

Woodland adjacent to Tannery Way, Manchester

Ecological Statement

The habitat corridors of the Fallowfield Loop and Stockport Branch Canal (linear multi-use routes) were subject to a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and subsequent protected species surveys (bats, nesting birds, badgers).

These extensive surveys took place between May 2020 and January 2021 and the geographical area included the woodland block running alongside Tannery Way.

Habitat Survey

The west side of Tannery Way was composed of modern suburban housing with small gardens. The eastern side of the road ran parallel with a footway. The footway ran alongside the western edge of a 0.8ha woodland block. The woodland was heavily sloped on its eastern edge but flat for the area adjacent to Tannery Way.

The PEA had identified this block as “Other lowland mixed deciduous wood – w1f7, dominated by *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Salix caprea*, *Acer pseudoplatanus* and *Crataegus monogyna* of semi-natural origin (using UKHab 1.1 classification). The woodland was assessed as being in “Moderate” condition, using the Defra Metric 2.0 – with the best examples of woodland occurring on the steep-sided eastern boundary, away from Tannery Way. It was noted that fly-tipping and builders’ rubble were present within the compartment. The habitat survey was done at a 400m² minimum mapping unit. At a finer scale it was noted that alongside Tannery Way there was newer planting of mixed, largely native, scrub; probably planted as part of the adjacent housing construction. This scrub acted as a natural barrier to human incursion into the main woodland block. It was this zone that would be needed to be thinned to widen the footway along Tannery Way.

Protected Species Surveys

Bats

As part of the Loopline/Canal Branch project bat activity surveys had been conducted. This particular section of the Loopline was not a hot spot. Common pipistrelles were regularly recorded during dusk and dawn surveys (monthly surveys May to Oct) with the majority of activity 30-75 mins after dusk.

Bat Activity Survey: Hyde Road to Branch Canal intersection

Month(dusk)	May	June	June dawn	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Totals
Species								
Common Pipistrelle	52	35	17	9	10	24	10	157
Soprano Pipistrelle	0	3	1	0	0	3	0	7
<i>Myotis</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	52	39	18	9	10	27	10	165

Activity was concentrated away from Tannery Lane, on the eastern edge of the woodland block where an unlit area extended from the woodland to Gorton Lower Reservoir. Tannery Way was lit, thus reducing its attractiveness to bats. As such the widening project would have little, if any, effect on bat activity.

The PEA did not highlight the habitat block or individual trees as containing potential roost features (prf) for bats. However, any trees potentially affected by the works would require closer inspection.

Nesting Birds

Song thrush (red listed), dunnock and bullfinch (amber listed) were noted as present during the nesting season, alongside a typical suite of woodland edge/garden bird species. The local conservation status of

the former would be unlikely to be affected by the works (construction and implementation phase); however, all nesting birds are protected and avoidance measures would need to be in place.

Other Protected Mammals

Results from targeted field surveys and local records searches revealed that the only other potential protected mammal to be considered would be hedgehog (protected under s41 of the NERC Act, 2016). The habitat was suitable for breeding and hibernation; the species was widely, if sparsely, distributed across Manchester.

Invasive Non-Native Species

No species listed under Schedule Nine of the Wildlife and Countryside Act was present within the compartment. *Cotoneaster* was noted, but not that of the specific species considered a threat under the Act.

Conclusions/Recommendations

If the works proceed outside the nesting season (i.e., works take place September to February) then the environmental impact would be minimal (ecologically, legally, planning policy-wise).

However, the following precautions/enhancements are recommended:

- Any area to be affected by the construction phase of the project will need to be checked by a suitability experienced ecologist for hedgehogs immediately prior to works proceeding.
- If any trees needed to be removed or cut-back they should be individually assessed for bat-roost potential by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- If cutting back scrub or trees exposed the woodland to easier public access/tipping this should be compensated by *in situ* fencing.
- Should replacement planting be desired (not necessary ecologically) this should be of species in keeping with the larger woodland block.
- Should works extend into the nesting season regular (every 2-3 days) checks by a competent ecological professional would need to be undertaken.

(NOTE: several common species of bird can nest at any time of year and mild weather can bring the season forward, so caution should be exercised throughout the project)

- Although the loss of habitat (planted mixed-scrub) is minimal, net-gain for this loss could be the removal of the tipped rubbish within the main woodland block to improve its condition.

Reference Documents:

CCNW (2021) **Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Fallowfield Loopline/Stockport Canal Branch. FINAL.** Internal Document to Manchester City Council/Sustrans.

CCNW (2021) Badger Survey Fallowfield Loopline/Stockport Canal Branch. Internal Document to Manchester City Council.

CCNW (*in prep*) **Bat Survey. Fallowfield Loopline/Stockport Canal Branch May 2020 – April 2021.** Internal Document to Manchester City Council/Sustrans.

Dominic Rigby MCIEEM
Senior Ecologist CCNW Jan 2021
dr@ccnw.info