from predators and the elements. The land within the proposed development site does not offer suitable potential habitat for use by reptiles. The car park areas provides no shelter or cover suitable for use by reptiles. The parcel of land surrounding the current visitor centre is isolated by the river to the east and busy road to the west. Whilst the habitat within this area is slightly more diverse the grassland is kept well

mown providing no shelter, cover or foraging habitat suitable for use by reptiles. Based on the isolation of the proposed development site from adjacent habitat suitable for use by reptiles, the overall very low potential of the habitats within the site to support reptiles and lack of local records it is considered unlikely that reptiles are present in the site. No further recommendations are made for these species.

### 3.9 White clawed freshwater crayfish

The white clawed freshwater crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) is a European protected species and is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017. In summary, they are protected from:

- Deliberate capture, killing and injuring,
- Deliberate disturbance of a breeding site or resting place,
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place.

There are no records for the presence of white clawed crayfish within 2km of the site returned through the data search.

White clawed freshwater crayfish prefer relatively hard, mineral rich waters on calcareous rocks. It is typically found in watercourses of 0.75m to 1.25m deep, but can occur in very shallow streams (about 5cm of water) and in deeper, slow flowing rivers (2.5m). Other environments suitable include canals, streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs and water filled quarries.

The lower reaches of the River Usk are thought to be unsuitable for the presence of White clawed crayfish. No further recommendations will be made for this species.

#### **4. Bat Survey Results**

The current visitor centre building is proposed for demolition as part of the development. The building was assessed as having moderate potential for roosting use by bats due to its location adjacent to the River Usk and gaps noticed within the roof structure. Two activity surveys were completed focused on the building, photos of potential access points are provided in Appendix 1.

##### **4.1 Bat Activity Surveys**

Two bat surveys were undertaken on the building. Appendix 4 shows the locations of surveyors during each activity survey.

##### **1) Dusk Activity Survey - 11th August 2019**

**Weather Conditions** - 19°C, warm, slight breeze

**Surveyors Present** - Aislinn Harris, Scott Watkins and Alan Harvey

**Sunset Time** - 20:43

A low number of Common and Soprano Pipistrelle Bats Pipistrelle bats were also observed arriving from the east and diverging both north and south along the waters edge . No bats emerged from the building.

##### **2) Dusk Activity Survey - 30th August 2019**

**Weather Conditions** - 15°C, light cloud, dry.

**Surveyors Present** - Scott Watkins and Alan Harvey

**Sunset Time** - 20:03

A low number of Common and Soprano Pipistrelle Bats Pipistrelle bats were also observed arriving from the east and diverging both north and south along the waters edge. No bats emerged from the building.

##### **4.2 Bat Activity Survey Results**

No evidence of the presence of roosting bats were found within the current visitor centre. A number of common bat species were found to be commuting and foraging along the River Usk.

## **5. Recommendations and Mitigation**

It is understood that the development proposals entail the demolition of the current visitor centre and creation of a new larger visitor centre within the land directly adjacent to the Transporter Bridge, on the western bank. Some repair and improvement works will also be undertaken on the structure of the Transporter Bridge, motor house and anchorage houses. It is unclear if any work will be undertaken to the car park area across Usk Way but improvements to link the parking and the visitor centre are likely.

Construction works and long term increased use adjacent to the River Usk SAC and SSSI could have potentially negative effects on the integrity of these protected sites. A series of avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures are required to ensure the development proposals do not affect the SAC and SSSI.

It is proposed to discharge all foul water into the local sewerage system, however it is necessary to discharge the surface water run off into the River Usk. The discharge will be made up of run off from the roof of the visitor centre, pedestrian paving and access roads. SUDs measures will be implemented to ensure the water discharged into the river is as clean as possible. Permeable paving with a permeable sub base to filter and capture any pollution prior to water discharging into the river will be proposed. The proposed run off rate during heavy periods of rain fall will be 7.2 litres per second. Water will not be continuously discharged into the river.

