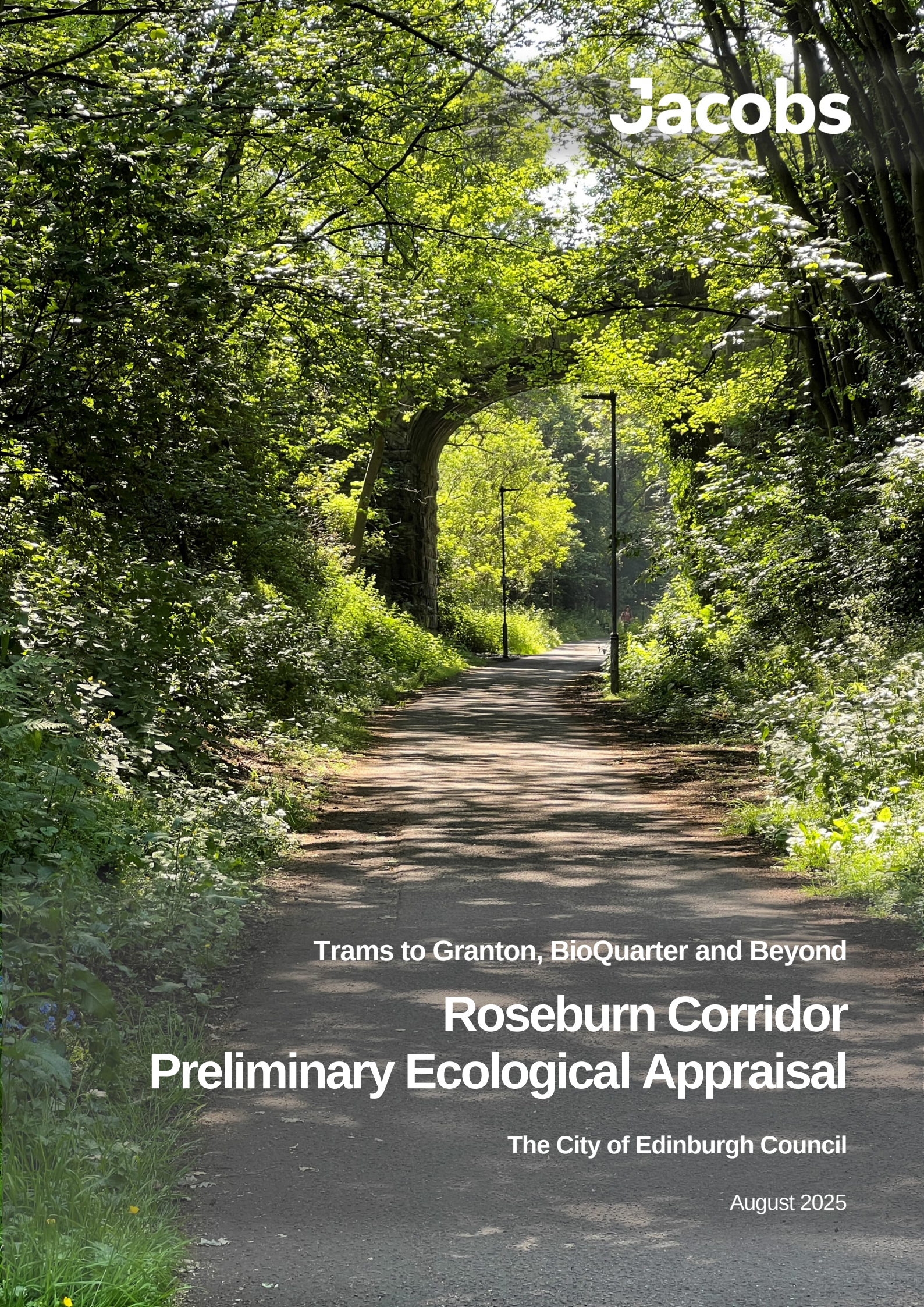

Jacobs

Trams to Granton, BioQuarter and Beyond

Roseburn Corridor Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

The City of Edinburgh Council

August 2025

Trams to Granton, BioQuarter and Beyond
Roseburn Corridor: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Client name:	The City of Edinburgh Council		
Project name:	Trams to Granton, BioQuarter and Beyond		
Client reference:	CEC	**Project no:**	B2340264
Document no:	REP05B	**Version:**	2
Date:	8 August 2025	**File name:**	TGBB Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 080825 FINAL.docx
Document status:	Final		

Document History and Status

Version	Date	Description	Author	Checked	Reviewed	Approved
1	29.04.25	Draft Report	BH	KR	MP	GKD
2	08.08.25	Final Report	BH	KR	MP	GKD

Distribution of Copies

Version	Issue approved	Date issued	Issued to	Comments

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Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

The expansion of the Edinburgh Tram network is an ambitious plan to improve public transport in the city: addressing congestion, reducing journey times, and supporting sustainable travel within Scotland's capital. Trams to Granton, BioQuarter and Beyond is a proposal to build a new north-south tram route connecting Granton, the city centre, the Bridges corridor, Cameron Toll, and the Royal Infirmary / BioQuarter. Further extensions are being considered to Shawfair and/or Queen Margaret University.

