

**HICKS FARM SANG, (THROOP NATURE PARK),  
THROOP ROAD, BOURNEMOUTH, DORSET**

**OTTER SURVEY REPORT**

**Final Document**

May 2023

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## ECOSA Quality Assurance Record

This report has been produced in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing 2017 (CIEEM, 2017). The report has been prepared in line with current best practice guidance and survey work has been undertaken in line with references within CIEEM's Source of Survey Guidance (CIEEM, 2017).

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**HICKS FARM SANG, (THROOP NATURE PARK),  
THROOP ROAD, BOURNEMOUTH, DORSET**

**OTTER SURVEY REPORT**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Ecological Survey and Assessment Ltd (ECOSA) have been appointed by BCP Council to provide ecological support and monitoring works in relation to otters at Hicks Farm SANG, Bournemouth. The site is located in the along the River Stour on the outskirts of Bournemouth and the surveys have been designed to assess the potential impact of the SANG development on foraging and breeding otter.

The main findings of the otter surveys are:

- Evidence of otter was recorded from within the site in the form of feeding remains, spraint and footprints.
- New woodland and shrub planting should be created along the southern bank of the River Stour to provide sheltering opportunities for otter.
- As a measure of enhancement, it has been recommended that an artificial otter holt is created on site.
- It is recommended that monitoring surveys are undertaken following the construction of the artificial holt to provide a continued update on the populations of protected species known to utilise the site.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Ecological Survey and Assessment Limited (ECOSA) have been appointed by Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council to provide ecological support and monitoring works in relation to otter at Hicks Farm Suitable Alternative Greenspace (SANG) (Throop Nature Park), Throop Road, Bournemouth, Dorset BH8 0DN (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). The site is located at National Grid Reference (NGR) SZ 1110 9618 (**Map 1**).

The site comprises grassland fields and woodland located along the southern bank of the River Stour. A planning application to change the use of the site to SANG was granted in October 2021 by BCP Council (Planning reference: 7-2021-7824-C).

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken by Abbas Ecology in August 2019 (Abbas Ecology, 2021). This identified the need for further surveys in relation to otter at the site with regard to the change of use of the site to a SANG. As part of the SANG proposals, a buffer greater than 8 metres in width between the River Stour and the SANG will be created by installing fencing bank to prevent dogs from entering the river. Further surveys for otter were therefore necessary to determine if otter was present and if the installation of the fencing would have an impact on the species.

ECOSA were subsequently instructed by BCP Council to undertake these further recommended surveys. This survey report presents the results of the otter surveys undertaken during 2022-2023 at Hicks Farm SANG.

## **2.0 SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This section details the methods employed during the 2022-23 ecological monitoring surveys. Any significant limitations to the surveys are also considered.

### **2.2 Otter Surveys**

#### **2.2.1 Survey Methods**

To determine whether otter are present and utilising the on-site habitats, four monitoring surveys were undertaken in May, July and October 2022 and January 2023. A detailed investigation was undertaken of the accessible banks of the watercourses within the site to record any evidence of otter such as spraints, footprints, feeding remains, otter slides, holts and couches. Any evidence was mapped where appropriate.

#### **2.2.2 Survey Details**

The May otter survey was carried out by Hugh Turner, Senior Ecologist, and Olivia Walton, Ecologist of ECOSA, on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022. The weather conditions were dry with 40-100% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 14°C and a light breeze.

The July otter survey was carried out by Hugh Turner, Senior Ecologist, and Megan Woolley, Assistant Ecologist of ECOSA, on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022. The weather conditions were dry with 100% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 20°C and no wind.

The October otter survey was carried out by Hugh Turner, Senior Ecologist, and Megan Woolley, Assistant Ecologist of ECOSA, on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022. The weather conditions were dry with 45% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 16°C and a strong breeze.

The January otter survey was carried out by Hugh Turner, Senior Ecologist and Joe Hunt, Assistant Ecologist of ECOSA, on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023. The weather conditions were dry with 100% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 3°C and no wind.

#### **2.2.3 Survey Limitations**

There were no significant limitations to the otter surveys.

## 3.0 RESULTS

### 3.1 Introduction

This section details the results of the 2022-2023 monitoring surveys in relation to otter undertaken for the site.

