

HAWKESWOOD ECOLOGY

Specialists in Ecological Survey and Assessment

Tel: 07957 154794 E-mail: hawkeswoodecology@btinternet.com
VAT Reg No 926 9271 93
(Proprietors: Niki and Eric Hawkeswood)



REPTILE TRANSLOCATION METHODOLOGY, FORMER TUDOR INN SITE, CIMLA, NEATH.

On behalf of

TAI TARIAN LTD

November 2024

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We confirm that in preparing this Report we have exercised reasonable skill and care, taking into account the project objectives, the agreed scope of the work and prevailing site conditions.

All habitat and protected species surveys present a ‘snapshot’ of conditions existing and species present, or considered having potential to be present, at the time of survey. Many species are mobile and distributions can vary across time. Results and findings presented in this report should be considered with these factors in mind.

Protected species surveys are recognised as having a ‘shelf life’ of two years maximum. Surveys older than this are unlikely to be accepted by a Local Planning Authority or Natural Resources Wales as viable documentation.

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Hawkeswood Ecology has been instructed by Tai Tarian Ltd to prepare a Reptile Translocation Strategy relating to land at the former Tudor Inn, Cimla, Neath. The approximate Grid reference of the Site SS 760 960. The Site is being developed for residential purposes.
- 1.2 Reptile presence/absence surveys were undertaken in 2023 covering the Site and the Site was found to support slow worm and grass snake being present. Details of the survey results can be found in the report '*Protected Species Surveys, Land at the Former Tudor Inn Site, Cimla, Neath. Hawkeswood Ecology, November 2024*' which should be read in conjunction with this strategy.
- 1.3 Slow worms were found across most of the Site boundaries with no evidence of them from the open grassed areas of the Site. Of 28 mats placed out for survey, 14 produced positive results with an age range of juvenile to mature animals clearly showing a sustainable population is present. Adventitious checks of mats during other Site visits showed continued use of some mats well into the Autumn with mat 21 particularly productive with up to 10 animals found under it in September.
- 1.4 No positive results were found from the open area of grassland which suffered disturbance from dog walking and gatherings of young people in the evenings through the summer period.
- 1.5 It was considered that a 'medium population' of slow worms may be present at the Site (when compared against Guidelines developed by Froglife in 1999). As such, measures will be taken to ensure the development does not harm reptiles and mitigation both on and off Site will be taken offering positive benefits for slow worms.
- 1.6 The proposed methodology offers the opportunity to provide enhancements for reptile populations on the Site in the longer term and to reduce the number of animals that will need to be translocated to a receptor site.

2. METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 Capture methods followed guidelines from the Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (1998). Following the presence absence survey and using the published guidance, a good population of slow worm was considered to be present (Froglife, 1999). On this basis, 100 refugia per hectare are recommended for translocation capture. The Site area where translocation is required is approximately 0.5 hectares. Presence absence surveys cannot give an accurate assessment of population although they are useful as a guide.
- 2.2 Following a precautionary approach, Hawkeswood Ecology will assume a medium level population (5-20 animals per hectare) which calls for 100 refugia per hectare. Given capture areas of approximately 0.5 hectare on Site, 200 felt mats will be laid out over the capture areas. Using 200 felt mats allows the capture time to be reduced by increasing the capture effort. The capture area is shown in Figure 1.
- 2.3 An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECW) will be appointed to oversee vegetation cutting operations and reptile fencing works prior to capture and translocation. Prior to any vegetation cutting works taking place a toolbox talk will be given to operators by the ECW.
- 2.4 Before refugia are laid out and fencing is erected, vegetation to be removed will be cut in the directions shown in Figure 1, this is particularly relevant in the capture areas at the west of the Site. The works will be undertaken slowly and the ground ahead regularly inspected for the presence of animals by the operator who will be informed of requirements and given instruction during the toolbox talk. This allows any animals that may be present to leave under cover of the remaining vegetation in a preferred direction.
- 2.5 The vegetation will be cleared by hand using brushcutters to a minimum height of around 100 millimetres. If any woody or tall vegetation is present in the areas to be cleared two cuts may be necessary, the first reducing height to make sure the area being cut is clearly visible to the operator, the second cut will reduce vegetation height to 100mm.
- 2.6 Reptile proof fencing as specified in Figure 2 will be constructed on the construction boundary to prevent animals returning to the construction zone once translocation has commenced.
- 2.7 The refugia mats will be laid out and be in place for a minimum of 10 days before any capture visits take place. Refugia will be placed across the Site but concentrated in and adjacent to areas where positive results were found during survey.