A draft Strategic Business Case (SBC) for the project was completed in December 2021. Further work is now being undertaken to inform public consultation on the scheme, to be held in late summer 2025. Outputs from this exercise will inform the final SBC which will be completed by early 2026.

In support of the above, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken to provide an updated understanding of the ecological sensitivity, potential constraints, and potential for ecological enhancement along the Roseburn Path section of the corridor ('the site'). This report presents the results of the PEA including a desk study and field survey undertaken by Jacobs in April 2024.

At this stage, a PEA has only been undertaken for the Roseburn Path. Other sections of the route are primarily on-street and so have less significant ecological value; potential impacts will therefore be considered at a later stage.

1.2 Site Extent

The section of Roseburn Path under consideration is from Russell Road to the junction of Ferry Road and West Granton Access. The site extent is shown in Appendix A Figure A.1.

1.3 Report Objectives

The structure of this report is informed by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for PEA (CIEEM, 2017) with a particular focus on highlighting ecological constraints. The objectives of the report are as follows:

- To provide a high-level update of the ecological sensitivity of the site;
- To provide information relating to potential ecological constraints relevant to the design and construction phases;
- To identify the requirement for detailed protected species surveys which may be required to inform design, mitigation and legal compliance; and,
- To identify opportunities for ecological enhancement.

2. Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

A desk study was undertaken to obtain background ecological information for the site and the surrounding landscape in November 2024. A 2km search radius was deemed to be sufficient as the proposals are localised and are unlikely to significantly impact ecological receptors beyond this distance. The desk study includes a search for species with a wider distribution, such as birds and bats, and meets the minimum recommendation within the guidelines for PEAs (CIEEM, 2017).

The desk study included the identification of statutory and non-statutory designated sites as well as protected and notable species and used freely available web resources, and communication with the City of Edinburgh Council's Planning Department.

2.1.1 Designated Sites

A search was carried out using the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) (MAGIC, 2024) website (accessed November 2024) to identify the presence of the following statutory designated sites for nature conservation:

- Statutory sites of European and international designation within 2km of the site boundary including Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites; consideration was also given to potential and candidate sites for all designations; and
- Statutory sites of national or regional designation within 2km of the site boundary, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).

2.1.2 Non-Statutory Sites

Liaison with the client provided records of non-statutory designated sites (e.g. Local Biodiversity Sites (LBS)) within 2km of the site boundary.

2.1.3 Habitats and Protected Species

Records of legally protected species and other species of conservation interest were obtained from the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) (NBN, 2024) (accessed November 2024). A centroid grid reference (NT 22441 74355) was used with a 2km buffer. Relevant species records from the last 30 years were searched. As the focus of this report was on ecological constraints this was considered a sufficient search period.

Online sources for aerial imagery were also used to provide ecological context such as habitats, including a search for ponds which may support amphibians up to 250m from the site.

2.2 Field Study

The PEA site walkover was undertaken by Jacobs ecologists on 25 and 26 April 2024, following good practice guidance in the Guidelines for PEAs (CIEEM, 2017). The walkover covered a minimum of 15m from the centre of the path on either side, and up to 50m where possible, depending on land access.

The survey area included land safely, and publicly accessible along the Roseburn Path as well as areas underneath the path where the path crossed over sections of road or watercourse. No access to private land (e.g. private gardens) was taken. Additional habitats were surveyed depending on their suitability (e.g., adjacent watercourses for riparian mammals) and the survey boundaries for these are noted in the methodology sections below. The survey areas are shown on Appendix A Figure A.1.

2.2.1 Daytime Bat Walkover

A Daytime Bat Walkover was undertaken to record potential roost habitat for bats in structures and trees. Trees and structures were visually inspected from the ground using binoculars. Potential Roost Features (PRFs) such as rot holes, cracks, cavities, and thick-stemmed ivy were recorded. A bat roost potential category of negligible, low, moderate, or high was assigned to each tree or structure based on the extent and suitability of the PRF. Methods taken from the 2023 Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice

Guidelines (4th Edition) were used (Collins, 2023). Table 2.1 provides further guidance on the bat roost potential categorisation process.

Table 2.1: Explanation of Habitat Roost Suitability Categories (Adapted from Collins, 2023)

Bat Roost Suitability Category	Description of Roosting Habitats
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions, and surrounding habitat.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions, and surrounding habitat.

2.2.2 Badger

A badger (*Meles meles*) survey was conducted on all accessible land within the site and a 30m buffer in accordance with good survey practice (NatureScot, 2024a). The survey involved a search for field signs indicating the presence of badger. Where encountered, all badger field signs were recorded, and a grid reference was taken. Signs searched for included:

- dung, dung pits, and latrines;
- guard hairs caught on fences / hedges, around holes, or on scratching posts;
- foraging signs such as snuffle holes;
- footprints; and
- setts.

A badger sett is defined as 'any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger' (Protection of Badgers Act 1992). Badger setts are commonly categorised dependent on their level of use and size. Descriptions for each type of sett are given in Table 2.2 below. The status of a sett was assessed using the criteria in Table 2.3 (based on Harris et al., 1989).

