

GRASSLAND TURF TRANSLOCATION METHODOLOGY & MANAGEMENT PLAN

LAND EAST OF LUTTERWORTH ROAD,
BURBAGE, LEICESTERSHIRE

for

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CONTROL SHEET

Davidsons Developments Ltd Land East of Lutterworth Road, Burbage, Leicestershire Grassland Turf Translocation Methodology & Management Plan

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scheme Background

The site 'Land East of Lutterworth Road' is located in the south-east of Burbage, Leicestershire, and is centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference SP 447 919. The site was granted outline planning permission at Appeal (ref.: APP/K2420/W/20/3265143) for residential development of up to 135 dwellings with recreational areas, retention and enhancement of existing wildflower grassland and creation of attenuation features.

1.2 Site Description

The site is an area of c.9ha and comprises eight fields (F1-F5, F7-F9) of semi-improved neutral grassland bounded by native hedgerows and semi-mature / mature trees. Fields F1-F5, F7 and F8 are cow-grazed, with a short sward. Of these, F1, F3 and F5 display ridge and furrow. F9 is a smaller unmanaged field in the north-west of the site that comprises rough grassland, tall ruderal and scrub habitats. The off-site base line includes a further semi-improved neutral grassland field (F6) bounded by native hedgerows and semi-mature / mature trees and with an open brick cow-shed. F6 shows weakly defined ridge and furrow. See Figure 1, below, for an overview of the site and off-site boundary, and referenced field numbers.

1.3 Rationale

The site comprises areas of species-rich semi-improved mesotrophic grassland of Local Wildlife Site (LWS) quality (fields F2, F3 and F5). The development site will retain and enhance existing areas of species-rich grassland. However, the proposals will result in the loss of 0.37ha of 'fairly good' condition LWS qualifying grassland within field F3. The site will also result in the loss of areas of 'fairly good' condition neutral grassland within fields F1 (c.0.6ha) and F8 (c.0.123ha) which does not meet LWS criteria, but is species-rich and / or comprises further botanical interest (*i.e.* adder's-tongue fern identified within F8). Figure 1, below, shows results of the condition assessment completed for the site and off-site habitats, whilst Figure 2 identifies those areas considered to meet LWS criteria.

To avoid total loss of areas of species-rich grassland within a county that currently is estimated to have less than 500 ha of high-quality UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) / Section 41 'Priority Habitats' (NERC Act 2006) remaining¹, it was agreed with the Local Planning Authority (Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council) that translocation of this 'fairly good' condition grassland to areas of lower condition grassland within off-site field F6 would be beneficial in retaining and enhancing existing habitats.

Figure 1: plan showing field numbers and condition assessments for the habitats at Land East of Lutterworth Road.



¹ Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland BAP 2016. Available at: <https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/planning/leicestershire-and-rutland-environment-records-centre-lrerc>

Figure 2: plan showing an assessment of grassland habitats against Local Wildlife Site criteria for the Land East of Lutterworth Road.



1.4 Objectives

The objectives of this report are to provide a clear methodology for the translocation of species-rich turf, with initial aftercare and a long-term management plan to ensure the best chance of successful establishment of the grassland, and to allow discharge of Condition 19 of the permission (see below).

Condition 19:

‘Development shall not commence until details of the grassland turf translocation methodology have been provided and agreed with the LPA. Development that would result in the loss of the grassland shown on ‘Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Plan’ dated July 2020 ref: 1459, as to be translocated cannot take place until the turf has been translocated in accordance with the agreed methodology. The translocation methodology should include details of locations and pre-translocation preparation of donor and receptor sites, method of translocation (which must be done in one operation without turf storage), monitoring and aftercare. The development shall be carried out in complete accordance with the agreed grassland turf translocation methodology.’

