

27th March 2023

Our Ref: 9562.008

Chris King is dealing with this matter.

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Anglo ES Levedale Limited

Mr James Stone

SENT BY E-MAIL ONLY

For the Attention of: Mr James Stone

Dear James,

RE: LAND SOUTHWEST OF LEVEDALE ROAD, PENKRIDGE – DORMOUSE NUT SEARCH

1. Introduction and Background

The Environment Partnership (TEP) was commissioned by Anglo ES Levedale Limited in July 2022 to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) to inform a pre-application submission (Reference: 22/00098/PREAPP) for the proposed development of a battery storage facility at Land Southwest of Levedale Road, Penkridge (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). TEP were then commissioned to update the PEA to an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) to support the full planning application submitted in March 2023.

The following ecology comment was included as part of the response to the pre-application response from the Local Planning Authority:

Hazel Dormouse - *"The PEA noted a record of Hazel Dormouse within the search area. However, further surveys for this species were ruled out. This would usually be reasonable, given the nature of the site. However, the record is for very similar habitat (hedges), with linking similar habitat between that location and the application site. The record is from a reliable source (County Mammal Recorder) and the species tends not to behave typically in the county. The application is not likely to have an adverse effect, except for disturbance to edge habitat and hedges. The applicant's ecologists should consider how they will either survey or adopt precautionary measures."*

Following discussions with Staffordshire County Ecologist Sue Lawley, and to further inform the EclA, it was proposed that a nut search be undertaken at the site.

2. Methods

A dormouse nut search was completed at the site by Natural England dormouse licence holder Principal Ecologist Chris King ACIEEM on 17th March 2023.

The survey broadly followed the methodology set out in Section 3.2.2 - Gnawed hazel nuts, as set out in the Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Edition (English Nature, 2006)). A total



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of five sections of hedgerow (H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5) where hazel was identified, were surveyed, with each section measuring approximately 20m in length. Each surveyed section of hedgerow was surveyed for a minimum of 20 minutes. A search for hibernation nests was also completed in conjunction with the nut search.

Limitations

Although the nut search was completed outside of the optimal survey season of mid-August to December, the hazel nuts collected were considered to have not degraded to a point where identification was inconclusive. Therefore, undertaking the survey in March is not considered to be a significant limitation to the survey.

3. Results

A total of approximately 35 hazel nuts which had been opened by a range of mammals excluding squirrel were collected over the five survey areas. Of the collected hazel nuts, none were identified to have been opened by dormice.



Figure 1 - Farmers Access track lined with mature outgrown hedgerow.



Figure 2 - Collected chewed nuts

No hibernating dormouse nests were identified during the survey.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

No hazel nuts collected as part of the nut search were identified to have been opened by dormice. Based on the survey effort achieved and referring to the Dormouse Conservation Handbook, there is an approximate 90% certainty that dormice are absent from the site.

In addition to the survey completed by TEP, the hazel dormouse feeding remains survey completed by a different consultancy for the nearby planning application (23/00009/FUL) in 2022 also did not find any evidence of hazel dormouse presence. Given that the surveyed hedgerows form part of the same network, this adds confidence to the above survey results.

The completion of dormouse nest tube surveys is not considered to be required to support any future planning application. However, as the site does contain suitable dormouse habitat, some of which is to be directly impacted, it is recommended that any Precautionary Working Measures employed at the site include measures to minimise impacts on dormice, and other small mammals. Should the presence of dormice be confirmed at any stage of development, then works must cease immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist be consulted.

Although two sections of hedgerow will be lost to facilitate the development, these losses will be mitigated through the creation of new native species-rich hedgerows. The creation of the hedgerows will increase foraging and ranging opportunities for dormice, while ensuring habitat fragmentation does not occur from the works.

Yours sincerely,



Chris King
Principal Ecologist
TEP