The exact details and scope of the work to be included under the development proposals are not finalised yet. As such broad recommendations are made below to help inform the design process. Our general recommendations are made below:

### **Habitats**

- All foul water will be discharged into the local sewage network. Surface water run off will be treated via SUDs and then discharged into the River Usk.
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan will be required to ensure adequate pollution prevention measures are designed and implemented during the construction phase of the development works. The management plan must include, but not be limited to,
  - storage of building materials and fuel away from the river bank to avoid spills,

- Storage of machinery away from the river bank to avoid fuel spills or parts being lost,
  - Measures to prevent the run off of building materials and soils etc into the River Usk during periods of rain or wind.
- At present it is understood that no works are proposed to take place within the river or to the river banks. All works will be adjacent to the river or on the Transporter Bridge which spans the River Usk. Any work within the river or river bank could affect the habitats within the SAC and SSSI. Work is considered highly unlikely to affect The Marshalls SINC which lies along the eastern bank of the River Usk.
- Any paint removal and repainting work to the bridge will be completed in a secure capsule to prevent paint and paint flakes falling into the river. It is extremely important to ensure no materials from the bridge fall into the river.

### Species

- Otter and a wide variety of bat species are known to use the River Usk for commuting and foraging purposes. Insensitive lighting can have a detrimental effect on nocturnal animals and can lead to species avoiding illuminated areas. Lighting of the building and pedestrian walkways is considered likely to be included with the building design. A sensitive lighting strategy for the proposed development site will be required. Lighting will be designed to avoid any illumination along the river.
- Whilst the presence of bats within the bridge and buildings on site is thought highly unlikely, a precautionary approach will be undertaken. All site contractors will be given a toolbox talk which covers the legal protection given to bats, what they look like, where they may be found and what to do if bats are found at any point during the works on site which affect any structure. Should bats be found, a suitably experienced ecologist will be contacted for advice which may include that work to that area stop and a licence is sought from NRW.
- Like for like repair work are proposed for both anchorage houses. Given the materials and structure of these buildings they are considered to have low hibernation potential and negligible potential for summer use. Whilst the potential for use by bats is thought to be extremely low, it cannot be ruled out. Therefore it is proposed to restrict the timing of works to the summer when bats are least likely to be present, works will follow an agreed method statement and a visual inspection on the internal sections of the buildings will be completed immediately prior to any works commencing.

- Minor repair works to the walls and windows to the motor house, the rainwater goods and painting of the building. The walls and windows do not have any potential for use by roosting bats. Whilst the potential for use by bats is thought to be extremely low and restricted to the roof of the building only, it cannot be ruled out. Therefore it is proposed to restrict the timing of works to the winter when bats are least likely to be present and for works to follow an agreed method statement
- It is understood that the lighting on the bridge will not increase. The current lights will be replaced with softer, more focused lighting in the same locations. Lighting levels within the river from the bridge will remain the same. Light spill onto the river could possibly decrease as the proposed new lighting will be more focused on the bridge structure.
- The new proposed visitor centre is a much larger building than that which is currently present. The new building will have a number of windows overlooking the river and Transporter Bridge. Avoidance and mitigation measures to reduce lighting along the river bank will be required. Measures such as the no external lighting on the eastern elevation of the building, timed lighting, a light reducing film applied to all windows overlooking the river and screen planting or fencing along the river banks should all be explored.
- Any works which affect the retaining walls of the river bank or foundations of the Transporter Bridge will be preceded by a visual assessment of the areas for potential holt or resting up sites for use by otter.
- There is some limited potential for use of the bridge by nesting birds. It is understood that works to the bridge will commence in September 2020 and continue for approximately 2 years. Given the length of the project, the variety of work across the large structure and height of the bridge it would be difficult to avoid the areas with potential for nesting birds or put up nesting restrictions. Instead it is proposed to start work outside of the nesting season and the disturbance from works which will naturally dissuade most birds from nesting. The site foreman and staff will be provided with a toolbox talk covering the signs of nesting birds. If a nest is created / found during the works period, an ecologist will be contacted for advice. Advice is likely to include that the active nest is cordoned off with an exclusion zone of at least 5m around it until the chicks have fledged.
- The trees and bramble scrub within the site boundary also have potential for use by nesting birds. Any vegetation removal or tree works removal must be completed outside of the bird nesting season of March to August inclusive. If this is not achievable an ecologist must inspect any trees or ground vegetation with the potential

for birds to be present, for active birds' nests prior to removal works beginning. If an active nest is identified a buffer zone of 5m around the nest must be observed until the chicks have fledged. Only then can the vegetation be removed.

The Environment Act (Wales) 2016 places a duty on competent authorities such as Newport City Council to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Exact details of any future development are not currently known. The below bullet points are some simple measures that could be achieved to enhance the biodiversity of the site:

- The provision of bird boxes of varying design in suitable locations within the development site. These could include sparrow terrace boxes as well as small and large holed boxes on the mature trees retained during works.
- The provision of native wildflower planting or borders would be beneficial for local wildlife.
- All fencing around the site will be hedgehog friendly in design. A friendly design is considered to allow the passage of small animals across the site. It should provide either a continuous gap between the bottom of the fence and ground of approximately 5cm or gaps cut a set distance along fencing.

