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OTTER PRESENCE SURVEY

SITE

Rhostyllen footpath / cycleway Route
Colliery Road
Wrexham
LL14 4FG

CLIENT

SG Estates
Unit 1
Rhosddu Industrial Estate
Old Rhosrobin
Wrexham
LL11 4YL

JOB No.

1090

DATE

May 2025

GRID REFERENCE

SJ 31685 48331
(approx. centre of site)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

EDC were commissioned to undertake an Otter (*Lutra lutra*) presence survey of an area of land situated in Rhostyllen on behalf of SG Estates. The proposed works are for the construction of a footpath / cycleway and bridge within a parcel of mixed woodland located to the south of the ongoing SG Estates housing development site situated off Wrexham Road. The overall survey area is approximately 5.4 ha in area originating adjacent to the north of Colliery Road in Rhostyllen running south east. The proposed site works survey area is approximately 1.35 ha, with the South eastern boundary adjoining Hafod Road. The Glan-yr-afon Brook runs central throughout the course of the site. A previous survey preliminary ecological appraisal has been undertaken on site by EDC in 2025 and United Environmental Services Ltd in 2022. The previous surveys both observed potential Otter evidence and recommended further study should occur.

2.0 SITE and SURVEY AREA

The overall survey area is approximately 5.4 Ha, with the proposed site works boundary being approximately 1.35ha in area. The vast majority of which comprises broadleaved woodland. The development works will be localised in nature. Agricultural arable land is adjacent to the woodland and the majority of the proposed footpath / cycleway will follow the boundary line of the woodland within this arable land. The Glan-yr-afon brook flows through the woodland from west to east. The south eastern section of site is an area of species-poor semi-improved grassland.

At this time, the proposed footpath / cycleway route has not been finalised although an indicative plan has been provided to EDC. The planned works will include the creation of a footpath / cycleway and bridge. One footbridge is to be provided as part of the works.



Fig 1 – **Survey Area**. White area indicates the extent of area surveyed on 16/05/2025. The main focus was the Glan Yr Afon Brook along the blue highlighted line.

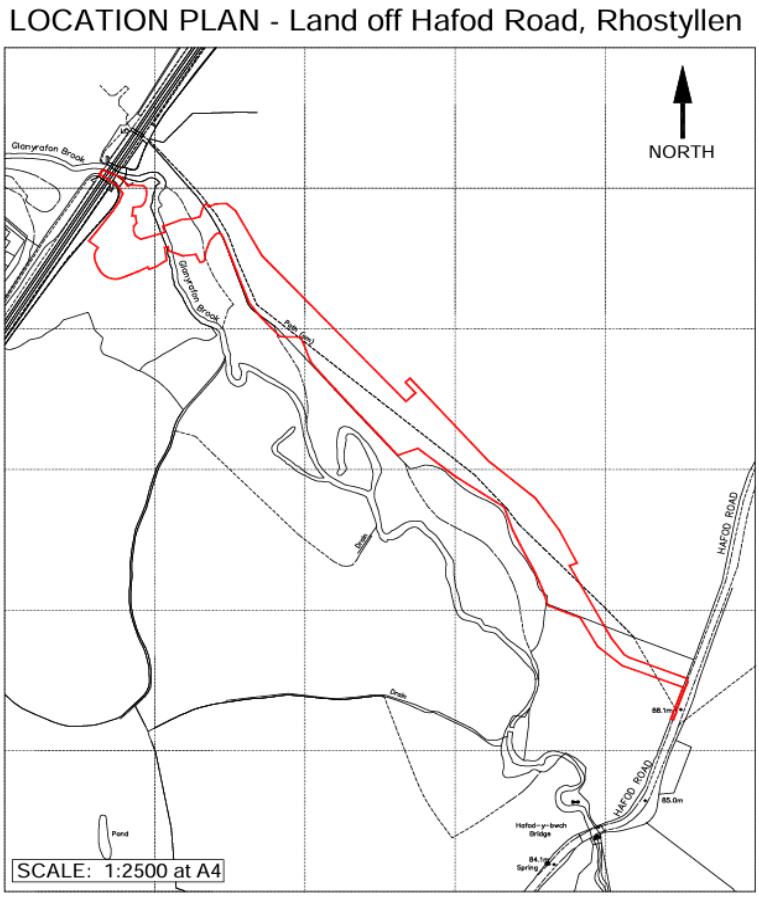


Fig 2 – **Proposed Work Survey Area** . Red line boundary area as this is where the proposed footpath / cycleway and bridge are to be situated.

