

APPENDIX 2
Summary of
Ecological Monitoring
(2019)

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Introduction

The following statement has been prepared by Ingrebourne Valley Ltd (IVL) for the ‘Elton Reservoir’ site (‘the site’), located on land north of Eaglethorpe, The Elton Estate, Warmington, Northamptonshire and centred at National Grid Reference (NGR) 07707 92144.

A programme of ecological monitoring works was outlined within the ‘Updating Ecological Management Plan’ (EMP) (ECOSA, 2018), as required subject to Condition 12 of planning permission 18/00031/MINVOC. This document summarises the findings of the ecological monitoring undertaken at the site in 2019.

As of the 10th June 2019, the responsibility of the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) was passed on from Frances King-Smith of ECOSA Ltd. to Victoria Harris of IVL. This document also provides evidence for Northamptonshire County Council with regards to the change in responsibility.

Given no operations commenced at the site in 2019, the monitoring works outlined within the 2016 to 2018 period were extended into the 2019 period. The monitoring works include the following:

- 1 day per year – monitoring the current site conditions including invasive species, breeding birds and reptile refugia checks.

Site Visit Details

Throughout 2019, numerous ecological monitoring visits were undertaken, however, an extensive site inspection was conducted by the ECoW on the 22nd July 2019, in accordance with the EMP. See **Appendix 1** for images taken during the inspection.

The visit was undertaken in suitable, dry conditions. The temperature was approximately 20 degrees Celsius (°C), with a cloud cover of 7 Oktas and a slight southerly breeze.

The north eastern section of the site between the River Nene and the reservoir remained inaccessible throughout the year due to the growth of dense scrub, however it should be noted that this area is to remain protected and unaffected by the proposals associated with the construction of the reservoir.

Breeding Birds

An assessment of breeding birds was conducted and based on the suitability of habitat present, evidence of nesting such as old or currently active nests and the presence of bird species that may potentially nest within the available habitat.

The shallows and adjacent tussocky wet grassland offer suitable summer foraging for a variety of breeding birds such as Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Red / Amber list species including reed bunting (*Emberiza Schoeniclus*), redshank (*Tringa totanus*), ringed plover (*Charadrius Hiaticula*) and little ringed plover (*Charadrius Dubius*). The woodland and scrub habitat surrounding the site also provides suitable habitat for a variety of common breeding birds.

Although no formal breeding bird survey was undertaken, given the site has been unmanaged for a few years, the establishment of the waterbodies and vegetation from the once stripped site, is likely to have increased the suitability to support breeding birds. It is considered that the recommendations given within the EMP remain suitable for the species (i.e. ECoW to check the site for the presence of breeding birds during the breeding season of March to August (inclusive), to ensure that the remaining reservoir works and schedule do not disturb the nests of breeding birds).

All wild birds, their young, eggs and nests (whilst in use or being built) are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), with certain exceptions.

Reptiles

An element of the pre-clearance works included artificial refugia (i.e. sheets of corrugated metal and / or roofing felt) to be distributed within areas of habitat which will not be affected by the site works, in addition to rubble mounds, to provide basking sites, shelter and hibernation sites for reptiles.

As the site is inactive, the refugia has not yet been distributed and therefore cannot be inspected for reptiles. Nevertheless, an assessment based on the suitability of habitat present within the site to support a population of reptiles, was undertaken.

The unmanaged scrub and grassland interfaces of the earth bunds along the bridleway on the southern boundary of the site, and protected area between the reservoir and the River Nene provide the most suitable sheltering habitat for reptiles. The disturbed habitat also supports patches of bare ground suitable for basking. Generally, it is considered that these features are good indications that common reptiles remain present on-site, in particularly the unmanaged site boundaries.

It is also considered that the proposed mitigation methods stated to safeguard the reptile population within the EMP remain suitable (i.e. the phased vegetation clearance of the bunds under ecological supervision).

The four widespread species of reptile are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also afforded limited protection under Section 9 of the Act.

Invasive Species

New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*) has begun to colonise the ‘shallows area’ of the reservoir. As the species is listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow the species in the wild. It is recommended that the species is carefully removed and buried onsite during the final construction phase.

Orange Balsam (*Impatiens capensis*) is not listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1989, however remains an invasive species in England. The EMP suggests any Orange Balsam present on-site is removed alongside the New Zealand Pigmyweed. No Orange Balsam was identified within the accessible areas of the site survey in 2019.

Conclusion

Given no operations have been undertaken at the reservoir site, the site has been allowed an additional year of establishment. Once a date has been set for the remaining restoration and engineering works to commence (likely to be August 2020), the following ecological steps will be undertaken:

- A breeding bird survey to be undertaken in the active season (March to August inclusive) prior to the de-watering of the reservoir;
- If the bunds are to be removed, they should be removed in the active reptile season (March to September inclusive) under a phased vegetation clearance and a destructive search.
- A water vole / otter walkover survey of the banks of the reservoir prior to de-watering (May to September inclusive)
- Monitoring the site for colonisation of invasive species;
- Monitoring of new planting / habitat creation following the completion of works.

Appendix 1. Images of the ‘Elton Reservoir’ site taken 22nd July 2019