Table 2.2: Criteria Used to Categorise Badger Setts (Based on NatureScot Best Practice Badger Survey Guidance Note)

Sett Category	Criteria
Main	Several holes with large spoil heaps and obvious paths emanating from and between sett entrances.
Annex	Normally less than 150m from the main sett, comprising several holes. May not be in use all the time, even if the main sett is very active,
Subsidiary	Usually at least 50m from main sett with no obvious paths connecting to other setts. May only be used intermittently.
Outlier	Little spoil outside holes. No obvious paths connecting to other setts and only used sporadically. May be used by foxes and rabbits.

Table 2.3: Criteria Used to Define Badger Sett Status (Based on Harris et al., 1989)

Level of Usage	Criteria
Active	Entrance holes well used, clear of debris/vegetation, except bedding material. The holes may or may not have been excavated recently. Fresh spoil outside. Signs of wear consistent with use (presence of prints, hair, and smooth, compacted soil).
Inactive	Entrance holes not in regular use: they have some accumulated debris/vegetation and no field signs indicating recent use by badgers. Sett use is often seasonal, and a sett recorded as inactive could be in regular use after a minimal amount of clearance.
Disused	Entrance holes show no signs of recent use and are often partly or wholly blocked. Entrances may require considerable digging to re-open. Setts may become disused through collapse, flooding, interference or other reasons.

2.2.3 Riparian Mammals (Otter and Water Vole)

An otter (*Lutra lutra*) and water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) survey was undertaken approximately 100m upstream and downstream of where the site crosses the Water of Leith at Coltbridge Viaduct (Grid reference: NT 23076 73425). The survey was conducted on the southern bank only, as the northern bank was not accessible due to steep, vegetated slopes, which are fenced off from public access. Binoculars were used to look for field signs on the northern bank. Standard otter survey methods (NatureScot, 2024b) were adopted for the survey which included a search for evidence of otter along the watercourse. Evidence of otter searched for included spraints, footprints, feeding remains, slides and potential resting sites. Potential resting sites are defined as 'holts' (a covered resting site such as cavities within root systems of bankside trees) or 'couches' (an 'uncovered' resting site used for day-resting typically found within dense bankside vegetation).

Water vole surveys followed the standard methodology as detailed in the Water Vole Conservation Handbook (Strachan et al., 2011). This involved searching the banks for characteristic signs of water voles such as burrows, droppings, latrines, feeding remains, runs and footprints.

2.2.4 Other Species (Birds, Amphibians, Reptile), Habitats and Plants

The site walkover considered a range of other species, habitats and plants in addition to bats, badger and riparian mammals. Presence, potential presence and suitable habitat for other protected species such as birds, amphibians and reptile was recorded. In addition, notes on habitats and invasive plant species were taken.

2.3 Limitations

Data supplied by the NBN provides useful baseline information on the species that have been recorded within a local area. This data often includes surveys undertaken by third parties on an 'ad hoc' basis; often data uploads can lag behind the current date by up to one year. Absence of species records on NBN does not indicate absence of that species from an area. For this reason, a PEA should be informed by both desk study and information gathered during field surveys.

Surveys were restricted to safe and publicly accessible land. Inaccessible habitat exists close to the site could provide legally protected resting sites for protected species. Such locations could be impacted by the construction and operation of the project and this should be taken into consideration at all stages of the development.

The findings of this report represent the professional opinion of qualified ecologists and do not constitute professional legal advice. Survey data is generally considered relevant for up to 18 to 24 months; after this period surveys may need to be repeated.

3. Results

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Sites Designated for Nature Conservation

There were six statutory designated sites recorded within 2km of the site:

The Firth of Forth SPA, Ramsar and SSSI. These sites are designated for a range of ornithological interests particularly the large number of wintering birds such as waterfowl and waders.

The Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay Complex is an SPA which is also primarily designated for wintering birds.

Ravelston Woods and Corstorphine Hill are LNRs which are locally important areas for wildlife.

3.1.2 Non-Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

Four non-statutory nature conservation sites are present within 2km of the proposed survey area (Table 3.1). The site itself is part of a wider LBS comprised of three Disused Railways: Dalry to Blinkbonny, Davidson Mains to the Quarry, and Craigleith to Pilton; these have been grouped together as a single site under "Disused Railway" for the purpose of this report.

Table 3.1: Non-Statutory Designated Sites within 2km of the Survey Area

Site Name	Distance from site	Reasons for Designation
Disused Railway	0.0km	Local Biodiversity Site
Water of Leith	0.0km	Local Biodiversity Site
Dalry Community Park	0.61km	Local Biodiversity Site
Union Canal	0.85km	Local Biodiversity Site

3.1.3 Protected and Notable Species

Table 3.2 below summarises the key desk study results for protected/notable and invasive species. This includes records from the last 30 years recorded within 2km of the site.

Table 3.2: Species Records Returned from Desk Study Sources

Species	Details
Invasive Species	Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica)*, cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus)*, snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), Himalayan cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster simonsii),* and Himalyan balsam *(Impatiens glandulifera*) were the most recorded invasive species.
Birds	One hundred and twenty-one species of bird, including two Wildlife and Countryside Act Schedule 1 birds: kingfisher (*Alcedo althis)* and merlin (*Falco columbarius).*
Mammals	Thirty-nine instances of badger (*Meles meles)*. Twenty-four records of hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus)*. Seven records of otter (*Lutra lutra).* Ten records of pygmy shrew (*Sorex minutus*) and six common shrew (*Sorex Araneus*). Four species of bat: soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), and brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus europaus*) across 529 records. One record of a water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*).
Amphibians	Common frog (*Rana temporaria*), common toad (*Bufo bufo*), palmate newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*) and smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) have been recorded within 2km of the site.