2. TRANSLOCATION METHOD STATEMENT

2.1 Donor and Receptor Sites

Where appropriate, turf will be translocated from F1, the western half of F3, and the area with adder's-tongue fern in F8, which all comprise 'fairly good' quality semi-improved mesotrophic grassland. The proposed receptor site for the grassland is within off-site field F6, located immediately east of the site (see Figure 3, below). The translocated turf will be located in the northern end of F6, where grassland is currently of 'fairly poor' condition. It is anticipated that c.0.5ha of grassland will be translocated.

Figure 3: showing the location of the donor (red) and receptor (blue) sites for the grassland turf translocation. Please note that not all turf from the donor sites will be translocated, only those areas where the condition is suitable.



2.2 Timing

The translocation will be undertaken during early spring (February / March) or early autumn (September / October) when the grassland is not actively growing, and when the sward is short (e.g. following a hay-cut / grazing). Translocation will only be carried out when weather conditions are suitable and will not take place whilst the ground is

frozen or during periods of waterlogging² to avoid compaction and associated damage to the soil structure, and damage to the surface vegetation from vehicles. Translocation will also not take place during prolonged periods of dry weather to prevent desiccation.

2.3 Personnel

The turf translocation will be carried out by experienced habitat contractors with the appropriate equipment / machinery necessary to carry out the works.

All stages of the translocation process (from the translocation to aftercare and management) will be overseen / directed by an experienced ecological consultant (Ecological Clerk of Works) from Focus Environmental Consultants. Prior to the translocation commencing, a toolbox talk will be given to all contractors involved to ensure awareness on the agreed methodology and procedures / protocols in place to minimise damage to sensitive habitats on site – including those outside of the donor and receptor sites.

Contact details are provided in Annex 4.2.

2.4 Site Preparation

The following prescriptions will be undertaken in preparation of the translocation of the turf:

- The extent of the receptor and donor sites will be clearly marked out by the Ecological Clerk of Works prior to works commencing³.
- Removal of any scrub or saplings within the donor sites via hand pulling/digging.

² Soil moisture should be below the field capacity (*i.e.* a water-table depth of >50cm below ground surface at the time of removal).

³ The area of turf to be translocated will be accurately plotted to enable the equivalent area of the receptor site to be marked out prior to any groundworks commencing. This will ensure there are no large gaps of bare ground left within the receptor site which could become readily colonised by undesirable species (*e.g.* common nettle, broad-leaved dock).

- If required, the grassland within the donor sites will be subject to a cut immediately prior to translocation.
- Protective fencing (e.g. Heras fence) with appropriate signs / notices will be erected around the donor and receptor sites to protect these areas and adjacent areas of grassland to be retained within the development proposals during works. No access within these areas will be allowed unless authorised by the ecologist overseeing the works. Storage of machinery / vehicles and materials will be prohibited from these areas.
- Only authorised vehicles / machinery will be allowed within the fenced off donor and receptor sites. Vehicles will avoid running over the vegetation before, during or after the translocation to avoid damage / compaction.
- The receptor site will be prepared by removing the topsoil layer. Donor fields F1 and F3 and the receptor field display ridge and furrow. Where practicable, the land will be reprofiled to replicate the ridge-and-furrow profile of the field, with the line of ridges and furrows having an orientation of south-east to south-west (see Figure 4, below). Excess turf and soil will ideally be removed from site, or stored appropriately (e.g. secured / sealed / covered) onsite outside of F6 and other grassland habitats to be retained, and hedgerow and tree protected areas. **Note** – leaving mounds of soil undisturbed for long periods of time will be avoided as mammals, such as badgers, may be tempted to excavate new setts within it.

Please refer to Annex 4.1 for the following plans to demonstrate the above.

- Site Compound Details and Transport Routes
- Indicative Sequence for Translocation of Turves

Figure 4: showing the direction of the lines of ridges and furrows of the receptor site (F6).



