



Phase 1 Habitat Survey in support of the North Transfer Facility Project

Issue B

Special Nuclear Materials Environmental Advisor

Background

The North Transfer Facility is to be located within the Sellafield site, to the west of a service trench (Area 1). An area to the east of the service trench may be used for temporary welfare facilities and laydown provision during the construction works (Area 2).

The site was visited on 20th September 2022 to undertake an initial ecological survey (Phase 1 Habitat Survey). The weather was warm (17 degree Celsius), with sunny intervals and a gentle breeze.

Site description

A large portion of Area 1 is currently used as a vehicle compound for transfer of material from one building to another and is a mix of hardstanding surfaces (tarmac and concrete). This area houses a temporary tent, which is currently used to provide weather protection during material transfer operations. The remaining portion of the area is comprised of made ground comprising a compacted heavy ballast.

Most of Area 2 is comprised of made ground (heavy ballast). A section of this area was previously occupied by an industrial building, of which the concrete pad remains.

The site is mainly surrounded by buildings and with a road to the south, this boundary is demarked by a weldmesh security fence. A service trench runs directly through the area, extending from the north of the site to the south, which is understood to be lined with heavy ballast.

Survey

There is a significant amount of emergent ruderal vegetation present within both Area 1 and 2, developing to scrub, particularly within the service trench. In many locations this habitat would be attractive to reptiles. However, the built-up nature of the wider area, including several fences and other features is a significant barrier to dispersal of terrestrial fauna. There is no obvious 'corridor' to draw wildlife to the site, and no evidence of reptiles in potential refuges. Additionally, there is no obvious attraction to the site such as water source or soil and hence it can be considered a low value habitat with negligible risk from wildlife ingress; excepting offering nesting potential for ground nesting birds. There was no evidence of this at the time of the visit and no history of birds nesting in the area.

The temporary tent within Area 1 is not considered to offer favourable conditions for opportunist wildlife such as bats to become established due to its open design, which offers little exposure protection. Similarly, the soffits and fascias on surrounding buildings are considered unlikely to attract bats due to their close proximity to large building louvres, which cause noise disturbance likely to deter them from establishing.

The only potential issue could be from transient birds using the surrounding buildings and the small number of trees/larger scrub vegetation present on the future North Transfer Facility site as potential nesting sites.

No wildlife was observed during the initial visit, beyond birds which were sighted in the vicinity of the area.

Designated Sites

Designated statutory sites within 5km of the Sellafield Site (Ref. Magic Map application <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>)

	Approximate Nearest Site Boundary (km)	Designations
Hallsenna Moor	4.2	NNR, SSSI
Low Church Moss	2.7	SSSI
Drigg Coast	3.2	SSSI, SAC
Silver Tarn, Hollas and Harnsey Mosses	4.7	SSSI
Cumbria Coast	0.5	MCZ
Lake District	2.9	National Park

There are no sites with the following designations within 5km:

- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Biosphere Reserves
- Marine Nature Reserves
- Ramsar

The proposed development will not impact on any designated sites.

Relevant Legislation

Nesting Birds

Wild birds are protected in England and Wales under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird.
- 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.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building or is in, on or near a nest with eggs or young; or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

The nesting season is officially 1st March to 31st July, however it may extend beyond those dates.

Wildlife and Countryside Act Penalties

Penalties that can be imposed for criminal offences contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are an unlimited fine, up to six months imprisonment or both. Similar penalties are set out under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017).

Recommendations

It is recommended the following mitigations are employed to ensure the risk of impacts on wildlife is as low as reasonably practicable:

- Consider clearing vegetation from the site in the autumn preceding commencement of construction works. This will reduce the likelihood of wildlife becoming established immediately prior to works commencing.
- Operatives working on the project will be provided with relevant tool box talks on identifying wildlife and actions to be taken on discovery of wildlife on the site during works. The tool box talks will be delivered at relevant points through the project e.g. before works with the potential to impact on wildlife commence.
- Consider beginning the ground works between 1st August and 28th February (outside the bird nesting season). If work is planned to begin during the nesting season an ecologically competent person should be contacted to inspect the site immediately prior to works commencing. **Note:** Regardless of the time of year, if an active nest is found on site an ecologically competent person should be contacted to assess the situation. Works will be delayed in the vicinity of any occupied nest until the young birds have fledged.
- As far as practicable restrict work, and laydown of materials and waste, to areas with hard surfaces (e.g. paving, poured concrete and tarmac). Do not leave any mounds of spoil that could be used as refugia or any materials that could be utilised as nesting material
- Once the project has confirmed a start date an ecologically competent person should be contacted to determine if the site needs to be re-inspected prior to works commencing.