

## 7: Environmental Impact Assessment

### Environmental Impact Assessment

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is the process of gathering and assessing the environmental information associated with a proposed development. An EIA aims to ensure that any potential environmental impacts that may occur during construction and following completion are properly understood and assessed before development is approved. Appropriate measures are developed to address any identified environmental impacts.

The EIA for the flood scheme is being undertaken by Sweco. Environmental constraints have been identified along with areas which required further assessment.

### Environmental Mitigation

Proposed measures to reduce the environmental impact of the scheme include:

- The design of the proposed flood defences has been carefully considered to ensure that the structures do not negatively impact on the surrounding environment in terms of visual impact, conservation setting and public access.
- The natural landscape and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance have been considered during the design process and mitigation included.
- Where appropriate, the use of 'soft' engineering techniques (such as willow planting) will be used to reduce river bank erosion, in place of 'hard engineering' techniques (such as brick or concrete, for example), to allow animals and plants to flourish.
- Pre-construction surveys are required to ensure that construction activity avoids disturbing protected species. An Environmental/Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be appointed to oversee the implementation of ecological measures during construction.
- Tree and vegetation loss will be minimised and all trees requiring removal will be checked for breeding birds and bats. Replacement and compensatory tree planting will be completed as part of the landscaping scheme to maintain and encourage wildlife and provide public amenity (see below).
- Existing public and residential access will either be maintained or alternative routes provided.
- Appropriate and sensitive construction methods, including pollution control measures, will be used when working adjacent to watercourses to protect water quality.



Figure 12: Potential bat roost in Comrie

### Ecological Surveys

Ecological surveys have been carried out to assist in the conservation of nature throughout Comrie during and after the flood protection works.

Surveys for the following species were carried out:

- Bats – potential roosts were identified across Comrie, at locations which included mature trees, rotting trees, dry stone walls with gaps between brickwork (Figure 12) and at the gable end of some buildings.
- Beavers – 44 individual instances of evidence pointing to beaver activity were found on the River Earn (Figure 13), including foraging signs and burrows.
- Birds – Protected species of birds were identified following consultation with the RSPB.
- Otters – 26 individual instances of evidence pointing to otter activity were found across Comrie, including several clear instances of otter holts.
- Fish – Evidence of adult American signal crayfish were identified on the River Earn and a targeted survey was undertaken for this species to fully understand their presence.

### Tree Replacement & Compensatory Tree Planting

A comprehensive tree survey has been carried out within Comrie to identify trees which may need to be removed to accommodate the scheme. For each tree which is removed, three more will be planted.

Native replacement tree planting is proposed along the river banks where possible to replace trees lost in construction. Trees would be planted at a range of heights including some larger specimens that would provide instant impact.

In addition to this, compensatory tree planting is proposed within gaps along the disused railway embankment located to the south of The Ross. This would create a continuous green link for wildlife. This feature is currently subject to discussion with local landowners.



Figure 13: Beaver foraging on River Earn