Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

LAND AT HAZELHEAD HALL FARM.

OS REF: SE 19782 03139.

ECOLOGY SURVEY.

Ref No: 210992.

Date: 23rd September 2021.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. There are plans to carry out works to an area of land at Hazelhead Hall Farm near Millhouse Green.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out an ecology survey of the site to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. The site survey was carried out on 23rd September 2021 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I to III of this report provide additional information on specific species and are designed to assist the reader to understand the contents of this report.

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2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. Prior to visiting the site, the survey area was cross referenced to maps and aerial photographs to give a general idea of the habitats and potential issues within the area and to identify potential access and walking routes.

2.2. The survey area and immediate surrounding area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society: -

* Badger setts.
* Badger latrines or dung pits.
* Badger snuffle holes and evidence of foraging.
* Badger paths.
* Badger prints in areas of soft mud.
* Badger hairs caught on fencing.

2.3. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 100m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) activity by looking for the following signs, in line with Dean M, Strachen R, Gow D and Andres R (2016). *The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series).* Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. The mammal Society, London: -

* Water vole burrows.
* Water vole faeces and latrines.
* Water vole feeding stations.
* Water vole runs.
* Water vole prints in areas of soft mud.
* Water vole lawns.
* Predator field signs.

2.4. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of otter (*Lutra lutra*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with the P Chanin (2003). *Monitoring the Otter* and *Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers: Monitoring Series No10 Guidelines: -*

* Otter prints in soft mud.
* Otter spraints.
* Otter Holts.

2.5. The survey area was searched for watercourses and waterbodies. Where found, and where safe to enter the water, all were thoroughly searched for the presence of crayfish, for approximately 50m in each direction of the site, by searching under rocks and logs. Where stated, crayfish traps were also deployed into the watercourse. All survey work was carried out in accordance with the *Conserving Natural 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 1, Protocol for Monitoring the White Clawed Crayfish.*

2.6. The survey area was searched for mature trees and derelict buildings and where found these were checked for potential bat roosting sites in line with Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition)* by looking for the following signs: -

* Holes, cracks or crevices.
* Bat Droppings.

2.7. The land immediately adjacent to the survey area was assessed for bat roosting potential and bat foraging potential. Connective routes and flight lines were also assessed whilst on site and using maps of the area.

2.8. The area within 500m of the survey site was cross referenced to maps to highlight all ponds close to the site. Where possible, all ponds identified were accessed using agreed access or public rights of way to assess the potential for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) to be present.

2.9. The survey area was assessed for the potential for reptiles and suitable reptile habitats. Where applicable the area was also searched for the presence of reptiles.

2.10. Where appropriate, the habitat within and surrounding the survey area was searched for species such as hazel, oak, honeysuckle, bramble and other species which may provide potential habitat for hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). Field signs such as feeding remains and nests were also searched for where possible, in line with P Bright, P Morris and T Mitchell-Jones *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Ed.*

2.11. Where appropriate, the area within and surrounding the survey area was assessed for its potential to house habitat for red squirrels. Field signs of red squirrels were searched for at least every 50m, looking for any dreys, feeding signs or sightings of red squirrels.

2.12. All surveys were carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) survey standards and advice.

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. An internet desktop data search of publicly available records was carried out for records of protected species and protected sites within the survey area.

3.1.2. There are no records of protected species within or adjacent to the survey area.

3.1.3. There is a record of a badger 1km from the survey area and there are a few records of bats, although no records relevant to the survey area.

3.1.4. There are no records of protected sites within or adjacent to the survey area.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The survey area is a small area of land to the west of the farm buildings. The area is mainly bare ground with sparse vegetation growing through.

