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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

CARDIFF MODEL ENGINEERING SOCIETY: TRACK EXTENSION

1 Site Analysis

The site is an area of wild woodland within SINC Heath Wood and Pond adjoining the existing Cardiff Model Engineering Society (CMES) premises. The site is bounded partly by the existing CMES premises, partly by existing paths and hedgerows and partly by fencing to be erected to enclose the proposed track extension.

The site is relatively flat with mature trees, saplings and undergrowth. Great crested newts are known to be present. There is no known site contamination.

2 Context Analysis

CMES is a member run charity which provides facilities for model engineering enthusiasts. The premises comprise a main clubhouse and a number of small gauge external railway tracks and associated buildings for the running of live steam trains. CMES operate open days for the public and run various charity events for disadvantaged local children, including a special event for the children of Chernobyl.

CMES provides a valuable local facility which is very popular with local families and their children as well as recreational facilities for its members and guests. There is a large public car park within a few minutes walk and both Heath railway stations and bus stops are within a short distance.

The proposal does not involve the construction of any buildings but is just to extend the trackwork to allow extended running of the trains to provide an extra variety of rides on open days. This will have no impact upon other local facilities or transport nor raise any social, physical or economic issues.

There is a history of engagement with a local residents group who have, unfortunately, taken exception to the club and its activities but this is far outweighed by the number of people who visit on open days and for whom it provides great enjoyment.

There has been widespread, almost unanimous approval for the development from our many visitors in surveys in the past. In order to gauge support for this proposed extension, we undertook a survey of as many visitors as possible over the Easter Weekend of 2006. The signatures of 762 adults collected on those dates approved of our plans and were willing to be identified as supporters. These were actual users of the Heath Park

3 Policy Context

The proposed development is set within the context of the following CCC SPGs:

- Open Space
- Biodiversity Parts 1 and 2

4 Design Analysis

Character and Context:

The only structures proposed are those associated with laying the extended railway tracks and will involve embankments, retaining walls and bridges, all of which are of a small scale to reflect the scale of the track. The structures will generally be designed to reflect Victorian railway architecture to compliment the existing structures.

Access and Movement

For safety reasons, the area of the track extension will not be accessible to members of the public other than when riding on the trains. Only Society members, trained in the skills required will be allowed access for maintenance and other associated reasons.

The areas of the existing premises accessible to the public, has full disabled access and toilet facilities. We also have plans to provide a ramp and bridge access to the central area inside the existing track to avoid the current procedure of crossing the tracks on the level. This will further improve public access and safety.

We have agreed to improve maintenance of the woodland area, under the direction of the Parks Department so that public access will be maximised by having the track double fenced inside the woodland area and access available to the remainder except on train operating days.

Community Safety and Safer Places

The proposal is for an extension to an outdoor private leisure facility only open to the public under regulated conditions. There are no identified Community Safety or Safer Places issues other than protection of the public from contact with the track and associated structures, for this reason the site will be fenced all around.

The track extension will allow the many visitors to the railway from Cardiff, from both Britain and abroad, to enjoy a miniature train ride through the woodland of Heath Park. This would provide a unique way of experiencing the woodland with the educational advantages of seeing wildlife in a natural habitat from a safe environment. This would be particularly valuable to children and people with disabilities and promote activity within the woodland, creating an increased sense of security within them.

We have discussed the possibility of installing of CCTV cameras for security purposes; this would be done in agreement with the council

Environmental Sustainability

No building structures are proposed so the bulk of the requirements of TAN 12 and TAN 22 do not apply. There are however some environmental issues to be considered relating to the SINC and a Method Statement has been prepared setting out how these will be addressed.

The development will have minimal impact on the woodland and no mature trees will be affected. Public access will be maintained to the majority of the area and the wild life habitat will be preserved.

Erica Colkett, the author of the Method Statement and formerly of CCW, in 2006, expressed her view that....*the numbers of Great Crested Newts affected by the track will be very low to minimal, whilst the provision of the new pond will significantly improve conditions at Heath Park for GCN....and there is no doubt that the benefits arising from the proposed works, far outweigh the negative effects.*

METHOD STATEMENT

The following Method Statement has been prepared for submission to the Welsh Assembly Government to accompany the License Application form "*Disturbance of protected wild animals or plants include Schedule 2 or Schedule 4 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994*" in respect of a development to a site adjacent to the Cardiff Model Engineering Premises within Heath Park Cardiff.

The format of this Method Statement complies with the Annex C of the Licence application form as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Outline of Works
3. Methodology
4. Work Schedule
5. Conservation Benefit

1. INTRODUCTION

The proposal is to extend the existing model railway track at the Cardiff Model Engineering Society. The current facility is situated in Heath Park in Cardiff - Grid Ref ST177798 and covers approximately 0.71 hectares. The entrance is from King George Fifth Drive along an asphalt narrow roadway. It is bounded to three sides by open parkland, a "Pitch and Put" golf course and a tarmac car park. To the West it is bounded by woodland and scrub. The proposed extension to the tracks is in this area as shown on the planning application drawings and plan attached. Great Crested Newts are known to inhabit a pond, in which they breed, approximately 80 metres to the west of our existing railway site and although rarely sighted, Great Crested Newts are known to inhabit the area.