Survey

The survey was conducted under optimal conditions, during a period of dry warm weather with stable water levels, on the 16th May 2025 by Ecological Consultant Tobias Hodnett.

3.0 METHODS

3.1 DATA SEARCH

A desk top data search for Otter (*Lutra* lutra) species records within 2 km over the last 20 years was undertaken.

3.2 OTTER (Lutra lutra):

A search for field signs (Holts, paths, spraints, foraging) indicating the presence of this species within the site boundary. The entire Glan Yr Afon Brook was investigated, with side tributaries and ditches also included in the survey area.

4.0 LIMITATIONS

No limitations were recorded that would be considered to vary the species and habitats as recorded during survey.

5.0 EXISTING DATA

5.1 *OTTER (Lutra lutra)*:

The previous survey conducted by UES in 2022 identified Otter spraint on the northern section of the site. Situated underneath the railway bridge. The preliminary ecological appraisal conducted by EDC in 2025 also observed one single Otter spraint in a similar location at the railway bridge situated to the north of the survey area.

The desk top data search returned with 19 historic records for Otter within a 2km radius. The most recent was from 2017 which identified Otter spraint underneath the road bridge situated on Colliery Road. The closest record was from 2013 where again Otter Spraint was observed underneath the road bridge situated on Hafod Road to the south of the site. There are no historic records available within the proposed works area.

6.0 RESULTS

At the time of survey climatic conditions were dry and clear, with minimal breeze. Average temperature was 17 °C. The Glan Yr Afon Brook held stable water conditions throughout the surveyed system.

6.6 *OTTER (Lutra lutra):*

Figure 3 displays the location of all spraints observed at the time of survey. Along the course of the Glan Yr Afon Brook eight locations displayed evidence of otter presence in the form of spraint. The main identified areas of activity were present at both the Hafod Road bridge situated to the south of the site and the railway bridge situated to the north of the survey area. Minimal to none activity/presence was noted at the proposed site works area for the new footbridge.

At the time of survey, no evidence of holts was identified within the survey area. From the surveyors opinion commuting, foraging and feeding behaviour are occurring within the survey area, with the main areas of activity noted to be outside the proposed works areas.



Fig 3 – **Spraint Location** . Red markers highlight the location of Otter spraint identified at the time of survey

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.5 OTTER:

The data search, previous survey and the walk over survey did identify potential presence of otter in the form of spraint within the site boundary. The proposed works area however showed minimal to none presence, it is therefore recommended within this area to;

- Monitor surface water drainage from the commencement of works to ensure that sediments are not entering the watercourse.
- Any excavations, particularly during the construction of the footbridge, should not be left open overnight. If unavoidable then an access ramp should be installed to allow for animals to escape.
- No site lighting should be left on overnight.
- No works to be ongoing at night.
- Fuels and oils should be kept in a bunded area away from the watercourse. All refuelling should not occur anywhere near the watercourse.
- Spill kits should be available on site, and contractors should be aware of their location and deployment.
- Prior to the commencement of the proposed construction of the footbridge, the site should be checked by a suitably experienced ecologist to ensure that there is no otter presence within the proposed works area. This is particularly important if the works are to be undertaken in the spring period. A tool-box talk should be undertaken at the same time.

8.0 CONCLUSION

No major impacts on Otter *(Lutra lutra*) or supporting habitats have been identified at this stage of the assessment process. The site does have features that would be attractive to Otter. The Glan Yr Afon Brook has been identified as both a commuting and hunting area for Otter. Within the proposed works area for the footbridge high banks with minimal cover were observed reducing the likelihood that the species would forage in this area and mainly just commute through. Habitat downstream is less disturbed and more suitable for an otter to lie-up in. During the course of the survey recent evidence of presence was noted at eight locations in the form of spraint. No well-worn runs were observed throughout the system, suggesting individuals are staying within the watercourse when commuting.