## **Appendix 1 – Plant Species Recorded**

| <b>Species</b>                   | <b>Common Name</b>  |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Trees &amp; Scrub</b>         |                     |
| <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>       | sycamore            |
| <i>Prunus sp</i>                 | cherry sp           |
| <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg      | bramble             |
| <i>Salix sp</i>                  | willow sp           |
| <i>Acer palmatum</i>             | Japanese Maple      |
|                                  |                     |
| <b>Herbaceous Plants</b>         |                     |
| <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>     | false oat-grass     |
| <i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>        | mugwort             |
| <i>Geranium robertianum</i>      | herb Robert         |
| <i>Hedera helix</i>              | ivy                 |
| <i>Anthroxanthum odoratum</i>    | Sweet vernal grass  |
| <i>Helminthotheca echinoides</i> | Bristly ox tongue   |
| <i>Trifolium repens</i>          | White clover        |
| <i>Taraxacum sp</i>              | Dandelion           |
| <i>Achillea millefolium</i>      | Yarrow              |
| <i>Elymus repens</i>             | Common couch        |
| <i>Daucus carota</i>             | Wild carrot         |
| <i>Trifolium campestre</i>       | Hop trefoil         |
| <i>Rumex crispus</i>             | Curled dock         |
| <i>Bella perennis</i>            | Daisy               |
| <i>Scorzonoides autumnalis</i>   | Autumn hawkbit      |
| <i>Plantago major</i>            | greater plantain    |
| <i>Urtica dioica</i>             | common nettle       |
| <i>Potentilla reptans</i>        | Creeping cinquefoil |
| <i>Veronica persica</i>          | Field speedwell     |