3.2 Field Study

3.2.1 Habitats and Plants

The site is dominated by deciduous woodland but also contains hedgerows, scrub and grassland. The woodland habitat is considered important for a range of species particularly given the paucity of similar habitat in the wider area other than the Water of Leith.

Some non-native species of plants were noted. These are primarily 'garden escapes'. No invasive non-native plant species were recorded.

3.2.2 Bats

The habitat within the site is likely to be important for bats in the local urban context. The linear structure of the habitat offers sheltered flight paths for foraging and commuting as well as roosting opportunities in trees and structures. The site is likely to provide good connectivity to surrounding green space including the Water of Leith. The habitat is considered likely to be important in supporting populations of pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus spp.*) and Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*) which rely on this type of habitat.

During the walkover, 13 trees and 12 buildings or structures with suitability for roosting were recorded; these are presented in Appendix A Figure A.2. To establish whether roosts or roost features are present, and the quality of these features, further surveys are required.

3.2.3 Badger

Woodland, grassland and gardens throughout the site provide suitable habitat for badger to build setts and forage for invertebrates and other food sources. Evidence of badger activity was recorded during the walkover, including two inactive or disused sett entrances (Appendix A Figure A.2). Additionally, mammal paths were observed throughout the length of the site, which is consistent with badger movement patterns, indicating the site may form part of a broader badger territory or commuting route. However, it is likely that a high population of fox also use this area, and paths cannot always be distinguished between species. To establish whether badgers are actively using these setts, further surveys are recommended.

3.2.4 Riparian Mammals (Otter and Water Vole)

No evidence of riparian mammals (otter or water vole) was identified during the walkover. However, suitable habitat is present within the adjacent watercourse and woodland which runs adjacent to the Water of Leith.

3.2.5 Birds

Breeding, foraging and commuting bird habitat is present within trees and scrub throughout the survey area. The Water of Leith adjacent to site could also provide suitable habitat to support foraging and commuting kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) but nesting habitat was not recorded.

3.2.6 Great Crested Newt and Common Amphibians

No ponds suitable for great crested newt (GCN) (*Triturus cristatus*) were identified within the survey area. The mosaic of woodland and urban gardens does provide suitable habitat for common amphibian species.

3.2.7 Reptiles

No evidence of reptiles was recorded within the survey area. However, habitats suitable for slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) were present, as this species is known to occupy urban gardens, and is more tolerant of shaded sites and disturbance through heavy footfall.

3.2.8 Other Protected and/or Notable Species

No signs or evidence of other protected species were identified during the survey. However, suitable habitat for terrestrial mammals such as hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) is present.

4. Discussion and Recommendations

4.1 Impacts and Recommendations

This section provides a brief discussion of potential impacts and recommendations for further surveys if required. A summary of legislation for key protected species is provided in Appendix B.

4.2 Designated Sites

The Firth of Forth, Outer Firth of Forth, and St. Andrews Bay Complex designated sites are all based on marine and/or inter-tidal habitats. The Project is considered unlikely to have adverse impacts or effects on the designated features or supporting habitats of these sites due to a lack of connectivity and distance.

Non-statutory nature conservation sites may be impacted due to a loss of connectivity provided along the Roseburn Corridor. Potential impacts on the Dalry to Blinkbonny, Davidsons Mains to Quarry, and Craigleith to Pilton LBS should be taken into consideration together with impacts on nearby sites including the Water of Leith LBS.

4.3 Habitats and Plants

The Project is considered likely to impact woodland and other habitats through permanent and temporary habitat loss. The site is potentially highly constrained in terms of replacing lost habitat particularly woodland. As with all developments, the Project should apply the mitigation hierarchy to avoid and minimise habitat loss wherever possible (Scottish Government, 2023). Where this is not possible, opportunities should be sought for replacing habitats or to enhance retained habitats.

As part of the next stage of design, is recommended that a dedicated habitat and tree survey is carried out to accurately map important habitats and trees to inform the design.

While no invasive non-native plant species were recorded, these cannot be ruled out and pre-construction surveys are recommended to confirm presence or absence. If present, a biosecurity plan should be produced detailing how the spread of invasive non-native plant species would be avoided.

4.4 Bats

Further surveys are recommended to inform elements of the design such as land take and lighting allowing impact on bats to be avoided or minimised. Further detailed ground inspections of trees and structures are required to obtain a more accurate picture of the potential for bat roosts to be present. Where trees and structures with roost potential have been recorded, inspections and roost surveys should be undertaken to establish where bats are roosting and to characterise the roosts (e.g. by species, number of bats, etc). In addition, to further understand how bats use different parts of the site, night-time bat walkover surveys are recommended.

Further surveys are likely to be required at pre-construction stage to confirm locations of bat roosts and inform the licensing of the destruction or disturbance of roosts, if impacts on roosts cannot be avoided.

4.5 Badger

Targeted surveys are recommended to establish if active setts are present to allow these to be taken into account during the design stage.

Further surveys may be required at pre-construction stage to confirm the location and status of setts as badgers can quickly establish new setts.

