

Appendix 11.7 Reptiles

Introduction

This report has been prepared by Tyler Grange Group Ltd on behalf of Northern Gateway Development Vehicle LLP (NGDV). It sets out the findings of reptile surveys undertaken at 'Northern Gateway'.

The EIA¹ assesses the Project for Assessment, which measures approximately 570 ha. Within the Assessment Boundary, sits the Proposed Scheme (approximately 210 ha), for which an outline planning application is sought. Reptile surveys were undertaken within the Survey Area (**Figure 11.3**); which was largely defined by permitted access. Access was granted within the entirety of the Proposed Scheme, with the addition of fields immediately south of the southern Application Boundary also being permitted for access. All remaining areas outside of the Survey Area, but within the Assessment Boundary were not surveyed in detail, and assumptions were made of the habitat type, condition and protected species suitability through aerial imagery and views from Public Rights of Way (PRoW).

This survey has been undertaken to establish presence/ absence of reptiles and if present, the population size of reptiles.

Legislation and Conservation Status

All of Britain's native reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA). The four common species of reptile: adder *Vipera berus*, grass snake *Natrix helvetica*, slow worm *Anguis fragilis* and common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* are listed on Schedule 5, Section 9, Parts 1 and 5, of the WCA and as such, it is an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take reptiles; and
- Sell, offer or advertise for sale any live or dead specimen or anything derived from reptiles.

Smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* and sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* are afforded additional protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2018 (as amended) but the Project for assessment boundary is not within the known geographical distribution of these species and no habitat exists within the Project for Assessment with the potential to support them.

All native reptile species are Priority Species in the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework which provides a statutory list of priority species in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as required under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (England), Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Section 2(4) of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, and Section 3(1) of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. Decision-makers such as Local Planning Authorities must have regard to Priority species in all their activities, including when making decisions on planning applications.

Previous Surveys and Desk Study Records

No records of reptiles were returned from the Greater Manchester Ecological Unit (GMEU) data search conducted in March 2024.

¹ NORM3018 Northern Gateway JPA 1.1 Environmental Impact Assessment

Survey Methodology

Reptile surveys within the Survey Area were undertaken by Tyler Grange between April and October 2024. These surveys were conducted in line with published guidance^{2,3}, and were completed within the active season for reptiles (March to October inclusive) by experienced field ecologists competent in reptile survey. For reference, Tyler Grange did not undertake reptile surveys in 2022.

As the vast majority of the Survey Area was considered to be sub-optimal for reptiles (large expanses of regularly managed modified grassland), therefore the reptile survey targeted the isolated areas of more suitable habitat, namely areas of neutral grassland, through the deployment of reptile refugia.

A total of 49 reptile refugia, comprising a combination of 1 x 1 m pieces bitumen roofing felt and 1m x 1m pieces of onduline, were deployed throughout the Survey Area. The location of all refugia are denoted on **Plan 16551/P11.7**

Refugia was left in situ for 4 weeks to settle in, before seven subsequent survey checks were undertaken during suitable weather conditions (dry, warm, air temperature between 11°C to 18°C, with intermittent sun and light winds). The timings and weather data for these surveys is shown in Table **A11.7.1** below.

During each visit, the refugia, were checked visually from a distance to determine whether reptiles are basking on their surface. The refugia were then carefully approached and lifted to check for reptiles sheltering beneath them. Searches of natural refugia were also undertaken, where these were present.

Table A11.7.1: Survey Dates, Times and Weather Conditions

Survey Visit	Date	Weather Conditions	Temperature (°C)
V1	10/04/24	Cloud Cover: 8/8, Precipitation: 0, Wind: 1	12-14
V2	09/05/24	Cloud Cover: 2/8, Precipitation: 0, Wind: 1	16-20
V3	16/05/24	Cloud Cover: 3/8, Precipitation: 0, Wind: 1	15-18
V4	05/06/24	Cloud Cover: 4/8 sunny spells, Precipitation: 0, Wind: 2	13-14
V5	11/07/24	Cloud Cover: 8/8, Precipitation: 0, Wind: 1	15
V6	07/08/24	Cloud Cover: 0/8, Precipitation: 0, Wind: 2	14-18
V7	17/09/24	Cloud Cover: 1/8, Precipitation: 0, Wind: 2	14
V8	28/10/24	Cloud: 7/8, Precipitation: 0, Wind: 1	11-16

² Froglife (1999) *Reptile Survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation*. Froglife Advice sheet 10. Froglife, Halesworth.

³ Natural England (2022) Reptiles: advice for making planning decisions. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reptiles-advice-for-making-planning-decisions#:~:text=This%20is%20Natural%20England's%20'standing,standing%20advice%20for%20protected%20species>. [Accessed 21/01/25]

Limitations

There were no limitations in relation to survey timing or survey effort and all suitable habitats within the Survey Area were surveyed for reptiles during the surveys.

Results

No reptiles were recorded throughout the entirety of the survey period. However, incidental sightings were recorded of both toad *Bufo bufo* and great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus*. Locations of these sightings are denoted on **Figure 11.23** at the rear of this appendix.

The Wider Project for Assessment

Habitats within the wider Project for Assessment offer limited suitability for reptiles, such as the open expanses of managed modified grassland. It is therefore considered likely that the wider Project for Assessment would also be of negligible ecological importance for reptiles, however, detailed surveys have not been undertaken.