- 2.8 Capture will only be undertaken in suitable weather conditions with air temperatures between 9 and 20°C with sunny conditions or sunny intervals, as described in the referenced published guidance (See Figure 3).
- 2.9 The best periods for capture are between mid-April and June and from late August to late September although capture can occur throughout the activity season. Early season captures avoid the population expansion from birth of juveniles.
- 2.10 Capture of animals from the refugia, or any seen basking in other locations, will be undertaken for a **minimum** period of 25 days in suitable weather conditions. The Site will be considered cleared of reptiles when five consecutive negative days checks have occurred. However, the capture will continue to at least visit 25 days as this is considered a minimum period to draw conclusions of successful reptile clearance. For example, should the Site produce negative capture between days 8-13, the effort will still continue to 25 days capture effort. Conversely, should no capture be made between days 20-24 but a capture made on the 25th visit, the effort will continue for a until a period of five clear days has been achieved. **This could result in a longer capture period than 25 days.**
- 2.11 Following the conclusion of the capture effort, a destructive search will be undertaken remove the vegetation from the capture areas using a 360 machine or similar with a straight edged bucket. This will be carried out under supervision of the ECW and at a slow pace.
- 2.12 Slow worms will either be translocated to a receptor site based at Tai Tarian headquarters in Baglan or remain on Site in an area where habitat enhancements have been undertaken. Animals captured on the western boundary of the Site will be retained on Site, all other animals will be translocated to Baglan.

3 ENHANCEMENTS TO THE RECEPTOR AREA

- 3.1 All habitat enhancements both on Site and in the new compensation area will be undertaken before animals are captured.

On-Site mitigation

- 3.2 Animals captured on Site will be placed into the retained vegetation on the west of the Site. This area is currently dominated by bramble and woody scrub. Areas will be cut into the bramble to allow areas for basking and these will be maintained in the longer term. This will allow animals an improved habitat over the existing and retain areas of dense bramble cover which will assist in avoiding predators such as cats.
- 3.3 The cuts through the bramble will be east-west and will be wide enough for areas to be in sunlight for most of the day. A hibernaculum will be created within the retained area.
- 3.4 Following completion of the development, the reptile proof fencing will be removed allowing animals to recolonise the residential area where new habitat will be found in gardens and green spaces on Site.

Translocated animals

- 3.5 Slow worms that are translocated will be taken to an area of land at Baglan which is currently undergoing specific improvements to support them (see Figure 4, drawing number 1234.01, October 2024). Survey has shown that they are not currently present on Site even though the current habitat is considered suitable for their presence. Isolation from other suitable sites by development and previous use is the most likely explanation for their absence. The presence-absence survey report '*Reptile Presence/Absence Survey, Potential Receptor Site For Slow Worms, Land at Ty Gwyn, Brunel Way, Baglan. Hawkeswood Ecology August 2024*' should be read in conjunction with this Strategy.
- 3.6 Animals will be moved to the Site on completion of each capture event as necessary with the minimum of delay between capture and release.
- 3.7 Ongoing monitoring of the receptor site is to be undertaken to assess the population present and inform management practices of the receptor site and the need for any improvements.
- 3.8 Manipulation of the surface area using an earth moving machine will be designed to provide enhanced opportunities for basking. This will involve the creation of banks at appropriate sites offering south and west facing banks.
- 3.9 Hibernacula will be constructed in appropriate locations including in the earth/stone/timber banks; any other areas will be identified by the ECW. The design of these will be in line with the accepted designs in the DRMB, see Figure 5.

4 REFERENCES

Froglife, 1999, '*Reptile Survey, an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation*', Froglife Advice Sheet 10, Froglife, Halesworth.