4.6 Riparian Mammals (Otter and Water Vole)

Due to the lack of evidence of riparian mammals and likely limited impact on the Water of Leith habitats, further surveys to inform the design stage are not considered necessary for riparian mammals.

Pre-construction surveys are recommended to provide an updated understanding of how otters use the Water of Leith beneath and adjacent to the site to inform appropriate protection measures during construction.

4.7 Birds

Breeding, foraging and commuting habitat for birds exist within woodland and other habitat across a large part of the site. The design should aim to minimise loss of these habitat types thereby minimising impacts on birds. No further bird surveys are recommended to inform the design.

The removal or disturbance of vegetation that could support breeding birds should be programmed out with the core bird nesting season (March to August inclusive). If this is not possible, checks for nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist would be required no more than 24 hours prior to works taking place. Any nests found will need to be left undisturbed until young have fledged or the nest has failed. Consideration of potential disturbance of more sensitive species such as kingfisher should be given when undertaking nesting bird checks.

4.8 Great Crested Newt and Common Amphibians

The desk study suggests that GCN have not been recorded recently in the area. Considering there are no ponds within 250m of the site that are not separated by major barriers to dispersal, GCN are considered likely absent from the site. Suitable habitat is present to support common amphibian species within both woodland and watercourse edge habitat. Minimising the loss of woodland habitat where possible will lessen the impact on common amphibians. No further surveys are recommended for amphibians.

4.9 Reptiles

While suitable habitat is present, numbers of reptiles are likely to be low due to the urban setting, as well as isolation from other suitable reptile sites. Whilst further surveys are not recommended, an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) should be present during works to undertake checks for reptiles in suitable habitat.

4.10 Other Protected and/or Notable Species

Suitable habitat is present within woodland and scrub on site to support common mammal species such as hedgehog, shrews, and fox. Pre-construction checks by an ECoW of all suitable habitats impacted by the works should be undertaken. A precautionary method statement should be produced by the ECoW to avoid and minimise potential for impacts on these species during works.

4.11 Enhancement Opportunities

The site holds important ecological value, functioning as a wildlife corridor and maintaining connectivity with other local nature sites. Retaining this connectivity is essential for sustaining a functioning local ecological network.

Despite the potential constraints, opportunities for ecological enhancement are present including creating or improving habitat for bats, birds, reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates; examples include creating tree features suitable for roosting bats, boxes for nesting birds, habitat piles and deadwood provision for small mammals and invertebrates. The project also presents an opportunity for positive community and educational engagement, for example in promoting a hedgehog highway or a network of garden ponds, to improve ecological connectivity.

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EU Directive and National Legislation

Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994

Protection of Badgers Act 1992

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011

Appendix A. Figures

Figure A.1: Site Extent and Walkover Route

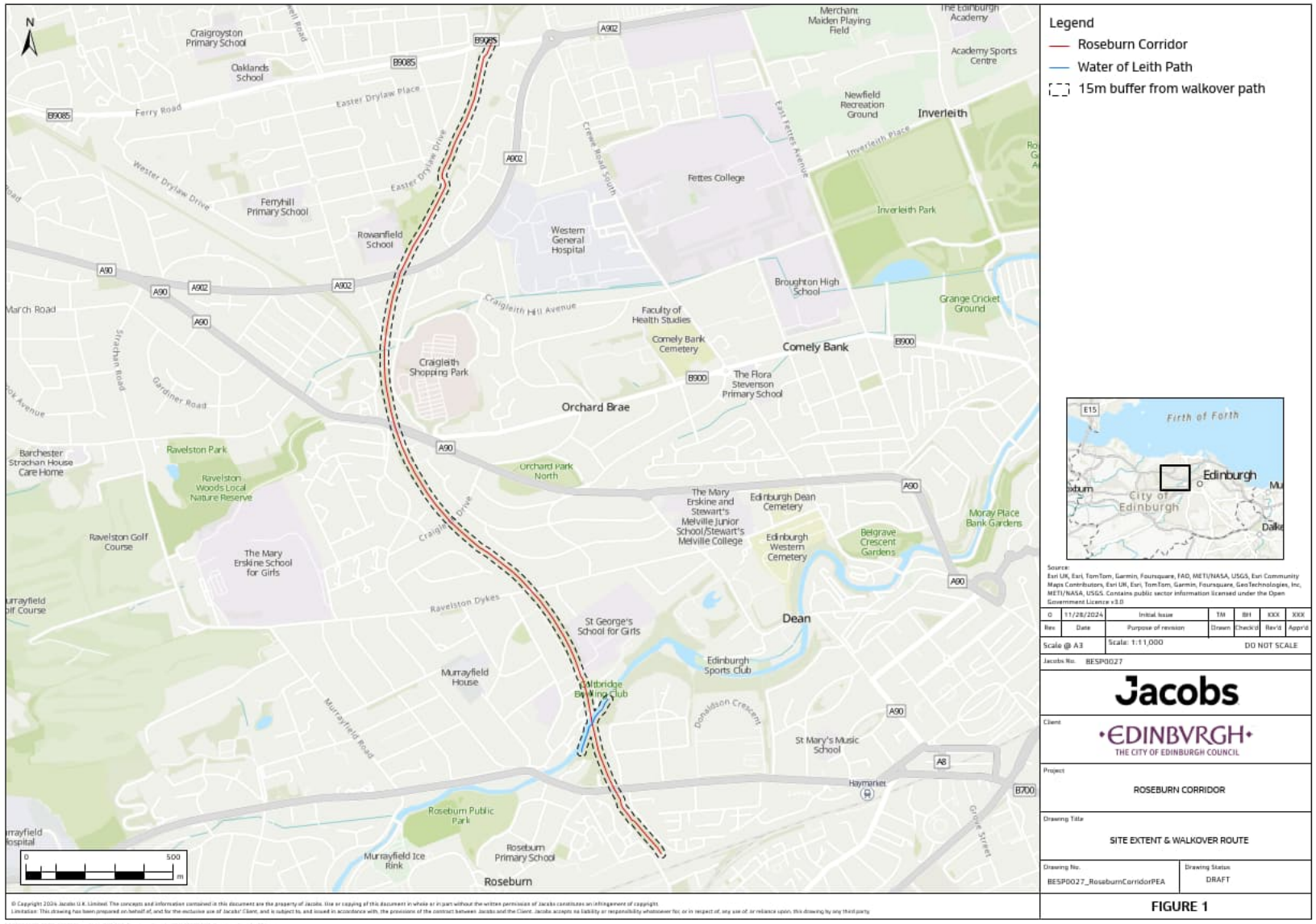


Figure A.2a: Survey Results

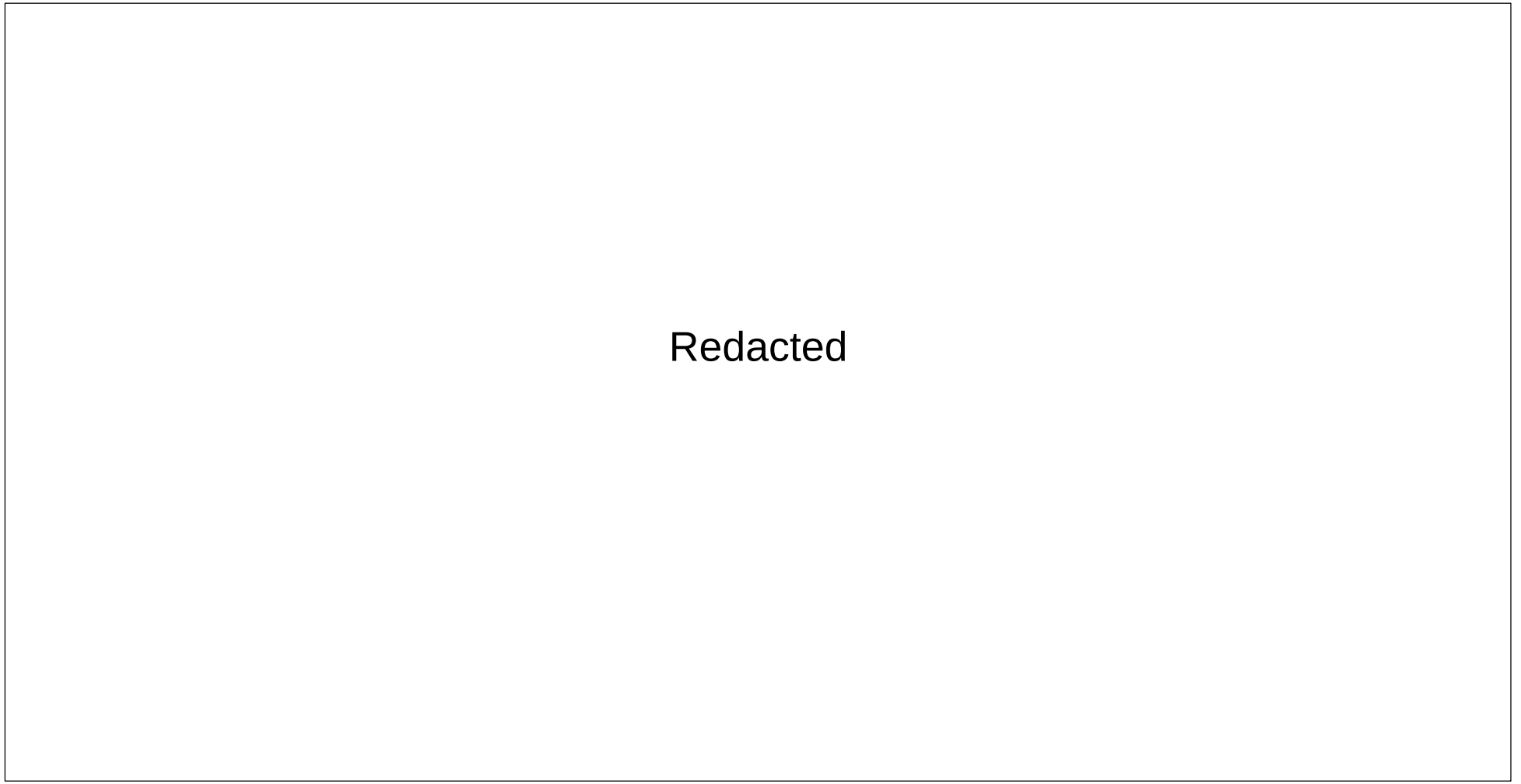


Figure A.2b: Survey Results

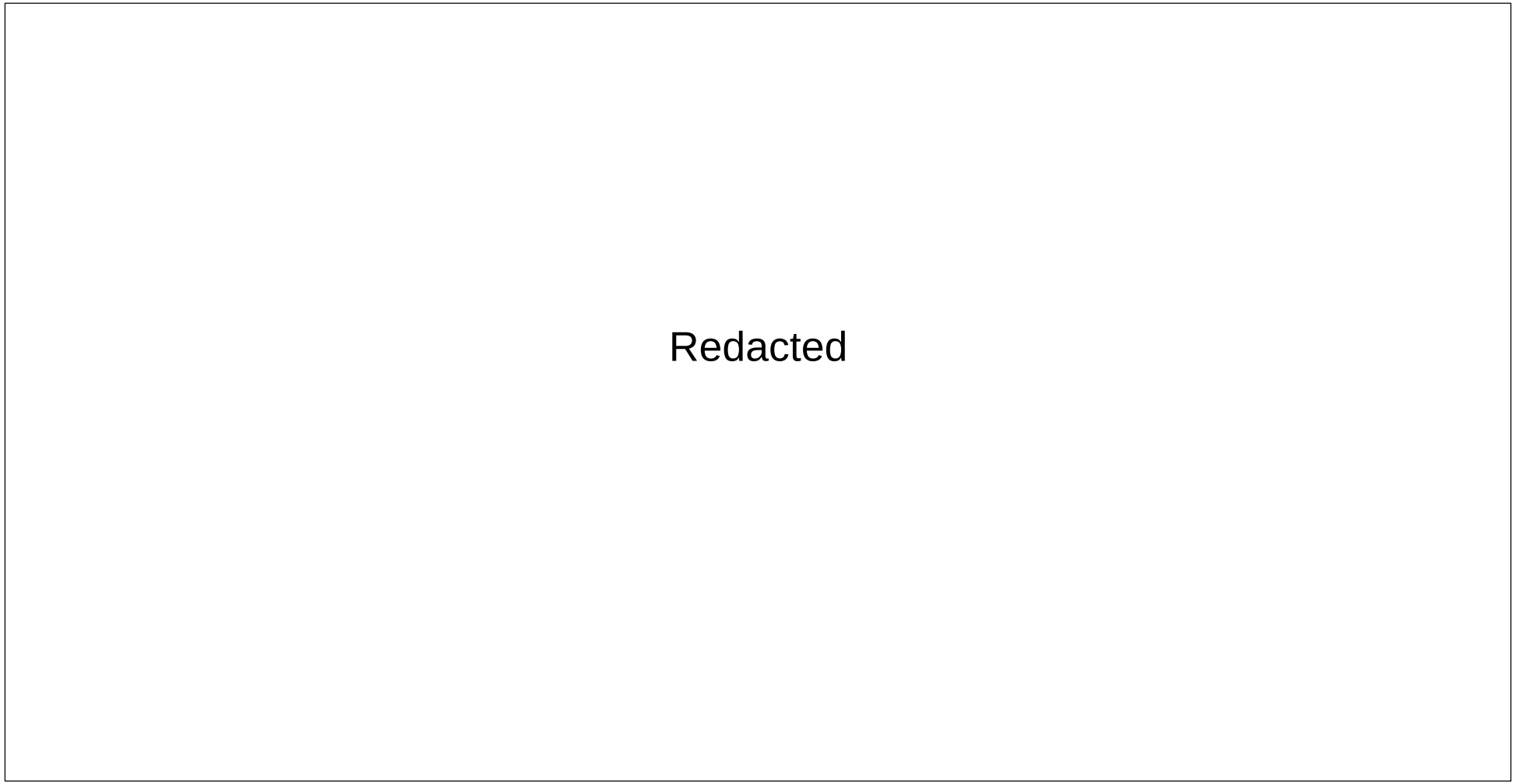
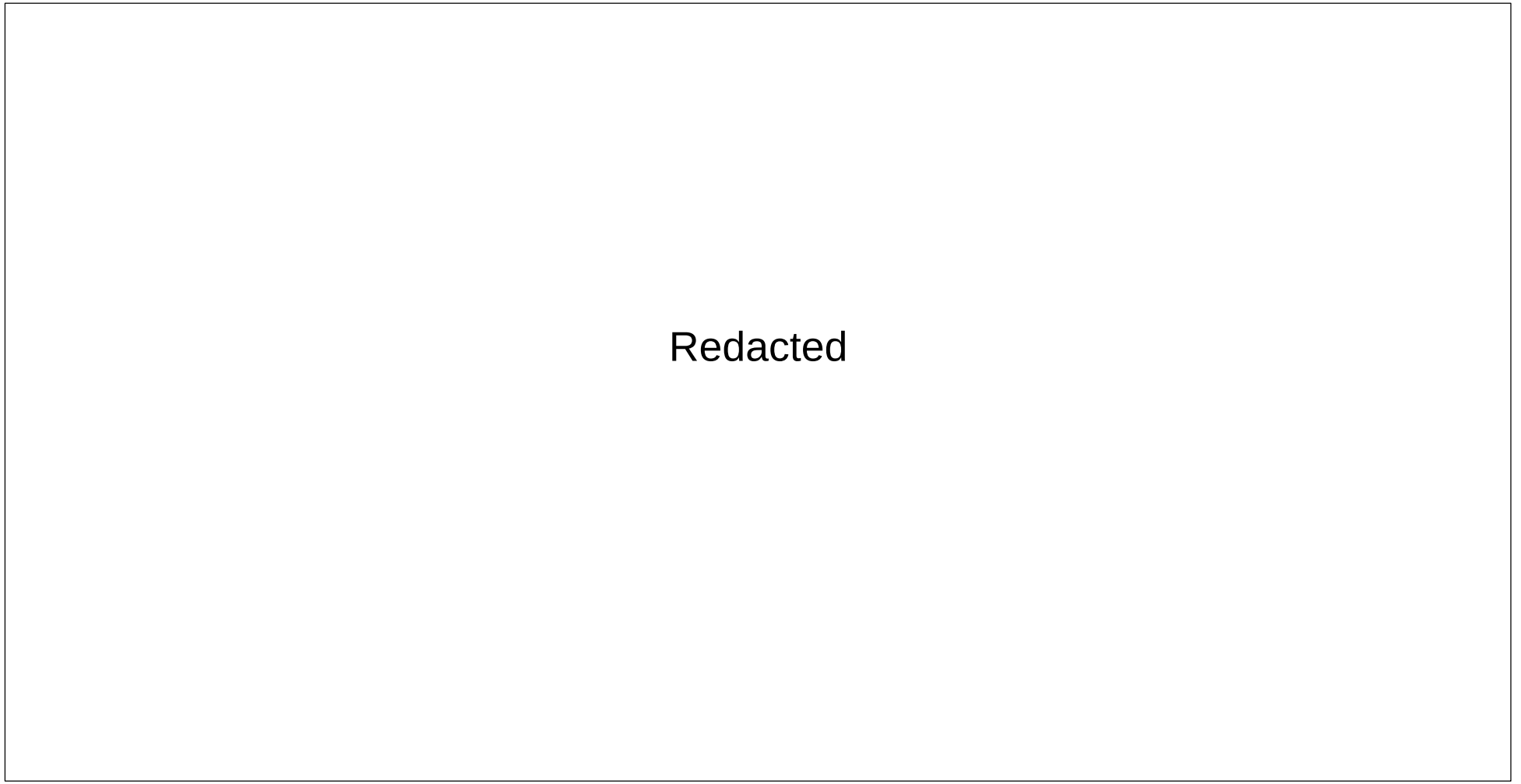