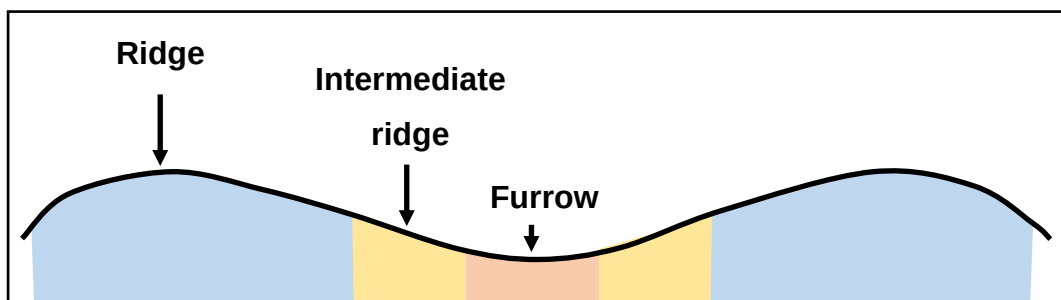
2.5 Translocation

The grassland will be moved and transplanted as large turves to increase the chance of successful establishment. Translocation will be carried out as outlined below.

- Turves removed will be of sufficient depth to incorporate the root zone and protective layer (approximately 300mm depth).
- Turves will be removed in sections as large as possible *i.e.* 2-2.5m x 1-1.5m.
Note – widths may vary depending on the section of ridge / furrow.
- Turves will be cut with clean, vertical edges to ensure turves fit together within the receptor site. This will be carried out using a machine with a guillotine (see below) or suitable flat-edged bucket attachment. When removed from the ground, turves will be cut in line with the ridges and furrows.
- Turves will be lifted with the use of a machine with forks and / or a plate attachment. Ideally, both machines / attachments will be available on site for use as and when most appropriate (as determined by the conditions of the site, soil, weather *etc.*).

- Once lifted, turves will be immediately transported to the receptor site. For short distances (<100m), it is advised that the turves are transported to the donor site using the lifting machine as this avoids the risk of damaging turves when moving to another machine. However, if this is not practicable, the turves will be loaded onto a flatbed trailer before being transported to the receptor site. Machinery will be restricted to designated routes only, avoiding damage to the remaining grassland within the donor sites, and grassland that has been relocated within the receptor site. **There will be no storage of turves.**
- Turves will be laid in line with the following key points:
 - Turves will be laid tightly together to avoid any gaps and reduce the risk of altering the soil properties through oxidation, desiccation, or mineralisation. If any gaps are unavoidable, these will be filled with soil from the donor site.
 - Turves will be laid evenly to provide a level surface (following the ridge-and-furrow profile if applicable). Using turves of the same depth will ensure this is achieved.
 - Turves will be re-laid in the order they were lifted from and will start from the south-east of the receptor site and work north-west towards the field access to minimise the risks of damage. Labelling of the turves may aid with ensuring correct positioning. **Note** – where ridge and furrow is to be achieved, ridge turves will only be placed on ridges, intermediate ridge turves on intermediate ridges, and furrow turves only placed on furrows. Figure 5, below, shows a profile of ridge-and-furrow to demonstrate this.

Figure 5: showing the profile of ridge-and-furrow.



3. AFTERCARE, MAINTENANCE & MONITORING

3.1 Aftercare & Maintenance

3.1.1 Initial aftercare

Watering of the turf should not be required in most situations and should be avoided as this will encourage the growth of more vigorous species. Watering will only be required if conditions are particularly dry to prevent desiccation and avoid turves from collapsing.

3.1.2 Establishment Maintenance

The receptor site and wider field (F6) will be managed as a traditional hay meadow. The first three years following translocation will be treated as the 'establishment maintenance' period and will be subject to regular monitoring to assess the progress of the vegetation. During this period, the grassland will be grazed or mown over the autumn, winter and early spring. **Note** - grazing will be used for management of the grassland following the hay-cut in the first year, prior to this mechanical cutting will be required.

Grassland will then be left uncut / ungrazed between April to early-August to allow the wildflowers to develop. An annual 'hay cut' will be undertaken during mid to late August to a height of no less than 100mm. Arisings will be left to dry in place and shed seed for 1-7 days before being removed from site.

