

Milltown Footbridge

Construction Ecological Management Plan

For Bethell

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

PBA Applied Ecology Ltd (PBA) was commissioned by Bethell to undertake a series of ecological surveys on a footbridge which crosses the River Irwell, southwest of Bury, Greater Manchester. This report provides an assessment of the ecological recommendations and subsequent measures required at the proposed application site to mitigate the ecological impacts of the proposed development platform. The objectives of this plan are as follows:

- Provide legislative evidence for the required ecological mitigation strategies.
- Provide the recommendations for the avoidance, minimisation, and mitigation of ecological impacts resulting from the proposed works.
- Detail the processes involved in required mitigation actions at the proposed application site.

The level of detail in this plan is intended to be proportionate to the scale of works and the complexity of its potential impacts.

1.2. LEGISLATION

It is the responsibility of Bethell to ensure that all works undertaken by their contractors are compliant with the relevant environmental legislation. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- The **Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)** (as amended) and **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010**, which constitute the primary legislative protection for wildlife within the UK.
- The **Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975** and **Animal Welfare Act 2006**, especially in relation to the proposed works within the watercourse.
- The **Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010 (regulation 38)** stipulate that it is an offence to cause or knowingly permit a water discharge activity or groundwater activity, or to operate a regulated facility, except under and to the extent authorised by an environmental permit. Due care and attention must be exercised to ensure that watercourses and groundwater are not polluted, particularly by substances such as diesel, petrol and oil from machinery.
- Furthermore, the **Water Resources Act 1991**, and **Environmental Damage (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations 2009** contain relevant sections regarding pollution prevention.

1.3. SITE CONTEXT

The proposed development area is situated next to/over the River Irwell, approximately 4 km southwest of Bury, Greater Manchester (SD 79109 07246). The site encompasses the River Irwell and the suburban areas south of Bury.

The wider landscape is dominated by some isolated areas of agricultural and pastoral land surrounded by urban development associated with the towns of Bury and Bolton.

2. BACKGROUND ECOLOGY

2.1. PRE-EXISTING INFORMATION

Habitats identified on the development site during a previous Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey conducted by Penny Anderson Associates Ltd (Penny Anderson Associates, 2021) include

dense/continuous scrub, neutral grassland, neutral grassland/tall herbs, tall ruderal, spoil, running water, building, bare ground, hardstanding, industrial habitats and broadleaved trees.

2.2. DRAWING INFORMATION

Error! Reference source not found. depicts the proposed footbridge replacement to replace the previous footbridge which collapsed during the 2015 flooding. The new crossing point will be slightly altered from the previous bridge and will take pedestrian and cycle traffic.

3. IMPACT RISK ASSESSMENT

Ecological Receptors	Construction Activity	Impact	Impact Avoidance/Reduction Measure	Timings	Requirement of ECoW
Scrub, grassland & Hedgerow habitats	Clearance for works.	Destruction of habitat.	Creation and enhancement of habitats as part of landscape plan and Habitat Management Plan (BNG).	Clearance: during works. Establish BPZs: pre-works. See Appendix C. Enhancement of habitats: post works – see HMP (BNG) for work schedule.	Present during vegetation clearance to ensure CEcoMP is followed.
Watercourse (including aquatic species)	Runoff or dust from construction. In-watercourse works. Diversion of watercourse. Sheeted coffer dam.	Damage to water quality. Mortality of aquatic species. Loss of habitat.	Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) including silt fencing and buffer zone. Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) to be applied for and adhered to. Fish rescue conducted before any works within watercourse. Works within watercourse to take place during the in-river working season (June–September inclusive). Fish will be protected from piling sound and vibration by use	SWMP mitigation: during works. In-river working season (June–September inclusive).	Oversee and conduct a fish rescue. Conduct start-up check to ensure SWMP measures are in place.

Ecological Receptors	Construction Activity	Impact	Impact Avoidance/Reduction Measure	Timings	Requirement of ECoW
			of the silent piling (press-in/hydraulic piling) technique		
Bats	Potential removal of mature vegetation.	Incidental mortality & roost destruction. Loss of habitat.	Site staff should be made aware of the possible presence of bats.	No constraints.	Ecologist should be contacted for advice if a bat is found on site. Ecologist should be contacted if works are to affect mature trees.
Birds	Vegetation suitable for nesting birds is to be removed.	Incidental mortality & nest destruction. Loss of habitat.	Installation of bird boxes. Vegetation clearance works should be timed to avoid the nesting bird season which runs from March to August inclusive. Any vegetation clearance within nesting bird season must have nesting bird checks performed within 24 hours beforehand. Active bird nests must not be damaged or destroyed by the works.	Box installation: during works Vegetation clearance: during works.	Oversee nesting bird checks if they are required.
Otter	In-watercourse works.	Incidental mortality & disturbance. Loss of habitat.	Risk is low: If an otter or evidence of otter is discovered during the course of development, then works should be paused and advice sought from an ecologist.	Works within watercourse to take place during the in-river working season (June–September).	Available as contact if otter or evidence of otter is discovered on-site.

