

Comments on ecological surveys undertaken in response to the proposed tree works in Marhill Copse.

11/03/2019

The ecology report provided by Mr Narbed identifies two ecological issues, non-native species and the presence of badgers, of which the City Council was already aware. The report's recommendations do not conflict with position of the City Council.

The City Council's Planning Ecologist has had the opportunity to review a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) commissioned by Southampton Airport and also met on site with representatives of the Airport to discuss potential ecological impacts and appropriate mitigation. At present the mitigation measures haven't been fully developed as further, species specific, survey work is due to be undertaken over the coming spring and summer. This survey work will cover bats, dormouse, great crested newt and otter. In addition, the consultant ecologist has been made aware of the potential presence of firecrest, a Schedule 1 bird species. Once the results of these phase two surveys have been analysed a full suite of mitigation measures will need to be developed.

In relation to felling trees in the bird nesting season, whilst it is good practice to avoid undertaking tree felling during this period, it is not prohibited by law. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is an offence to intentionally:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- take, damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird included in Schedule 1;
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Provided work can be undertaken without any of the above occurring, an offence will not have been committed.

The PEA has recommended undertaking all tree works outside the breeding season, which runs from March to August inclusive, however, should it be necessary to remove any trees during this period the area around the trees to be felled will need to be checked for active nests. If any are found, a five metre exclusion zone will need to be placed around the nest. Should the nest be closer to the work zone than five metres' felling would not be able to proceed until after the chicks had fledged.

I am satisfied that the consultant advising Southampton Airport has identified all the relevant ecological issues and that appropriate phase two surveys have been commissioned.

Planning Ecologist.