



Newsletter – Summer 2021

Dear member

Cull

Sadly, as I am sure you are aware, Supplementary culling is ongoing in several areas of Gloucestershire - the original Pilot areas of the Glos. East and West Zones; North Cots (north of A40 up to Evesham) and South Glos is included in some Wiltshire areas.

The cull are in court on 22 July with Tom Langton's latest legal action - Help Stop Badger Culling Adding to England's Biodiversity Catastrophe. Crowdfunding is still required to meet the necessary target.

<https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/stop-badger-culling>

Vale Open Day

Great to see so many of you at Vale Wildlife Hospital on Sunday - where we hear that they are caring for 6 badger cubs. Despite the hourly downpours which threatened repeated gazebo collapse, this was a really busy event. We raised £170 towards protecting our badgers - much of this a credit to the merchandise created by Wendy's sewing skills.

We met some very enthusiastic members of the public who were keen to share sett locations and the badger videos they had on their phone.



Sadly, our neighbouring Oxfordshire Group were not able to make it but we met up with several other local groups including a lovely couple from Worcestershire/W. Mids. Here are some pics of a mum and cub that they recently rescued.





They are keen to liaise more with neighbouring groups - which is great news, given their expertise in rescues and sett surveying.

Crime & Persecution

Just a snapshot of the many cases: -

May

A badger skin was discovered on the Glos/Wilts border. As it was right near a recently refurbished artificial earth, it looks likely that the badgers had been resident. Hunts will want them removed to keep exclusively for fox use. In this instance, it looks like the badgers may have been baited and the animals fed to the dogs. A truly awful find amongst the bluebells. Earlier in the year, 3 skinned badgers had been found at Coopers Hill.

May

A sett was hard blocked with concrete and steel in central Stroud.

June

A sett was found flattened by machinery in the N. Cots cull zone on a rather well known hunting farm near Stow.

From observation when out and about, it seems that many landowners used lockdown to log over setts and put up sturdy mesh wire fencing that is badger-proof. The latter has led to many sad situations of badgers losing foraging area, being forced on to roads, and being cut off from social groups. It's likely this is done through ignorance as much as malice.

RTA's

April was probably the worse month recorded, with 24 incidents reported - and this seemed to be the case across the country. Central Cheltenham and the east side of Bristol have been particularly bad this year. There were also 2 otter RTAs reported in Gloucester.

Development

This continues to be a major problem. Sadly, we have lost Julie's effort and expertise as she has moved away. Cheryl is doing a great job, but would welcome assistance if anyone else want to get involved in field work.

The huge road scheme of the A417 Missing Link project at Birdlip is has now been accepted for formal examination by the Planning Inspectorate. It does provide mitigation measures for badgers, including 3 crossing culverts. Just a shame that this area has been so heavily culled that there are barely any badgers left.

The badger-specific section from the A417 Environment Statement (Section 8.9.58) is included for reference, at the end of the newsletter.

A417 Environmental Statement (virtual-engage.com)

As regards residential developments, a current worrying case is in central Cheltenham. Here badgers have been stranded in a pocket of land after housing construction, with no alternative provided or follow-up once their sett was closed. Residents are getting annoyed at damage to gardens and badgers are suffering. Another developer/NE fail.

Government plans to further relax the planning laws (with the rumoured removal of protection for some endangered species) can only make a bad situation much worse.

National Trust

This autumn, the issue of hunting with dogs will again be a voted on at the NT AGM. In 2019, the motion to end the licensing of hunts was narrowly defeated by the Chair's casting of proxy votes. In order to be eligible to vote, membership needs to be taken out now.

Join as a National Trust member | [National Trust](#)



The League Against Cruel Sports are campaigning hard on this issue and will be holding a series of events leading up to the vote, including one

pencilled in for Cheltenham town centre, as well as at NT properties across the country.

Hunting on National Trust Land | League Against Cruel Sports

Website

We are in the process of building a new website for the group. It's in the early stages but we are planning to have a members' area and of course, will be keen to receive any contributions in the form of photos, videos, blogs, news etc. We are fortunate to have our Treasurer, Mike's input on this - a man for whom plug-ins hold no fear.

Membership

Thanks to everyone for paying their subs so promptly this year - and for all the generous donations on top.

A warm welcome to our new members - Colin, Rachel, Mark and Jeanny, and Dom. Let's hope when Freedom Day finally arrives, we can meet up for badger business and sociable mingling, with no distancing measures from the vegan cakes.



<https://gloucestershirebadgergroup.org>

Highways England: A417 Environment Statement - Badgers

Badgers have been found to be active across the scheme. In addition to mitigation embedded into the design such as badger culverts and badger fencing, as detailed in ES Chapter 2 The project (Document Reference 6.2), and best practice working methods, the following mitigation for badgers would be undertaken;

- A pre-construction survey for badgers (activity and setts) would be carried out (this is detailed within Annex D LEMP of ES Appendix 2.1 EMP (Document Reference 6.4).