NAARS, 2008, '*Survey Pack*', The Herpetological Trust.

Gent. T. & Gibson, S. (2003) *Herpetofauna Workers Manual*, JNCC

Highways Agency (updated 2011), *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume 10, Part 4- Nature Conservation, Section 7, - Advice in Relation to Reptiles and Roads*, Highways Agency

Herpetofauna Groups of Britain and Ireland (1998) *Evaluating local mitigation/translocation programmes: Maintaining Best Practice and lawful standards. HGBI advisory notes for Amphibian and Reptile Groups (ARGs)*. HGBI, c/o Froglife, Halesworth. Unpubl.

**FIGURE 1:
AREA OF REPTILE CAPTURE LOCATION**

Figure 1: Site with are of Reptile capture Locations Identified

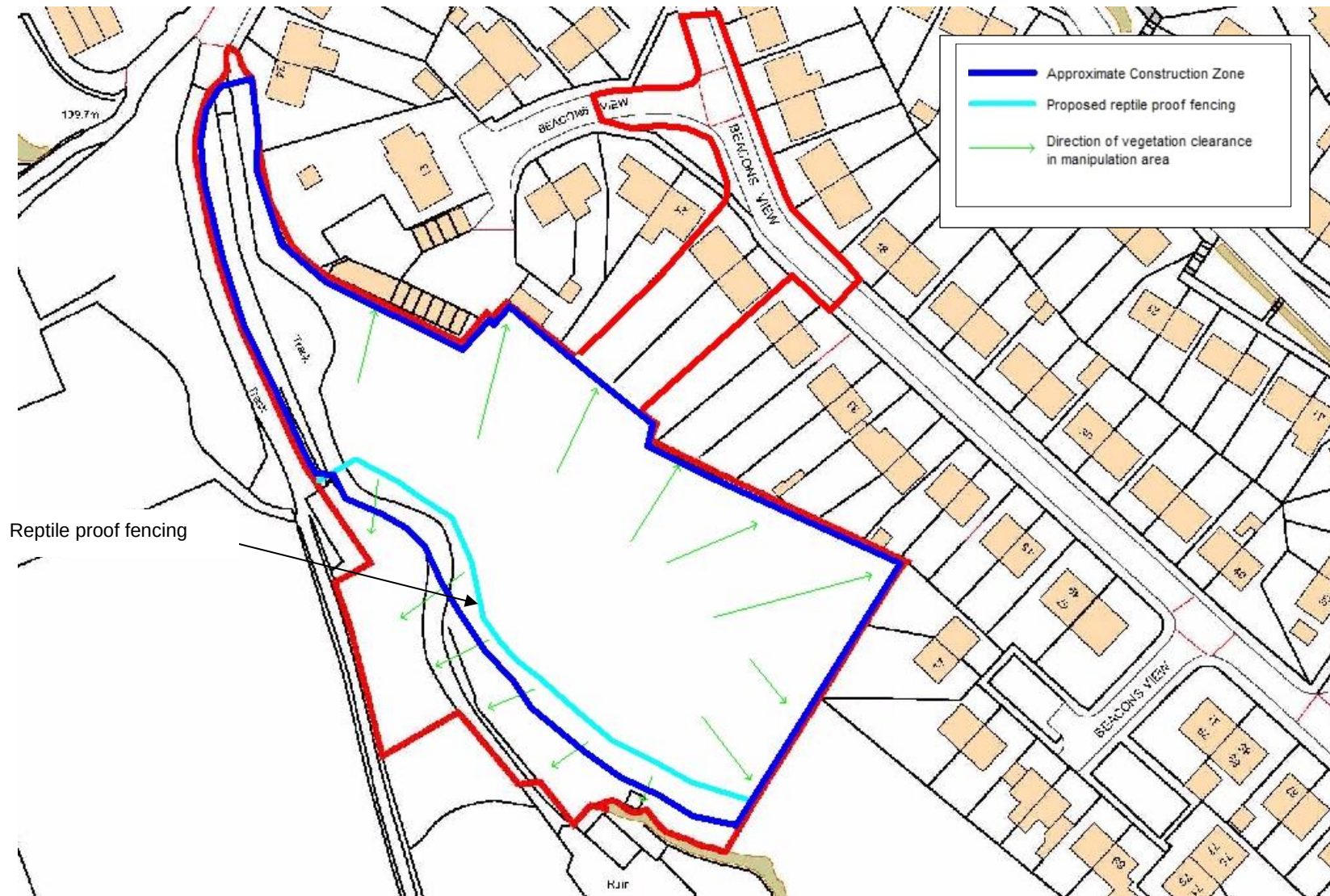


FIGURE 2
REPTILE PROOF FENCING SPECIFICATION

Reptile Translocation Strategy, Former Tudor Inn, Cimla.
Hawkeswood Ecology – November 2024

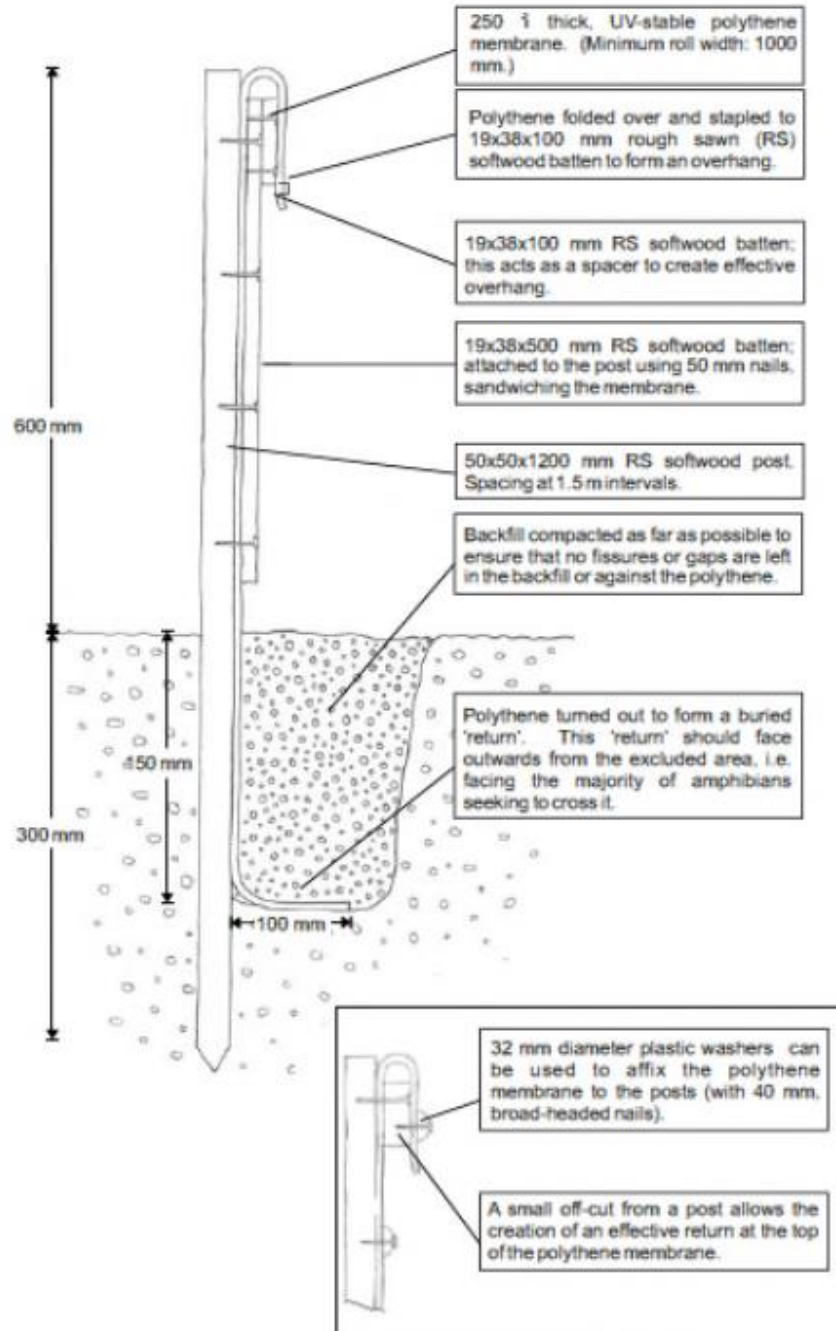


FIGURE 3
SUITABLE REPTILE SURVEY AND CAPTURE CONDITIONS

Reptile Translocation Strategy, Former Tudor Inn, Cimla.
Hawkeswood Ecology – November 2024