## **Appendix 2 – Site Photographs**

Visitor centre south elevation



Visitor centre west elevation



Visitor centre north elevation



View of visitor centre roof with slight raised tiles



View of tight soffit board



Preliminary Ecological Assessment  
Visitor Centre Newport Transporter Bridge



View of Winch House



View underneath the winch house



Interior view of the winch house



Winch House south elevation



Winch House north elevation



Winch House east elevation

Preliminary Ecological Assessment  
Visitor Centre Newport Transporter Bridge



View of bridge from eastern bank



View of boom



View of bridge tower



View of potential nest site suitable for birds



View underneath tower platform



View of tight metal work

Preliminary Ecological Assessment  
Visitor Centre Newport Transporter Bridge



View from Visitor Centre site looking north



View of Visitor Centre site looking south



View of retaining wall and bridge footings



View of ornamental planting



View of bridge loading western bank



South boundary of visitor centre site

Preliminary Ecological Assessment  
Visitor Centre Newport Transporter Bridge



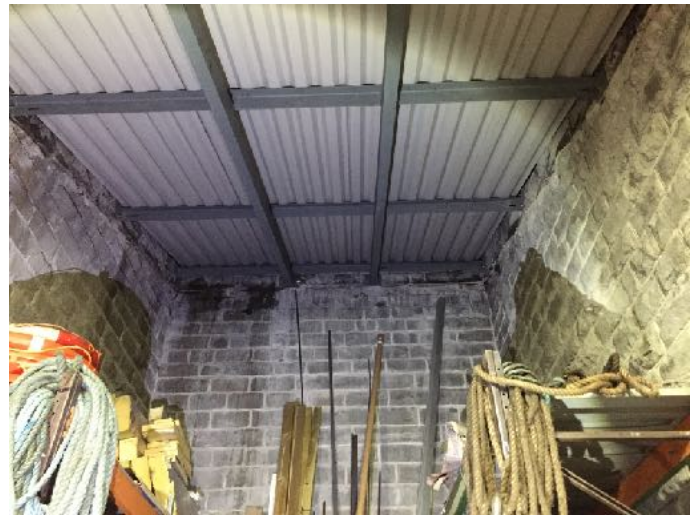
View of car park looking north



Western boundary of car park