3.2.2. The aerial photograph below shows the surveyed area.



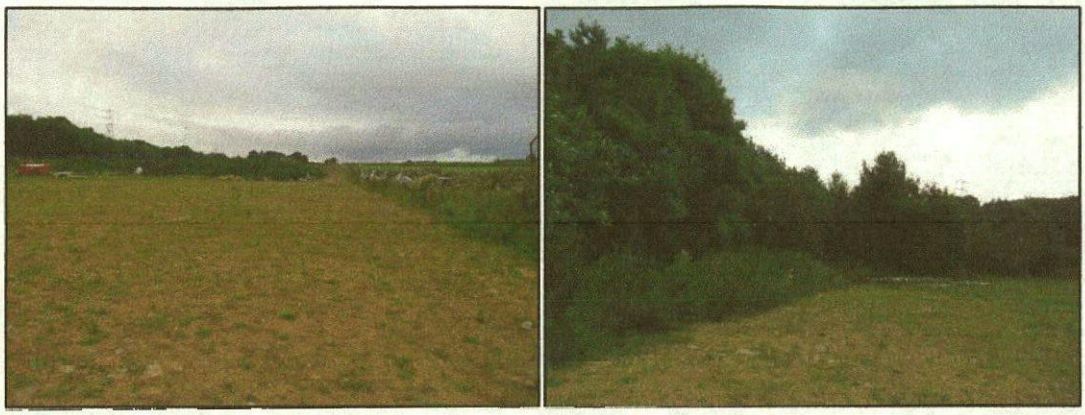
3.2.3. The site is surrounded by farmland and pockets of woodland with Hazelhead Hall Farm to the east. The aerial photograph below shows the survey area and the wider surrounding area.



3.2.4. The site has a stone wall on the northern boundary, a bund on the western boundary covered with nettle and thistle, a bare earth bund on the southern boundary and a post and wire fence on the eastern boundary. The boundaries are shown in the photographs below.







3.2.5. The site is bare ground with some sparse vegetation, mainly dock, beginning to grow. The site is mainly used for storage of stone on pallets. There is also a large pile of tyres at the western side of the site.



3.2.6. Sledbrook Dike lies outside the eastern site boundary. Beyond the boundary fence is a small bank with the dike at the bottom. There are semi-mature oak, sycamore, pine, cherry and hawthorn growing on the bank outside the boundary fence.

3.3. Survey Results.

3.3.1. No badger setts or badger field signs were identified within the survey area.

3.3.2. Sledbrook Dike flows past the eastern side of the site outside the site boundary. The dike has low vertical earth banks and areas of tall ruderal vegetation growing where it borders the site. The dike is shallow with a moderate flow and a stony bed.

3.3.2.1. The banks of the dike are not ideal for water vole as they are bare and have no suitable vegetation for a food source. No water vole burrows or field signs were found during this survey.

3.3.2.2. No otter holt or otter field signs were identified within the survey area. Although, the dike provides some potential for foraging and commuting otters. There was one record found of otter but this was 1km to the west and was recorded in 1997.

3.3.2.3. The dike may provide suitable habitat for white clawed crayfish, although there are no records of the species within the surrounding area. Therefore, it is unlikely they will be present in the dike.

3.3.3. One pond was identified within 500m of the survey area on an Ordnance Survey Map of the area. This pond lies 170m to the east within the grounds of the farm. The pond is large and is located on the opposite side of Sledbrook Dike which is a large enough flowing watercourse to provide a barrier to the movement of amphibians. There are no records of great crested newts within the surrounding area.

3.3.3.1. The site is low value habitat for the species as it is mainly bare ground used regularly by the farmer. Therefore, it is assessed that there will be no great crested newts within the survey area.

3.3.4. No structures or suitable trees that could provide bat roost potential were identified within the survey area.

3.3.5. The survey area appears to provide low potential for foraging and commuting bats. The watercourse corridor outside the eastern boundary provides moderate potential for foraging and commuting bats and provides connectivity to other suitable areas. However, a thorough evaluation of bat activity could not be made during a daytime survey of the site.

3.3.6. The vegetation within the survey area provides limited opportunities for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to September each year. The main area of potential is the western bund as this has tall ruderal vegetation growing. However, no active nests were identified during this survey.

4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. There are no designated sites within the survey area. Therefore, there will be no impact on designated sites.

4.2. No badger setts or badger field signs were identified within the survey area. Therefore, there will be no impact on badgers during the proposed works.

4.3. Sledbrook Dike flows past the eastern side of the site outside the site boundary. The dike is not ideal habitat for water vole and no burrows or field signs were found during this survey. The dike provides some potential for foraging and commuting otters, although no field signs were found. The dike may provide suitable habitat for white clawed crayfish, although there are no records of the species within the surrounding area.

4.3.1. The dike is outside the site boundary and will be unaffected by any works. Therefore, there will be no impact on water voles, otters or white clawed crayfish during the proposed works.