Reptile Weather and Timing Survey Conditions (After Chris Gleed-Owen, 2009)

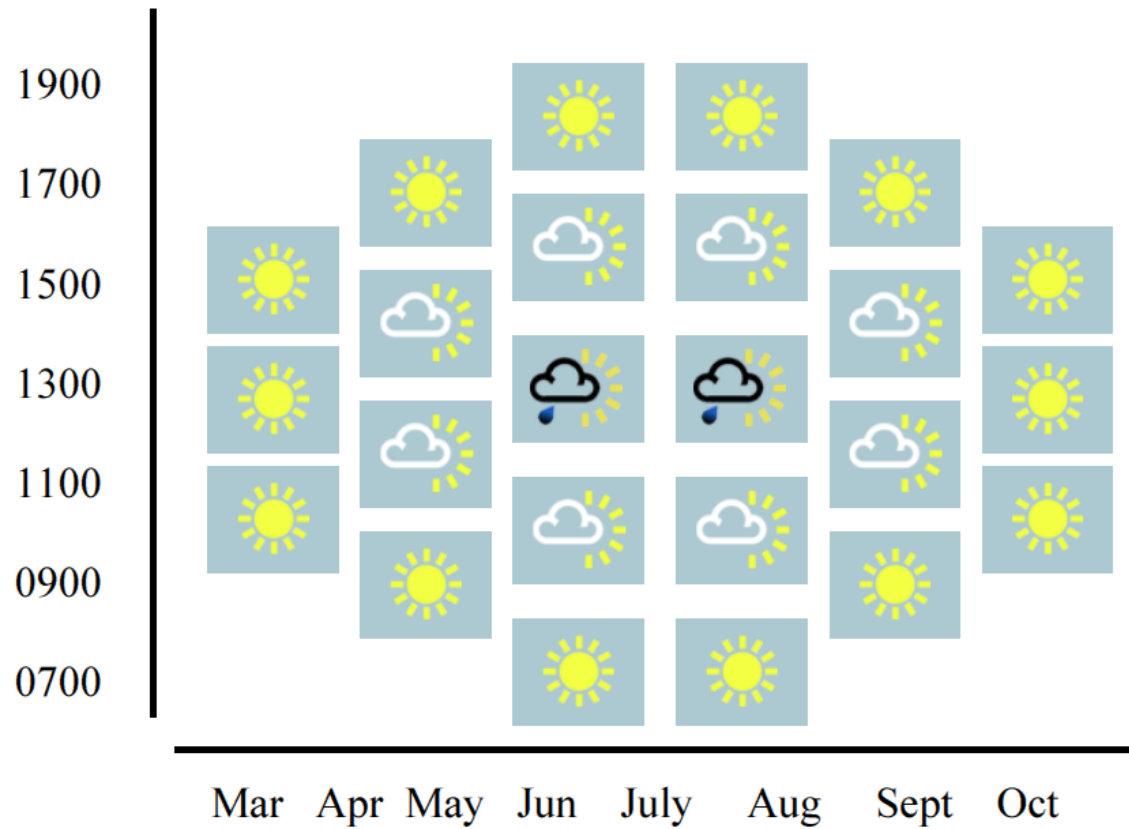


FIGURE 4
RECEPTOR SITE IMPROVEMENTS, DRAWING 1234.01

Reptile Translocation Strategy, Former Tudor Inn, Cimla.
Hawkeswood Ecology – November 2024