Control of undesirable 'weed' species, such as creeping thistle, spear thistle and broad-leaved dock will be managed via hand-pulling or spot treatment using a selective herbicide.

3.1.3 Long-term Maintenance

Once established, the grassland will be subject to continued management as a traditional hay meadow (*i.e.* grazed / mown over the autumn, winter and early spring, followed by an annual 'hay cut' mid to late August with arisings removed after 1-7 days, as per 3.1.2, above) to achieve the following objectives:

- to establish and maintain a floristically-diverse, healthy sward;

- to increase the degree of botanical conformity with Mesotrophic Grassland Community 5 (MG5), as measured by the cover and frequency of key indicator species (See Rodwell, 1992; Rodwell, 2006; Joint Nature Conservancy Council, 2004).
- to achieve a habitat which fulfils the criteria for 'lowland meadows' (g3a) of 'good' condition as set out within the UK Habitat Classification guidance and associated guidance for Biodiversity Metric condition assessments (UK Habitat Classification Working Group, 2018; Panks *et al.*, 2022).
- to encourage flowering wild plants, which provide a rich nectar source attracting various butterfly, bee and moth species, which in turn will provide an invertebrate food source for bats.
- to implement an appropriate management regime to allow wildflowers to increase in coverage and reduce the dominance of grasses and weeds;

3.2 Responsibilities for Long-term Management

Long-term management of the receptor site (F6) will be carried out by the Landowner (or tenant). However, the responsibility for ensuring that the management is being carried out correctly as prescribed within this Plan, will lie with the Management Company appointed for the development site. This will be secured through a legally binding agreement secured between the Management Company / Developer and Landowner.

3.3 Monitoring

Monitoring of the turf within the receptor site will be undertaken annually by a suitably qualified ecologist for a minimum of five years post-translocation. Monitoring will assess the condition and management of the grassland and include a detailed botanical survey. The following are considered to be key aspects to this monitoring survey:

- a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey using quadrats. Results will be analysed using statistical software (e.g. MAVIS) to enable an assessment of the grassland against the criteria for Mesotrophic Grassland Community 5 (MG5), and to allow a review of the establishment of the grassland over time and the influence of management;

- condition monitoring of the grassland to enable an assessment of the grassland against the UK Habitat Classification criteria for 'lowland meadows';
- site observations;
- faunal observations; and
- condition monitoring.

Following each monitoring survey, a report detailing results together with recommendations for any remedial works, as required, will be submitted to the Management Company and Local Planning Authority, and any restorative measures will be actioned. Following the first five years, a review of the project and frequency of the monitoring checks will be reviewed.

4. ANNEXES

4.1 Plans

4.2 Contact Details

4.3 References & Bibliography

4.4 Legislation & Best Practice

4.1 Plans

4.1.1 Turf Translocation – Site Compound Details and Transport Routes

4.1.2 Turf Translocation – Indicative Sequence for Translocation of Turves

4.1.1 Turf Translocation - Site Compound Details and Transport Routes



Key

- Protective Fencing
- Transport & Access Routes
- Donor site
- Receptor site
- Site Compound Area
(storage of welfare facilities, machinery / vehicles and materials including excess topsoil and turf during turf translocation)

Client: Davidsons Developments Ltd
Site: Land East of Lutterworth Road, Burbage, Leicestershire
Title: Turf Translocation - Site Compound Details and Transport Routes
Contract: 1459
Date: November 2022

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4.1.2 Turf Translocation - Indicative Sequence for Translocation of Turves



This plan is to demonstrate the sequence of the translocation of turves from the donor (red) and receptor (blue) sites. The number denotes the start of the translocation from each donor site (i.e. process of removal of turves from each land parcel) and the receptor site (i.e. process of turves being laid out), with the arrow indicating the direction of the turves to be removed from each donor site / laid thereafter. Please note that this is indicative only. Not all turf from the donor sites will be translocated, only those areas where the condition is suitable. The order of turves will be clearly marked out by the Ecological Clerk of Works prior to translocation works commencing.