4.4. One pond was identified within 500m of the survey area on an Ordnance Survey Map of the area. This pond lies 170m to the east on the opposite side of Sledbrook Dike which is a large enough flowing watercourse to provide a barrier to the movement of amphibians. There are no records of great crested newts within the surrounding area. The site is low value habitat for the species. Therefore, it is assessed that there will be no impact on great crested newts during the proposed works.

4.5. No structures or suitable trees that could provide bat roost potential were identified within the survey area. Therefore, there will be no impact on roosting bats during the proposed works.

4.6. The survey area provides some foraging potential for bats. The proposed works will impact a small area of vegetation and will not fragment any foraging habitat and will therefore have no impact on foraging or commuting bats.

4.7. The vegetation on the western bund provides opportunities for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to September, inclusive, each year. Vegetation clearance within the nesting bird season will have an impact on any birds nesting within the work site.

4.8. The survey area provides limited potential habitat for reptiles and there are no records of reptiles within the surrounding area. The works will have a low impact on any reptiles within the work site.

4.9. No suitable dormouse habitat was identified during this survey. The survey area is also outside the natural range of this species. Therefore, there will be no impact on dormice during the proposed works.

4.10. No red squirrels or red squirrel field signs were identified during this survey and there is no suitable habitat within the survey area. The survey area is also outside the natural range of this species. Therefore, there will be no impact on red squirrels during the proposed works.

4.11. Himalayan balsam, a non-native invasive species of plant listed under Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was identified within the survey area. The plants are growing around the pile of tyres at the western side of the site. Works within 7m of the plants could cause the plants to spread into the wild.

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Appendix I. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

Ecology

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in April, peaks during May and June and continues until August. It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees and scrub, but others are ground nesting or prefer man- made structures or buildings.

Surveys

Nesting bird surveys search for potential nest sites in vegetation, buildings etc. Potential nesting sites are observed over a suitable period of time for bird movements or calling male birds that would indicate the presence of a nest. The presence of a nest can be identified from the field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself, thereby avoiding any disturbance of the nests. The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Legislation

Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Part 1. -(1) Of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - kills, injures or takes any wild bird; takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1. -(5) of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or disturbs young of such a bird, he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after "intentionally" the words "or recklessly".

Appendix II. REPTILE INFORMATION.

Ecology

There are five main species of reptile that reside in the UK; Common or Viviparous Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*); Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*); Slow Worm *(Anguis fragilis*); Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*) and Adder (*Vipera berus*). The Adder is the only native species that is venomous although this is rarely harmful to humans.

Reptiles occupy a wide range of habitats including woodland, marshes, heathland, moors, sand dunes, hedgerows and bogs. Sand Lizards are confined to moorland and coastal sand dunes where they lay their eggs in the warm sand. The range of the Sand Lizard in the UK is therefore very limited. Slow Worms can be found in a wide variety of habitats throughout Britain and is the most likely reptile to be found in urban and suburban environments.

Maintaining the right body temperature is vital to reptiles' survival. In the morning, they find a warm basking site to heat up their bodies, then later they may move back into the shade because they do not sweat and have to be careful not to overheat. During hot summers, Adders will try to move to damper, cooler sites.

Over winter reptiles will hibernate in burrows or under longs where they are protected from the cold and predators, emerging from February onwards as the weather warms up.

Reptiles generally begin to mate April to May with young born in late July to September. The Common Lizard gives birth to live young, hence the term viviparous, meaning live bearing.

Surveys

Reptile surveys involve the searching of refuge such as logs and stones for any animal sheltering below. Artificial refuge may be laid out on site for the purpose of reptile surveys.

Legislation

Invasive species listed under Schedule 9 are prohibited from release into the wild. Schedule 9, Section 14(2) prohibits 'planting' or 'causing to grow' in the wild of any plant listed in Part 2 of Schedule 9.