East bank anchorage house



Store room of east anchorage house



View of chamber that holds cables



View of concrete floor

Preliminary Ecological Assessment  
Visitor Centre Newport Transporter Bridge



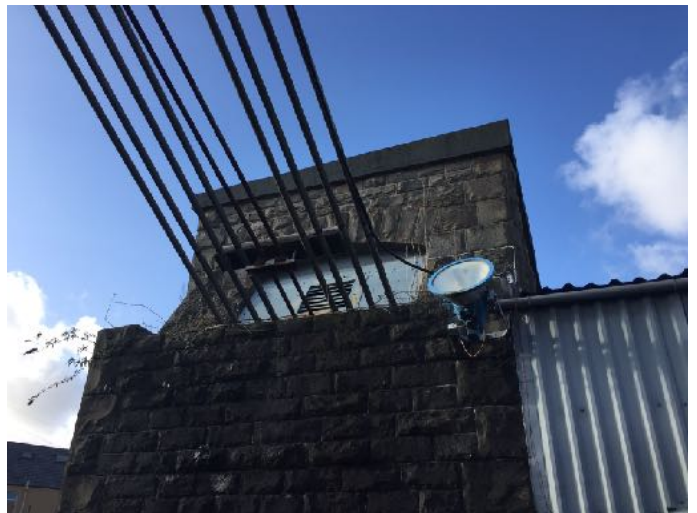
View of grilled entrance cover



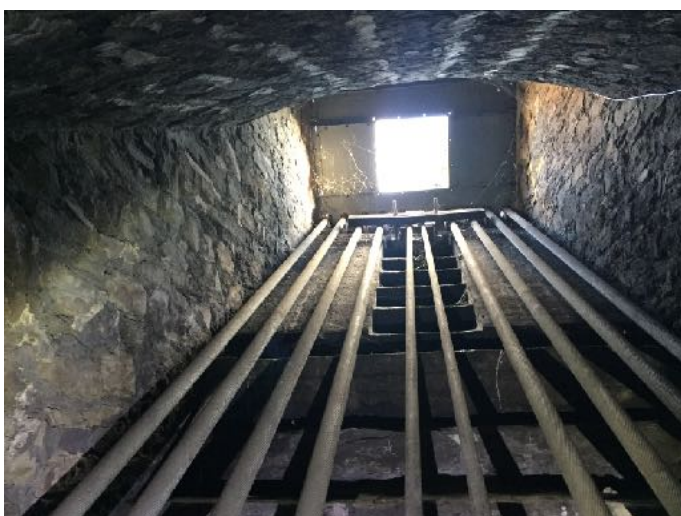
West Bank anchorage house



West Bank anchorage house



West Bank anchorage house



View of chamber entrance



View of cables sunken into the ground

Preliminary Ecological Assessment  
Visitor Centre Newport Transporter Bridge



Side view of east bank deck



View underneath east bank deck



Otter prints in mud under deck



River facing wall of east bank deck



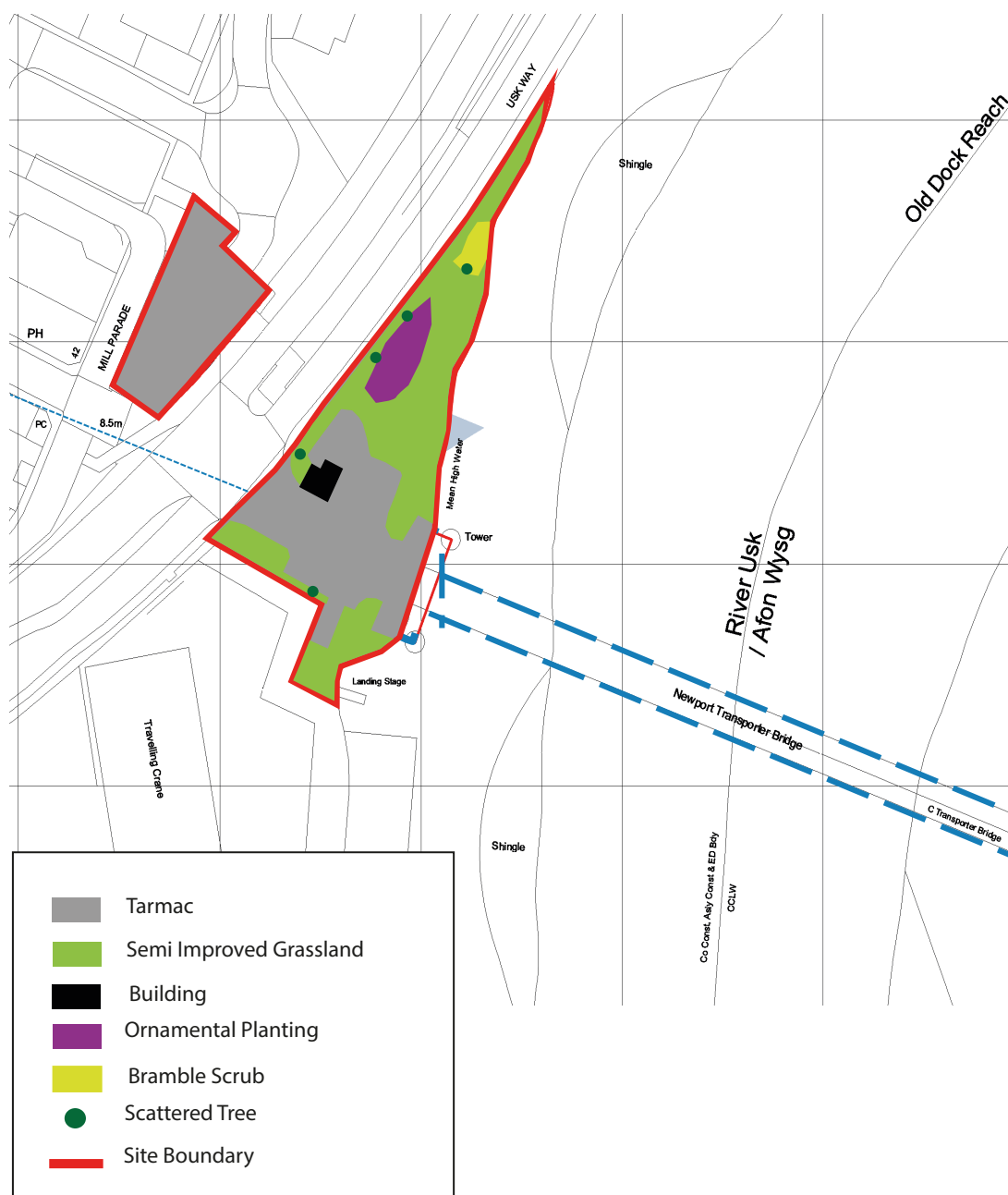
View of wall that deck metal work sits in

## Appendix 3– Site Habitat Map

VISITOR CENTRE, NEWPORT TRANSPORTER  
BRIDGE, NEWPORT

Habitat Map

October 2019



## Appendix 4 - Activity Surveyor Locations

VISITOR CENTRE, NEWPORT TRANSPORTER BRIDGE, NEWPORT

Bst Surveyor Locations

October 2019

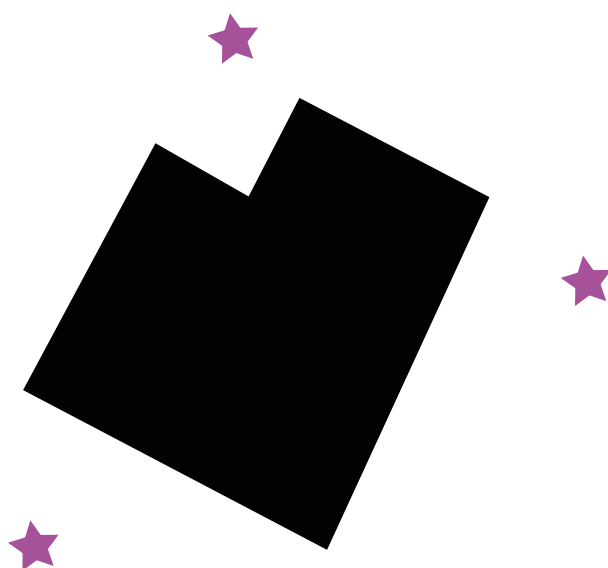


Approximate Surveyor Location

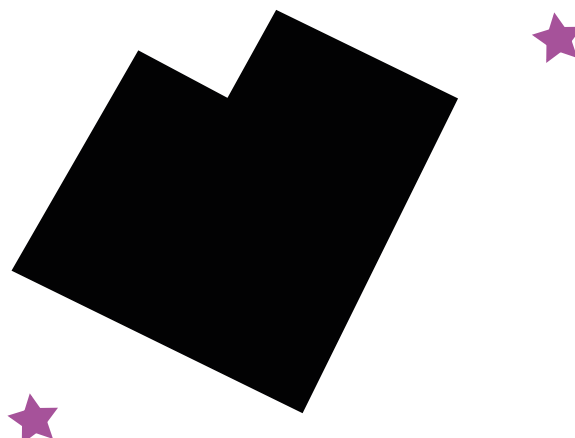


Building

11th August 2019



30th August 2019



**Appendix 5 - Aerial View of Site Location**