Client: Davidsons Developments Ltd
Site: Land East of Lutterworth Road, Burbage, Leicestershire
Title: Turf Translocation - Indicative Sequence for Translocation of Turves
Contract: 1459
Date: November 2022

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4.2 Contact Information

4.2.1 Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW)

Name: Focus Environmental Consultants

Contact: Natalie Walsh (Associate Ecologist)

Contact No: 01905 780700

Address: Unit 2, Ball Mill Top Business Park, Worcester, WR2 6PD

4.2.2 Habitat Contractors

Name:

Contact:

Contact No:

Address:

4.2.3 Management Company

Name:

Contact:

Contact No:

Address:

4.3 References & Bibliography

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Acknowledgements:

FiveRivers Environmental Contracting Ltd.

4.4 Legislation & Best Practice

4.4.1 The Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act 2021 is a far-reaching Act of parliament, which received Royal Assent on 9th November 2021 and took a number of years to come into force. It is described by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management as ‘world leading’ legislation and has the primary focus of providing targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment. In implementing the Act, the Secretary of State is required to set long-term targets for a number of priority areas including: air quality, water, biodiversity, resource efficiency and waste reduction. Schedule 14 of the Act establishes a mandatory requirement for all developments to secure a 10% net gain in biodiversity, with a few exceptions such as ‘permitted development’ and marine and intertidal developments. Schedule 14 of the Act details the required amendment of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserting a new s.90A and Schedule 7A) with respect to ‘normal’ development. Schedule 15 describes amendments to the Planning Act 2008 with respect to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, inserting a new s.99 and Schedule 2A.

The measurement of baseline and post-development biodiversity figures involves the use of the most up to date version of the state-sponsored ‘biodiversity metric’. A ‘small sites’ metric is available for sites of up to 0.5ha in size supporting 1 - 9 residential units or for other forms of development, with a floorspace of less than 5000m² and in both cases without priority habitats being present (with the exception of hedgerows and arable field margins). The mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain requirement described by the Act will not be mandatory until November 2023, although may be still be required by local plan policy in the intervening period. Other matters covered by the Environment Act are the creation of a Biodiversity Gain Site Register, the provision of Biodiversity Credits, the establishment of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) and the establishment of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. The Act further strengthens the biodiversity duty enshrined within s.40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, requiring not only the conservation of biodiversity but also its ‘enhancement’.

4.4.2 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/490/contents/made>

These regulations, referred hereafter as “the Habitats Regulations”, represent the primary method by which Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the “Habitats Directive”) is transposed for England and Wales and their territorial seas. The Habitats Directive, in conjunction with the Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EEC) forms the basis for implementation of Europe’s nature conservation policy through both habitat and species level protection. The Habitats Directive requires the designation of strictly protected European sites known as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Together with the Special Protection Areas (SPAs) established by the Birds Directive, these collectively form the Natura 2000 Network of protected sites. The Habitats Directive also requires the strict protection of animals and plants of Community Interest

listed under Annex IV. Habitat types requiring strict protection as SACs are listed under Annex I. The conservation of animals and plants listed under Annex II requires the designation of SACs.

The Habitats Regulations require that public bodies must exercise their nature conservation responsibilities to ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive. These regulations also require the conservation of natural habitats and habitats of species through the selection, designation and notification of marine and terrestrial 'European Sites' to be afforded protection under the Habitats Directive. The habitats and species of European Importance are listed under Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive. The regulations also contain provision for the appropriate management of these European Sites including the control of damaging operations, special nature conservation orders and restoration orders, for example. The Habitats Regulations afford strict protection to European Protected Species of animals under Schedule 2 and plants under Schedule 5. Offences (subject to certain exceptions) include the deliberate capture, killing, disturbance or trade in these animals. Similarly plants listed under Schedule 5 are protected (subject to exceptions) from picking, collection, cutting, destruction or trade.