The following is a list of all the species of plant listed under Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**England & Wales**	**Scotland**
Alexanders, Perfoliate	*Smyrnium perfoliatum*	✓	
Algae, Red	*Grateloupia luxurians*	✓	
Archangel, Variegated Yellow	*Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. Argentatum*	✓	
Azalea, Yellow	*Rhododendron luteum*	✓	
Balsam, Himalayan	*Impatiens glandulifera*	✓	
Cotoneaster	*Cotoneaster horizontalis*	✓	
Cotoneaster, Entire Leaved	*Cotoneaster integrifolius*	✓	
Cotoneaster, Himalayan	*Cotoneaster simonsii*	✓	
Cotoneaster, Hollyberry	*Cotoneaster bullatus*	✓	
Cotoneaster, Small Leaved	*Cotoneaster microphyllus*	✓	
Creeper, False Virginia	*Parthenocissus inserta*	✓	
Creeper, Virginia	*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*	✓	
Dewplant, Purple	*Disphyma crassifolium*	✓	
False-acacia	*Robinia pseudoacacia*		✓
Fanwort	*Cabomba caroliniana*	✓	✓
Fern, Water	*Azolla filiculoides*	✓	✓
Fig, Hottentot	*Carpobrotus edulis*	✓	✓
Garlic, Three-Cornered	*Allium triquetrum*	✓	
Hogweed, Giant	*Heracleum mantegazzianum*	✓	✓
Hyacinth, water	*Eichhornia crassipes*	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	*Macrocystis angustifolia*	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	*Macrocystis integrifolia*	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	*Macrocystis laevis*	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	*Macrocystis pyrifera*	✓	✓
Kelp, Japanese	*Laminaria japonica*	✓	✓

Knotweed, Giant	*Fallopia sachalinensis*	✓	
Knotweed, Hybrid	*Fallopia japonica x Fallopia sachalinensis*	✓	
Knotweed, Japanese	*Fallopia japonica*	✓	
Knotweed, Japanese	*Polygonum cuspidatum*		✓
Leek, Few-flowered	*Allium paradoxum*	✓	✓
Lettuce, water	*Pistia stratiotes*	✓	✓
Montbretia	*Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora*	✓	
Parrot's-feather	*Myriophyllum aquaticum*	✓	
Pennywort, Floating	*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*	✓	
Potato, Duck	*Sagittaria latifolia*	✓	
Primrose, Floating Water	*Ludwigia peploides*	✓	
Primrose, Water	*Ludwigia grandiflora*	✓	
Rhododendron	*Rhododendron ponticum*	✓	
Rhubarb, Giant	*Gunnera tinctorial*	✓	
Rose, Japanese	*Rosa rugosa*	✓	
Salvinia, Giant	*Salvinia molesta*	✓	✓
Seafingers, Green	*Codium fragile*	✓	
Seafingers, Green	*Codium fragile tomentosoides*		✓
Seaweed, Californian Red	*Pikea californica*	✓	✓
Seaweed, Hooked Asparagus	*Asparagopsis armata*	✓	✓
Seaweed, Japanese	*Sargassum muticum*	✓	✓
Seaweeds, Laver (except native species)	*Porphyra sp. except -* *P. amethystea* *P. leucosticta* *P. linearis* *P. miniata* *P. purpurea* *P. umbilicalis*	✓	✓
Shallon	*Gaultheria shallon*		✓
Stonecrop, Australian swamp	*Crassula helmsii*	✓	✓
Wakame	*Undaria pinnatifida*	✓	✓
Waterweed, Curly	*Lagarosiphon major*	✓	✓
Waterweeds	*All species of the genus Elodea*	✓	

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. It is recommended that the vegetation growing along the banks of Sledbrook Dike remains undisturbed to maintain the watercourse corridor and provide continuity of foraging and commuting for bats and other species.

5.2. Any vegetation clearance should be carried out outside the nesting bird season, which extends from March to September each year.

5.3. If any vegetation clearance is to be carried out during the nesting bird season a thorough nesting bird survey must be carried out by a suitably experienced person immediately prior to works commencing. If any active nests are found during this survey, they must be left undisturbed until the young have fledged. This could put a considerable delay on proposed works.

5.4. In the unlikely event that any reptiles are found during the works they must be left to safely move away of their own accord. If large numbers of reptiles (5+) are found works must stop and Whitcher Wildlife Ltd contacted for further advice.

5.5. It is recommended that a method of works are put in place to prevent the spread of Himalayan balsam. A toolbox talk has been included at the end of this report with further information on the species.

5.6. Any excavations within 7m of the plants could contain seeds and must be treated as contaminated waste.

5.7. The plants currently have ripe seed pods within will fire seed if disturbed. It is recommended that any plants without seed are either pulled up or sprayed to prevent further flowering. It is recommended that each year the young plants are pulled or sprayed to prevent flowering and seeding to eradicate the plants from the site.