- No works or tracking of heavy machinery would occur within 30m of retained active badger setts.
- Any active setts that would be lost or predicted to be affected as a result of the scheme construction would be closed under a Natural England development licence between the months of July and November prior to commencement of construction. These setts would be determined following the pre-construction survey.
- Loss of main setts would be mitigated by provision of alternative setts in suitable habitat, taking account of factors like drainage, within the current territory of the main sett to be closed under licence from Natural England. This would be undertaken at least four weeks⁸³ in advance of the main sett closure. Current survey data indicates that one main sett would require closure and an artificial sett created.
- Key foraging habitat near the artificial sett to be created would be retained. In compiling the landscape design as detailed in Figures 7.11 Environmental A417 Missing Link | HE551505 Highways England HE551505-ARP-EBD-X_XX_XXXX_X-RP-LE-000001 | C01, A3 | 27/05/21 Page 78 of 147 Masterplan (Document Reference 6.3) appropriate planting has been incorporated into the design to account for where losses of badger foraging resources have occurred.

- All excavations would be closed overnight, or ramps or another means of escape provided to reduce risk of trapping or injuring wildlife as detailed in ES Appendix 2.1 EMP (Document Reference 6.4).
- Landscape planting would be designed to direct badgers to the three new wildlife culverts (detailed in ES Chapter 2 The project (Document Reference 6.2)) and the Gloucestershire Way crossing, Cowley and Stockwell overbridges which provide additional crossing routes for badgers.

8.9.120

Subject to detailed design of the entrance grills, badgers and other wildlife could also use the underpass designed for bats at the western end of the scheme at chainage 1+085. Badger surveys showed a territory to span both sides of the Existing A417 in this location and badgers are thought to use the existing Witcombe road underbridge. Therefore, the bat underpass at CH 1+100 would provide a safer method of crossing within the existing territory. Grove Farm underpass would also be suitable to be used by species such as bats, badger, fox and deer. Badger fencing would tie in with this structure to encourage its use and prevent access of animals to the highway

Mortality, injury and disturbance: Construction activities may result in direct mortality or injury of badgers within setts or disturbance from noise and vibration which can lead to abandonment of setts and young or in the case of vibration could lead to collapse of sett tunnels. The potential for mortality

and disturbance would occur throughout the anticipated construction years (2023-2026). To avoid this, suitable working methodologies and measures would be implemented during the construction phase as detailed in section 8.9, Design, mitigation and enhancement measures and in Annex D LEMP of ES Appendix 2.1 EMP (Document Reference 6.4).

Sett closures during the early construction phase of the scheme for preparatory works would be conducted under ecological supervision in accordance with a Natural England licence which would ensure no mortality, injury or trapping of badgers. The licence methods are referred to in Annex D LEMP of ES Appendix A417 Missing Link | HE551505 Highways England HE551505-ARP-EBD-X_XX_XXXX_X-RP-LE-000001 | C01, A3 | 27/05/21 Page 110 of 147 2.1 EMP (Document Reference 6.4). There would be no observable impact on the badger population from mortality or disturbance during construction.

Habitat loss: The scheme would result in the permanent loss of badger foraging habitat and badger setts during the early construction phase of the scheme (2023-2024). All setts within 30m from construction works where works would damage setts, would require closure under a Natural England licence between July and November. Survey results show that there is a single main sett, one annex sett, seven subsidiary setts, and 25 outlier setts within the scheme boundary that would be permanently lost.

The loss of a main sett would be unavoidable. Provision of an artificial sett, and recorded use by badger, would be required prior to closure of the main sett. Additional setts within 30m of the DCO Boundary include one main sett, two subsidiary setts, and 11 outlier setts which potentially require closure during the construction phase depending on the nature of the works. Closure of the main sett within 30m is not anticipated as works in this location would involve habitat creation and a 30m exclusion zone would be implemented to protect the sett. The loss of habitat including setts would result in temporary/reversible damage to the badger population that would negatively affect its integrity until compensatory habitats are established. This habitat loss would represent a moderate adverse impact upon the badger population.

Severance: Site clearance and construction could lead to isolation of badger populations both within and between clans, which in a worst-case scenario could lead to local extinctions. Severance could cause an increase in conflict and competition due to a temporary reduction in territory size and foraging resource. Such adverse effects would be reduced by careful construction programming so that certain crossing areas would remain available to badgers prior to final crossing points in the form of wildlife culverts being completed. Temporary fencing would be installed to funnel badgers to these areas throughout the construction phase (2023-2026).

The creation and enhancement of habitats, the provision of wildlife culverts under the scheme, the Gloucestershire Way multi-purpose crossing and two

smaller Cowley and Stockwell overbridges which also include verges and hedgerow habitat, would mitigate severance of habitat and identified territories. With the implementation of the above mitigation and embedded mitigation as part of the design detailed in ES Chapter 2 The project (Document Reference 6.2), severance of habitats and territories would result in temporary/reversible damage to the badger population during the construction phase that would negatively affect its integrity. Severance of habitat would represent a moderate adverse impact on badgers.

In summary, the badger population would be subject to moderate adverse impacts from loss and severance of habitat as a result of construction activities. The residual effects associated with the scheme are considered to be slight adverse at the local level, and not significant.