4.4.3 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

While the Habitats Regulations provide the basis for nature conservation policy in Europe, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) is still a major mechanism for the legislative protection of wildlife and countryside/national parks in the UK. The WCA, and its various amendments, draw on from pre-existing legislation and support the Habitats Regulations in implementing the Bern Convention (1979) and Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds. Schedules within the WCA provide a list of protected species and habitats, in addition to prohibited actions. Further details are provided below for specific species relevant to the report. The WCA also contains measures for controlling invasive non-native species and amendments to a number of laws, including in relation to public rights of way.

4.4.4 The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000

The CROW Act amends existing WCA legislation in accordance with the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio Earth Summit). The Act applies to England and Wales only and encompasses public access, rights of way, nature conservation and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Schedule 9 of the Act provides increased powers for the protection and management of SSSIs while Schedule 12 strengthens the legal protection for protected species via arrestable offences and heavier penalties.

4.4.5 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act imposes a *Biodiversity Duty* (S.40) on all public bodies to conserve biodiversity at both species and habitat levels (S40). *"Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity."*

S.41 of the Act requires the publication of a list of “*living organisms and types of habitat which in the Secretary of State’s opinion are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity.*” The list generated under S.41 of the Act contains a number of types of habitats and species of animal and plant that have the potential to be affected by development projects of a range of sizes and impacts.

S.47 of the Act establishes special protection for the nest sites of certain birds that are known to re-use their nests and creates an additional Schedule containing these birds, namely golden eagle, white-tailed eagle and osprey. It is an offence to take, damage or destroy the nest of these three birds at any time.

The Act also establishes Natural England as the independent body “to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development”. 943 species and 56 habitats of principal importance are included on the S41 list as guidance for public bodies on decisions that affect biodiversity.

5. QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

Focus Environmental Consultants® has the expertise to provide sure-fire environmental solutions to a wide range of projects. The company ethos forges the highest standards of professional scientific practice with a best value approach for our clients. Our core area of expertise is in the production of specialist environmental reports and advice to support planning applications. Our comprehensive services include Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEA), Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and fulfilling protected species surveys, licensing and mitigation requirements. Focus Environmental Consultants is a CIEEM Registered Practice, with all ecological staff being members of this professional body. Our flexible approach, range of skills and broad project experience from major infrastructure contracts to small private developments allows us to adapt to your individual requirements. As well as offering a full suite of ecological services, Focus Environmental Consultants can provide expert arboricultural advice and reports and is building an enviable reputation for innovative habitat creation and management solutions. Focus Environmental Consultants is situated in Worcestershire, providing a convenient and central UK location.

Natalie Walsh BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Natalie is an Associate Ecologist and has over seven years' professional experience in the field of ecology. She holds a BSc (Hons) degree in Wildlife Conservation from the University of Plymouth. Natalie is experienced in undertaking Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA), Biodiversity Impact Assessments (BIA) and Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA) as well as surveying for European Protected Species including great crested newts, bats and hazel dormice. Natalie is also a competent surveyor of badgers, reptiles, barn owls, water voles and otters. Natalie holds Natural England and Natural Resources Wales survey licences for great crested newts and bats (Class 2) and is a Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

This report has been checked for quality and content by:

Graham Davison BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM MRSB

Graham is an ecologist with over twenty years of experience in the field of applied ecology. He holds a BSc (Hons) degree in Zoology and an MSc with distinction in Law and Environmental Science. Graham's Masters paper on legal and practical implications for mammal reintroductions was published by the IUCN. His ecological experience includes surveys to identify nationally and locally important sites for wildlife, ecological services to local planning authorities and provision of ecological reports to accompany major infrastructure projects, housing schemes, industrial developments and mineral extraction. Graham is a skilled botanical surveyor (FISC 4) specialising in Phase I and Phase II (NVC) Habitat Surveys. Graham has considerable expertise in protected species surveys and licensing, and is a Registered Consultant under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence scheme (BMCL). Graham has appeared and delivered evidence as an expert witness for Planning Appeals and Public Inquiry. Graham has been interviewed for BBC local radio and TV programmes to provide specialist expertise on ecological topics.