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Toolbox Talk: Himalayan Balsam

Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

Ecological Consultants

Himalayan Balsam was introduced into the UK in the early 19th century as an ornamental garden plant. The plant has since become established in the wild growing in a wide range of habitats, predominantly damp habitats and along watercourses. Himalayan Balsam grows in dense stands and therefore along river banks it can increase the likelihood of flooding during periods of heavy rainfall and can leave the river banks bare and exposed to erosion during the winter.

Identification.

Himalayan Balsam grows to around 2m and has a hollow, brittle stem. The plant stem is green to red early in the season and turns pink to red during the summer.



The plant has leaves up to 15cm long which are finely serrated along the edges and may have a pink mid-rib. The flowers are trumpet shaped and pink.



Habitat and Spreading.

Himalayan Balsam grows in a range of habitats but prefers damp habitats and river corridors. The plant grows in dense stands that out-compete native species. Along river corridors the plant can increase the likelihood of flooding during periods of heavy rainfall and leaves the river banks bare and exposed to erosion during the winter.



Himalayan Balsam spreads solely by seeds, which are small and easily carried by wind or water. The seed heads are approximately 2.5cm long and explode on touch when ripe.

The best form of control of the plant is to prevent it from seeding by cutting back or pulling before it can seed.

Legislation.

Under section 14 and Part II of Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence for it to be planted or otherwise caused to grow in the wild. This includes spreading the species by transferring polluted ground material from one area to the other.

If Himalayan balsam is identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk

2.13. This survey was carried out by Jenny Whitcher Roebuck MCIEEM. Since 2001 Jenny has had experience in a professional capacity as a Wildlife Consultant carrying out Ecology Surveys and Phase 1 Habitat surveys. Jenny holds Natural England Survey Licences in respect of bats, great crested newts, crayfish and barn owls, NRW and SNH Survey Licences in respect of bats and great crested newts. She has also successfully completed several courses run by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and the Field Studies Council (FSC) in the relative protected species, plant species and in carrying out Phase 1 Habitat Surveys. As a full member of CIEEM she is committed to continuous professional development, a continual process of learning and career development, a condition of CIEEM membership.

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Appendix III. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES INFORMATION.

Ecology

The Government has acknowledged the problems that can be caused by non-native invasive species. In 2008 the Government launched "The Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain". The strategy provides a framework for a more co-ordinated approach to invasive species management. It seeks to create a stronger sense of shared responsibility across government, key organisations, land managers and the public.

The Non-Native Species Secretariat has been established to oversee the implementation of the strategy. Details of the secretariat including risk assessments and action plans for some species are available at www.nonnativespecies.org.

In general, there are four basic methods of controlling weeds; mechanical, chemical, natural and environmental.

- ***Mechanical control*** *includes cultivation, hoeing, pulling, cutting, raking, dredging or other methods to uproot or cut weeds.*
  Where this method is used all plant material must be considered "controlled waste" and must be disposed of properly.
- ***Chemical control*** *uses approved herbicides.*
- ***Natural control*** *uses pests and diseases of the target weed to weaken it and prevent it from becoming a nuisance.*
- ***Environmental control*** *works by altering the environment to make it less suitable for weed growth, for example by increasing or decreasing water velocity.*

Surveys

A site will be searched for invasive plant species growing on site, from mature plants to new shoots. A site will also be searched for dead stems indicating that plants that may have seasonally died back are present.

3.3.7. The survey area provides limited potential habitat for reptiles and there are no records of reptiles within the surrounding area. No reptiles were identified during this survey.

3.3.8. No suitable dormouse habitat was identified during this survey. The survey area is also outside the natural range of this species.

3.3.9. No red squirrels or red squirrel field signs were identified during this survey and there is no suitable habitat within the survey area. The survey area is also outside the natural range of this species.

3.3.10. Himalayan balsam, a non-native invasive species of plant listed under Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was identified within the survey area. The plants are growing around the pile of tyres at the western side of the site. The plants were not found in any other areas of the site. Himalayan balsam spreads by seeds fired from exploding seed pods between July and October and the seed can remain viable in the soil for two years. The plants can be seen in the photograph below.



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Legislation

Reptiles are protected under Appendix II (sand lizards) and Appendix III (common lizard, slow worms, smooth snake, grass snake and adders) of the BERN Convention (1982), partially protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and are all listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Communities Act (2006) making them a species of principal importance.

This makes it an offence to disturb any reptile while it is occupying a structure or place it uses for shelter or protection or to obstruct access to such a place.