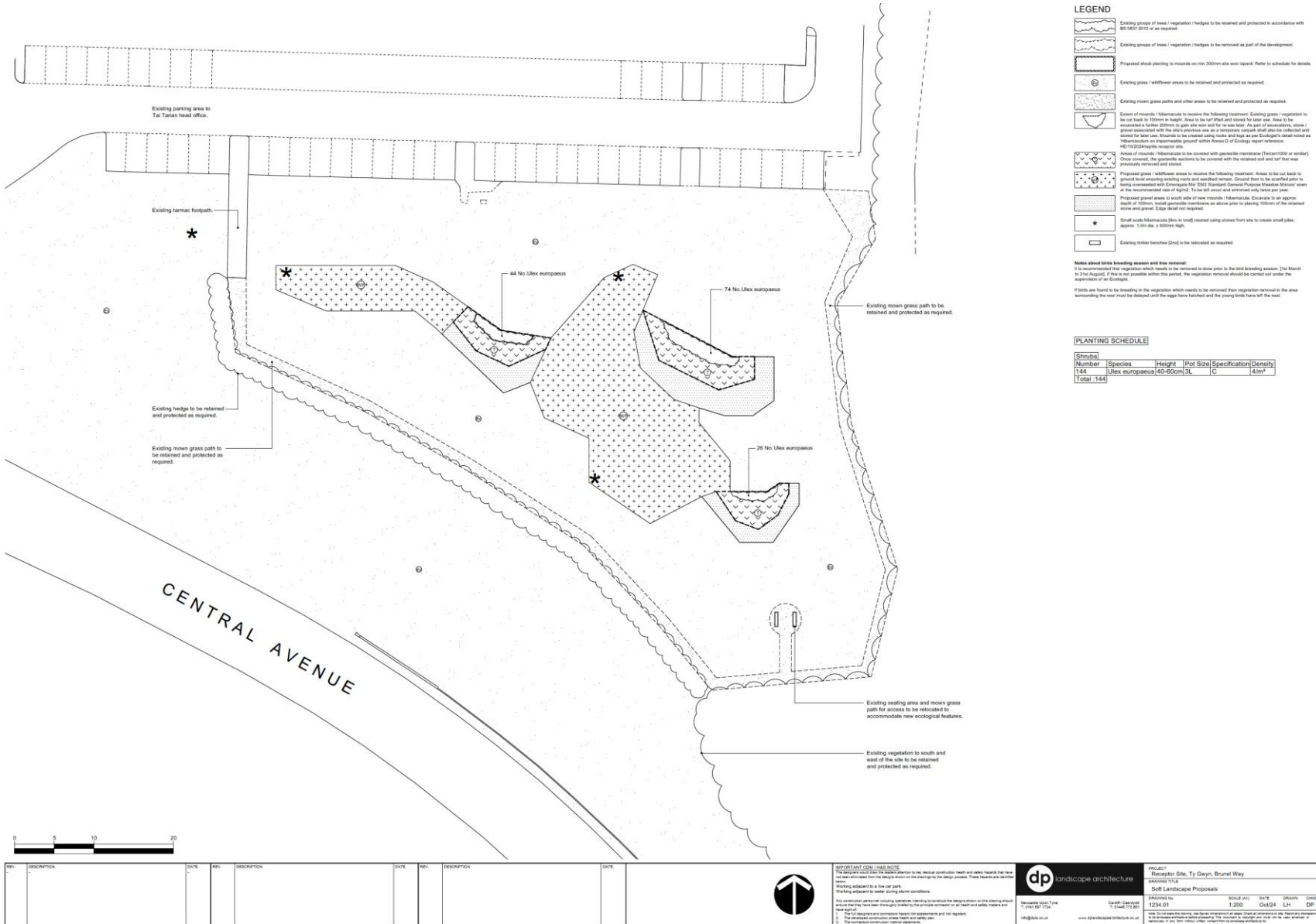


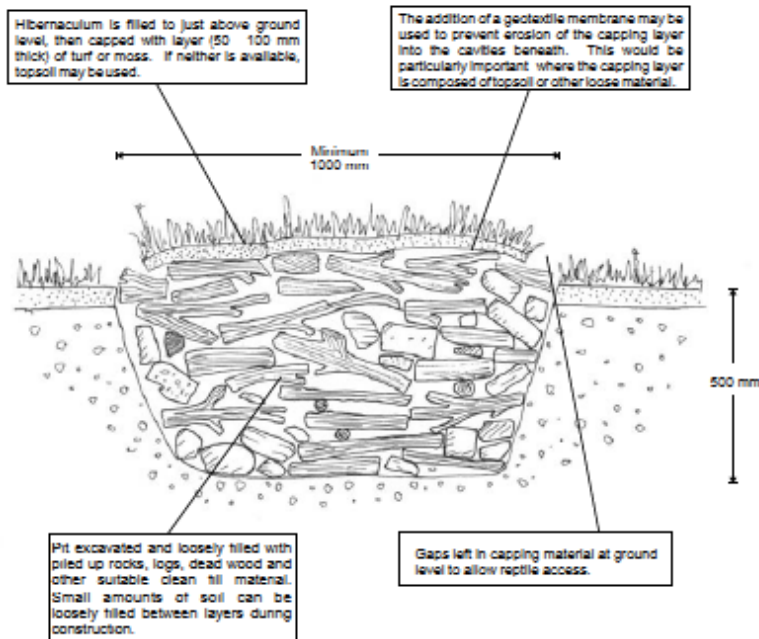
FIGURE 5
REPTILE HIBERNACULA DESIGN
(AFTER DESIGN MANUAL FOR ROADS AND BRIDGES (2011))

ANNEX D HIBERNACULA DESIGN

VOLUME 10 SECTION 4
PART 1 / 11A 11B/05

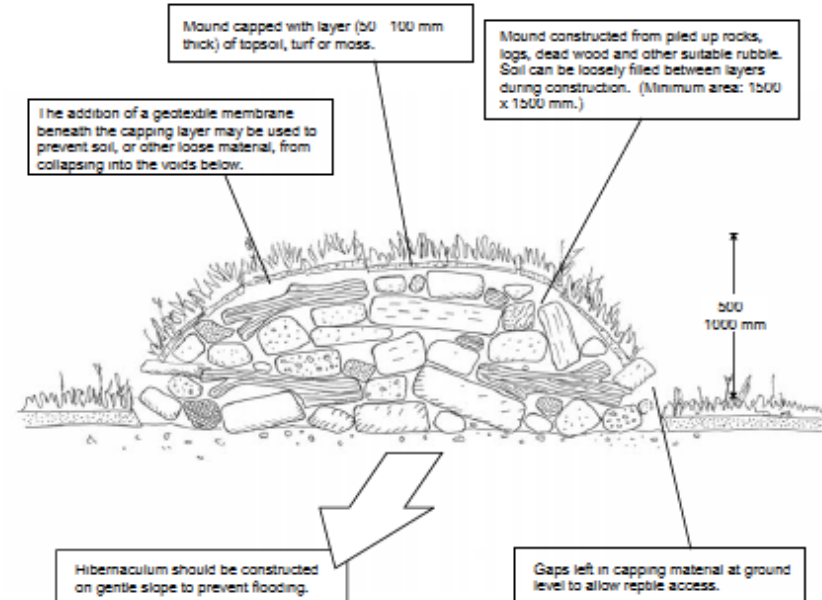
Hibernaculum on free-draining ground

Where ground conditions allow, the hibernaculum should be incorporated into a shallow pit. This design is more likely to remain frost-free, and will be less obtrusive and thus unlikely to be subject to interference.



Hibernaculum on impermeable ground

Where ground conditions are impermeable, then an 'above-ground' or mounded design should be utilised in order to prevent the hibernaculum from flooding. This design should also be used if it is not possible to excavate a pit for any other reason.



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17 Heol Henrhyd, Coelbren, Nr. Ystradgynlais, POWYS. SA10 9PG. Tel/Fax: 01639 701304
Mobile: 07957 154794 E-mail: hawkeswoodecology@btinternet.com
(Proprietors: Niki and Eric Hawkeswood)

Hawkeswood Ecology is an Ecological Consultancy based in South Wales offering a wide range of expertise in ecological assessment for a broad range of clients.