It has been recommended that prior to the commencement of works, especially prior to the footbridge construction an experienced ecologist should be present on site to provide system checks within the proposed works area and undertake a tool-box talk to the onsite contractors. Otters are nocturnal and crepuscular, and therefore unlikely to be disturbed whilst commuting or hunting within this section.

Generally, it is therefore the surveyor's opinion that the development proposals are considered likely to have no long-term impact on the favourable conservation status of locally recorded protected species, or their ecological functionality if the works are carried out in accordance with good mitigation and management going forward.

Tobias Hodnett

edc

July 2025

APPENDICES

Site Photographs

Photo 1 – Railway Bridge at north of site looking north west.



Photo 2 – Hafod Road Bridge



Photo 3 – Spraint within Hafod Road Bridge.



Photo 4 – Spraint within Railway Bridge.



Photo 5 & 6– Fallen Tree on the southern section of the watercourse showing claw marks

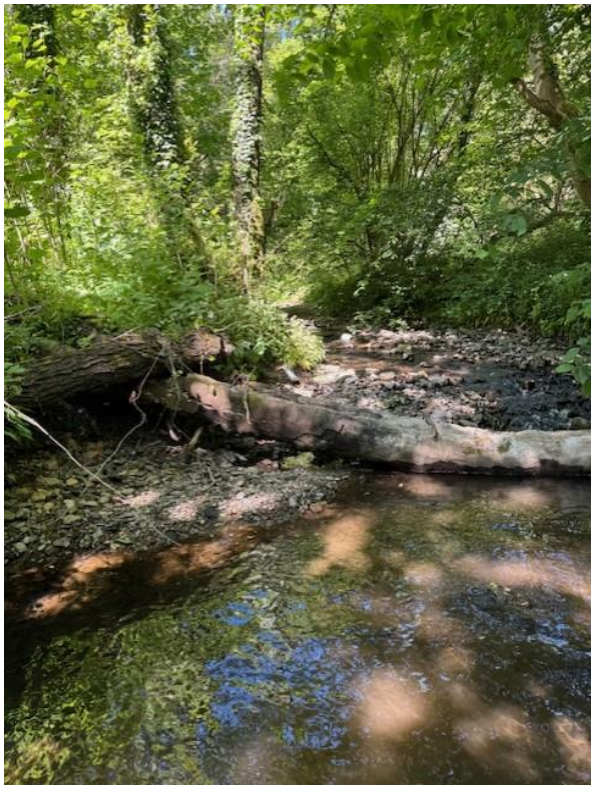




Photo 7 – Historic spraint located downstream



Photo 8 – Deceased Freshwater Sculpin (*Cottus gobio*) example of food source available.



Legislation

Otters and the Law

The otter is a European Protected Species (EPS). It is against the law to damage or destroy an otter breeding site or resting place, or deliberately to capture, kill, injure, or disturb an otter.

Otters are fully protected by the following pieces of legislation:
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (regulation 42) fully protects otters, making it an offence to: -

- Intentionally or deliberately capture, injure, or kill an Otter.
- Damage or destroy a breeding or resting place of an Otter, or intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy any structure or place used for shelter or protection
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb an Otter in a place used for shelter or protection , or deliberately disturb Otters in such a way as to be likely significantly to affect (i) the ability of any significant group of Otters to survive, breed, rear or nurture their young, or (ii) the local distribution or abundance .
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection.
- Possess an Otter (alive or dead), or any part of an Otter

- Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW [Countryside Rights of Way] Act 2000) fully protects otters, making it an offence to:-

For any disturbance to occur a derogation or EPS licence must be gained from Natural Resources Wales. To gain an EPS Licence from Natural Resources Wales (NRW), NRW must be satisfied that;

i. granting the licence would not be detrimental to the Favourable Conservation Status (fcs) of the populations of species concerned within its natural range.
ii. the derogation (licence) is in the public interest of Health and Safety or for other reasons of over-riding public interest, including those of a socio-economic nature or will have a benefit of primary importance to the environment.
iii. there is no satisfactory alternative to the derogation which would allow the described development to proceed but which would avoid or reduce the need for any adverse impact to the species.

Otters are also protected by;
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and in Wales specifically, by the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- Annex II Habitats Directive (protection through Special Areas of Conservation)
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species and Species of Principal Importance in Wales.