Ecological Receptors	Construction Activity	Impact	Impact Avoidance/Reduction Measure	Timings	Requirement of ECoW
Extension of watercourse.					
Terrestrial mammals	Clearance of vegetation that could hold small mammal species.	Incidental mortality. Loss of habitat.	Phased cutting approach to vegetation clearance. Cover excavations - ensure that excavations are covered overnight or fitted with means of escape.	During works.	Present during vegetation clearance to ensure CEcoMP is followed.
Invasive non-native species (INNS)	Clearance for works.	Incidental spread of INNS.	Ecological walkovers and biosecurity procedures. Excavator to clear vegetation from the top of the bank and remove to licensed tip.	A suitably qualified ecologist has written an INNS Management Plan prior to the works, which is then to be reviewed during the works.	Present during vegetation clearance to ensure that the INNS management plan is being followed.

4. IMPACT AND AVOIDANCE/REDUCTION MEASURES

4.1. REPTILE/AMPHIBIAN BUFFER ZONE

It is not deemed likely that reptiles or amphibians are to be an issue relating to the proposed works. However, it is possible that common species will be seen during the works.

If it is suspected that a protected species of reptile/amphibian has been seen on site, works should stop, and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted for further advice.

4.2. RIPARIAN BUFFER ZONE

A 10-metre exclusion zone will be established on either side of the open watercourse where no further development will take place except for the construction of the access bridge and the diversion of the watercourse prior to the works. This will be fenced and signposted so as not to interfere with the approved works and all site personnel will be made aware of the 10-metre buffer.

The purpose of the riparian buffer zone is to ensure that no further encroachment on the river is made. The temporary exclusion zone will be removed once all work on the site has been completed, and all personnel and equipment have left the site.

4.3. RETAINED HABITATS & TREE PROTECTION ZONES (TPZs)

Biodiversity Net Gain is not required for this site as the works are to provide a replacement for the collapsed structure, therefore, planning permission is not required. No habitats are expected to be lost as a result of these works.

Individual trees to be retained will have a buffer zone created by fencing and signage identifying the fenced area as being within a Tree Protection Zone (TPZ).

4.4. INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES (INNS)

A site walkover conducted by PBA Ecology in March 2025 identified extensive presence of INNS on site. This finding was based off the presence of early giant hogweed growth, anecdotal evidence and images from Google Maps Streetview. The site is to be revisited in the height of the botanical season to confirm presence and locations of presence to provide further recommendations of how the works should continue, which will be found in the INNS management plan.

The ECoW will be responsible for ensuring the INNS Management Plan is followed and for monitoring any new evidence or growth of INNS at the Milltown Footbridge site during the course of the works and while on site. The INNS Management Plan features appropriate biosecurity protocols which must be adhered to at all times during the works. Strict biosecurity measures must be maintained to prevent INNS from spreading on site/to other construction sites. This includes adherence to the Check Clean Dry protocols proposed by DEFRA for PPE and machinery entering and leaving the site.

Pollution prevention measures are required whilst INNS are being treated using herbicide to ensure runoff does not enter the River Irwell. Additionally, during any excavation of any contaminated soil (soil containing INNS) pollution prevention will be required to ensure no biological material enters the River Irwell.

4.5. NESTING BIRDS

The protection of wild birds is covered by the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it an offence to wilfully kill or injure a wild bird, to damage or destroy a wild bird nest while it is in use or under construction, or to take or destroy a wild bird egg. Persons found to have contravened this Act may be liable to penalties including an unlimited fine and/or imprisonment for up to six months. It is important to note that these penalties can be imposed for an offence involving a single bird, nest or egg.

4.6. REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides protection for many reptile species, including adders, grass snakes, common lizards and slow worms. It is an offence to kill or injure these animals. In addition, all native reptiles are listed as rare and vulnerable species under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

The site at Milltown Footbridge does not provide suitable habitats for reptiles. It is assessed that common species of amphibians may be present on site.

4.7. FRESHWATER FISH

A Flood Risk Activities Permit (FRAP) is required as it is proposed that a temporary structure over a main river will be erected (DEFRA, 2016).

The Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 (SFFA) is legislation designed to protect all watercourses and waters containing freshwater fish from pollution by toxic substances and polluting effluents. Under the terms of the Act, it is prohibited to injure or kill fish, spawn or fish food, and

salmonids are accorded special protection under the Act. Additionally, the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (AWA) provides protection to all freshwater bony fish from 'unnecessary suffering'.

It is the responsibility of all landowners and leaseholders to ensure that their activities do not adversely affect the welfare of bony fish in aquatic habitats on their land. To mitigate the ecological impacts on fish and their habitats, including direct mortality and pollution of freshwater habitats as a result of the works, a fish rescue operation will be carried out during the in-river working season (June-September). Prior to work commencing, all captured individuals will be relocated downstream, and the watercourse will be fitted with a mesh screen to ensure that individuals do not re-enter the works area. The works are to involve installing a coffer dam and dewatering a section of the channel to construct the proposed pier/abutment works. Immediately prior to the construction of a coffer dam, a fish rescue should be completed by a team of suitably qualified ecologists. Further fish rescues are then required once the coffer dam has been created and before any de-watering is to take place.

Additionally, to the fish rescue, silt curtains should be used to prevent pollution to downstream watercourses when in-river works are carried out.

Fish will be protected from piling sound and vibration by use of the silent piling (press-in/hydraulic piling) technique. This along with the cofferdam will limit the risk vibration in the water column.

4.8. TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS

A phased approach to clearing grassland not containing INNS will reduce the risk of harm to terrestrial mammals: tall herbaceous vegetation should first be cut to a height of approximately 10 cm to allow individuals to escape, and left for 24 hours before the vegetation is cut to ground level. If areas of vegetation are required to be removed where INNS are present, herbicide spray must be used (the INNS Management Plan must be referred to).

All excavations must be securely covered overnight or provided with a suitable means of escape for wildlife. A possible solution to this problem is the construction of a safe ramp positioned at an angle of less than 45 degrees. If small terrestrial mammals such as hare *Lepus europaeus* or rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* are encountered during unsupervised work, work in the immediate area should be suspended until the animal can be carefully relocated or allowed to leave on its own. If a protected mammal (e.g. badger *Meles meles* or otter *Lutra lutra*) is suspected to be present, it is advisable to consult an experienced ecologist for further guidance.

4.9. ECOLOGICAL CLERK OF WORKS

An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be on site to oversee the works and to ensure that the CECoMP is followed. The ECoW will be responsible for ensuring that all necessary measures are taken to mitigate the impact on any wildlife present. The ECoW is responsible for ensuring that the INNS Management Plan is also being adhered to, especially during vegetation removal on site, pre-works.

Prior to the commencement of work, the ECoW will undertake a start-up check to ascertain that the site is operating in accordance with the CECoMP requirements.

4.10. COMMUNICATION OF CECoMP

A copy of the CECoMP shall be kept on site for the duration of the works. A copy will also be distributed to the project team, including any subcontractors, to ensure that all applicable environmental management requirements are effectively communicated. In addition, key activities and environmentally sensitive operations will be communicated to staff and subcontractors through the induction process and supplementary toolbox talks.

A Site Ecological Management meeting will be scheduled as required, as determined by the ECoW, and will follow a structured agenda including discussion points such as:

- All internal and external environment communications and complaints, including those from statutory bodies such as the EA.
- Ecological incidents and near misses.
- Amendments to the CEcoMP or site working practices.
- Ecological training, including inductions and toolbox talks.

4.11. POST-WORKS MITIGATION

Once the new crossing of the waterbody (River Irwell) has been completed and remnants of old bridge structure and associated in-channel pier structure have been removed then the following methods should be followed:

- The riverbank should be reinstated including a soft landscaping scheme predominantly based on native species, once any existing resident INNS have been appropriately managed in accordance with the INNS Management Plan which is informed by the Environment Agency's comments on the proposed development, "*No development shall take place until a detailed method statement for removing or the long-term management / control of Japanese knotweed, Giant hogweed & Himalayan Balsam identified on the site.*" Riparian seed mix with scattered trees (alder, willow).
- The INNS Management Plan should be followed pre-works, during works and after the works are completed to ensure that the INNS on site do not re-establish.

5. REFERENCES

Animal Welfare Act, Animal Welfare Act as Amended. 2006. 7 USC §2131–2156. ; Animal Welfare Regulations, Animal Welfare Regulations.2006

DEFRA 2016. *Flood risk activities: environmental permits*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits> (Accessed 20 March 2025).

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Appendix 1 – Phase 1 Habitats Map

Penny Anderson Associates Ltd , 2021



Appendix 2 - Plans