The development areas are small and the working methodology will minimize, as far as reasonably practical, any effect on the Great Crested Newt population.

2. OUTLINE OF WORKS

- 2.1 The construction of boundary fence and the planting of blackthorn hedges
- 2.2 The construction of a 40 square metre pond of maximum depth 2 metres. This will be specifically built to be suitable for the greater crested newt population. A considerable number of areas of stone gabions and other loose stone walling to be built to provide suitable newt habitat.
- 2.3 Construction of a miniature railway through the woodland area as shown on attached drawings. This will be approximately 4 metres wide and will involve the removal of some saplings but no mature trees. Construction of various embankments and bridges, some enclosed storage sidings in the area as shown on attached drawing.
- 2.4 We will apply for a Development Licence to Welsh Assembly Government. We have already been in consultation discussions with the Countryside Commission for Wales (CCW) to discuss mitigating options and we will carry out these works according to their guidelines.
- 2.5 We will arrange for training of some of our members in the handling of Great Crested Newts and apply for Disturbance Licences to Welsh Assembly Government for those individuals. If the need arises, only those members with such licences will handle Great Crested Newts.

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The development will take place in five stages over a period of approximately five years. Before each stage commences the relevant area will be cleared of Great Crested Newts and made secure to prevent their re-entry to that part of the site in which works are being undertaken. This is shown on the attached drawings. Work in the woodland area will not involve machines, work in the other area will involve mini digger, tracked, type of machines.
- 3.2 Clearance will take place between February and September, only.
- 3.3 Each area will be bounded by newt proof fencing consisting of stakes and polythene to a height of 600mm. or, where appropriate and depending on conditions, a robust barrier in the form of an upturned cut pipe will be installed to prevent the newts from re-entering the site. The condition of the fence will be monitored daily and any damage repaired immediately.

- 3.4 The area to be enclosed will be cleared of vegetation in two stages, a few days apart, to allow the newts to decamp of their own volition. That will mean strimming the area to an initial height of three to five inches followed by another strimming to ground level. The area concerned will then be kept free of vegetation.
- 3.5 After the clearance of vegetation and the installation of newt proof fencing, "Pitfall" traps will be installed alongside the inside of the newt proof boundary fencing as per the recommendations in "Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines" at intervals of approximately ten metres. They will consist of a bucket with a drainage hole, the base covered by moss to keep any trapped newts moist with a thin twig from the base to the lip of the bucket to facilitate the escape of any mammals caught in the traps. The traps will be buried in the soil to their lips. They will be partially covered when in use and completely covered when not in use. These traps will be opened every evening and inspected in the morning of the following day. Any amphibians found will be translocated into a suitable area outside of the boundary fence.
- 3.6 Additional refugia in the form of carpet tiles will be placed throughout the bounded area to provide an additional method for capturing the newts.
- 3.7 The trapping will continue for at least thirty consecutive days and nights, as per the guidelines until a period of ten consecutive days occurs when no newts are trapped. Trapping activities will be logged and the record kept.
- 3.8 Once it has been thought that a reasonable effort to clear the bounded area of great crested newts has been made, development work will commence. The newt proof boundary fence will be kept intact until the work in that area has been completed.
- 3.9 When all the work is completed, the large area within the track will be open to public access on non-operating days through the two level crossings; one pedestrian and one vehicular (for parks department machinery access). On running days, the enclosed area would be closed to the public. The track itself would be double fenced and blackthorn whips planted to mature into hedging as surrounding the current site.

4. WORK SCHEDULE

- 4.1 Obtain Planning Permission.
- 4.2 Submit Development and Disturbance Licence applications to Welsh Assembly Government.
- 4.3 Receive Licences from Welsh Assembly Government.
- 4.4 Erect newt proof fencing boundaries (5 stages over several years).
- 4.5 Work within newt proof fencing boundary until complete.
- 4.6 Remove newt proof fencing boundary.
- 4.7 Move to next area(s) and follow steps 4.4 through 4.6 for each stage in the development.

5. CONSERVATION BENEFIT

- 5.1 Although the area for development is about 0.26 hectare, much of the area will still be available to Great Crested Newts. Therefore, the amount of terrestrial habitat to be lost is very small, about 1000 m² and this will not affect the viability of the Great Crested Newt population in Heath Park.
- 5.2 In addition to the above undertakings, we will provide another suitable breeding pond for the Great Crested Newts. This will be approximately forty square metres in area and have a depth minimum of one and a half metres in parts. The new pond will not be stocked with fish and it will be allowed to vegetate naturally.
- 5.3 We intend to provide some dry stone walling and log piles to provide hibernation habitat for the Great Crested Newts and other wildlife.

6. CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 Initial site survey by Erica Colkett in March 2006
- 6.2 Formal meeting between the Society (Mike Williams, Roger Sully and Don Norman) and Erica Colkett on 18/4/2006.
- 6.3 Draft Method statement submitted to Erica Colkett 23/04/06.
- 6.4 Method Statement amended and agreed 19/05/06