Figure A.2c: Survey Results



Appendix B. Relevant Legislation

Badger

Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 as amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. The following activities are offences:

- wilfully taking, injuring or killing a badger;
- cruelty to a badger;
- intentional or reckless interference with a badger sett;
- sale or possession of a badger; and
- marking or ringing of a badger.

Interfering with a badger sett includes:

- damaging or destroying a sett or any part of it;
- obstructing access to a sett;
- disturbing a badger while it is in a sett; and
- causing or allowing a dog to enter a badger sett.

Bats

All bat species in Scotland are classed as European Protected Species (EPS). EPS are protected under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended by The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) (EU Exit) (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 and the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 following the implementation of Brexit (hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations). These works have the potential to cause an offence(s) under this legislation. In regard to bats, is an offence to deliberately or recklessly:

- capture, injure or kill a bat;
- harass a bat or group of bats;
- disturb a bat in a roost (any structure or place it uses for shelter or protection);
- disturb a bat while it is rearing or otherwise caring for its young;
- obstruct access to a bat roost or otherwise deny an animal use of a roost;
- disturb a bat in a manner or in circumstances likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species;
- disturb a bat in a manner or in circumstances likely to impair its ability to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or otherwise care for its young; and
- disturb a bat while it is migrating or hibernating.

It is also an offence to:

- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal (whether or not deliberately or recklessly); and
- keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any wild bat (or part or derivative of one) obtained after 10 June 1994. damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal (whether or not deliberately or recklessly).

Breeding Birds

All wild birds in Great Britain are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended). For any wild bird species, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- kill, injure or take a bird;

- take, damage, destroy or interfere with a nest of any bird while it is in use or being built;
- obstruct or prevent any bird from using its nest; or
- take or destroy an egg of any bird.

It is also an offence to knowingly cause or permit any of the above acts to be carried out.

Otter

Otters are classed as EPS and receive full protection under the Habitats Regulations. It is an offence to deliberately or recklessly:

- capture, injure or kill an otter;
- harass an otter or group of otters;
- disturb an otter in a holt; or an otter in any structure or place it uses for shelter or protection;
- disturb an otter while it is rearing or otherwise caring for its young;
- obstruct access to a holt for otter; or other structure or place otters use for shelter or protection, or otherwise deny the animal use of that place;
- disturb an otter in a manner or in circumstances likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species; or
- disturb an otter in a manner or in circumstances likely to impair its ability to survive, breed or reproduce, or rear or otherwise care for its young.

It is also an offence to:

- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal (whether or not deliberately or recklessly); or
- keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any wild otter/beaver (or any part or derivative of one) obtained after 10 June 1994.

Non-native Plant Species

The law on non-native plant species is covered by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011). In Scotland, it is an offence to plant, or otherwise cause to grow, a plant in the wild at a location outside its native range.