### 3.2 Otter Surveys

#### 3.2.1 Field Survey Results

Evidence of otter *Lutra lutra* was recorded in both the 2022 and 2023 field surveys, in the form of footprints, fish scales, spraint and feeding remains for otter. No holts or resting places were recorded on site during the survey works, although suitable habitat is present on the site in the form of wet woodland and woodland blocks along the edge of the river.

Three otter spraints were recorded during the May 2022 survey located within opposite ends of the site with the locations shown in **Map 2**. A footprint (**Figure 1**) was found with the most northern spraint (**Figure 2**) and two of the spraints were accompanied by discarded mussels feeding remains.



Figure 1: Otter footprint



Figure 2: Otter spraint

Feeding remains and spraint were identified during the July 2022 survey, with the locations shown in **Map 3**.

During the October 2022 survey feeding remains in the form of broken mussel shells, were identified along with four spraints, two of which appeared very old with the locations shown in **Map 4**.

The January 2023 survey identified feeding remains in the form of fish remains, fish scales, footprints and two areas of spraint, one of which appeared old. All locations are shown in **Map 5**.

Otter feeding remains were recorded on all surveys with the majority of the evidence attributed to discarded swan mussel *Anodonta cygnea* shells (**Figure 3**) and unidentified fish remains (**Figure 4**).



**Figure 3:** Discarded swan mussel shells



**Figure 4:** Otter feeding remains



## **4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 Summary Evaluation**

The surveys confirmed that otter are present on site. Evidence for the presence of the species was recorded along the full surveyed area of the River Stour, however the majority of evidence recorded was present along the northern bank of the river and around the inlet to the south-east of the proposed SANG area. The evidence suggests that otter are using the site for commuting and feeding but not for holts or resting.

### **4.2 Potential Impacts**

No evidence of holts was recorded on site during the survey, therefore resident otter are considered likely absent from the site. Fencing installation will be carried out during the daytime to avoid disturbances to feeding or commuting otter.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

To enhance the site for otter, the southern bank of the River Stour should be planted with a mixture of native tree and shrub species including common lime *Tilia x europaea*, crack willow *Salix fragilis*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and alder *Alnus glutinosa* with sedges including pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* and greater pond sedge *Carex riparia*.

An artificial holt should be created in the southern bank. If constructed, the holt will comprise two entrance tunnels of 200 millimetres diameter constructed from concrete. The tunnels will be approximately five metres in length and will be connected to two chambers, comprising two large concrete pipe sections measuring 400 millimetres high by 650 millimetres diameter and fitted with lids. The chambers will be approximately 600 millimetres below ground level. The tunnel entrance will be set a minimum 1,000 millimetres above the mean winter water level, and will be accessible to otter via a set of stepped stone blocks, providing easy access/egress regardless of water levels.

The design of the artificial otter holts will follow the guidance issued by the International Survival Otter Fund (ISOF) (ISOF, 2023), however the artificial otter holts will be made of concrete blocks rather than plastic.

The proposed planting and construction of an artificial holt should be carried out with guidance and supervision from an Ecologist.

### **4.4 Site Wide Monitoring**

Should the artificial holt be installed, it is recommended that monitoring of the holt to determine if it is in use occurs on a yearly basis over a five-year period from the completion of the holt construction.

## 5.0 REFERENCES

Abbas Ecology, 2021. *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal - Proposed Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace at Hick's Farm, Throop, Martinstown*: Abbas Ecology.

CIEEM, 2017. *Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing. Technical Guidance Series*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.cieem.net/publications/23/ecological-report-writing> [Accessed October 2022].

ISOF, 2023. *How to Build an Otter Holt*. [Online] Available at: [https://www.otter.org/public/IOSFResearch\\_HowToBuildAnOtterHolt.aspx](https://www.otter.org/public/IOSFResearch_HowToBuildAnOtterHolt.aspx) [Accessed 6th March 2023].

**Map 1** Site Location

**HICKS FARM SANG (THROOP NATURE PARK), THROOP ROAD, BOURNEMOUTH**

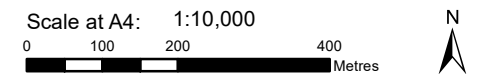
OTTER SURVEY REPORT

Map 1 - Site Location Plan

Client:	Bournemouth Borough Council
Date:	August 2022
Status:	Final

**KEY**

 Site Boundary



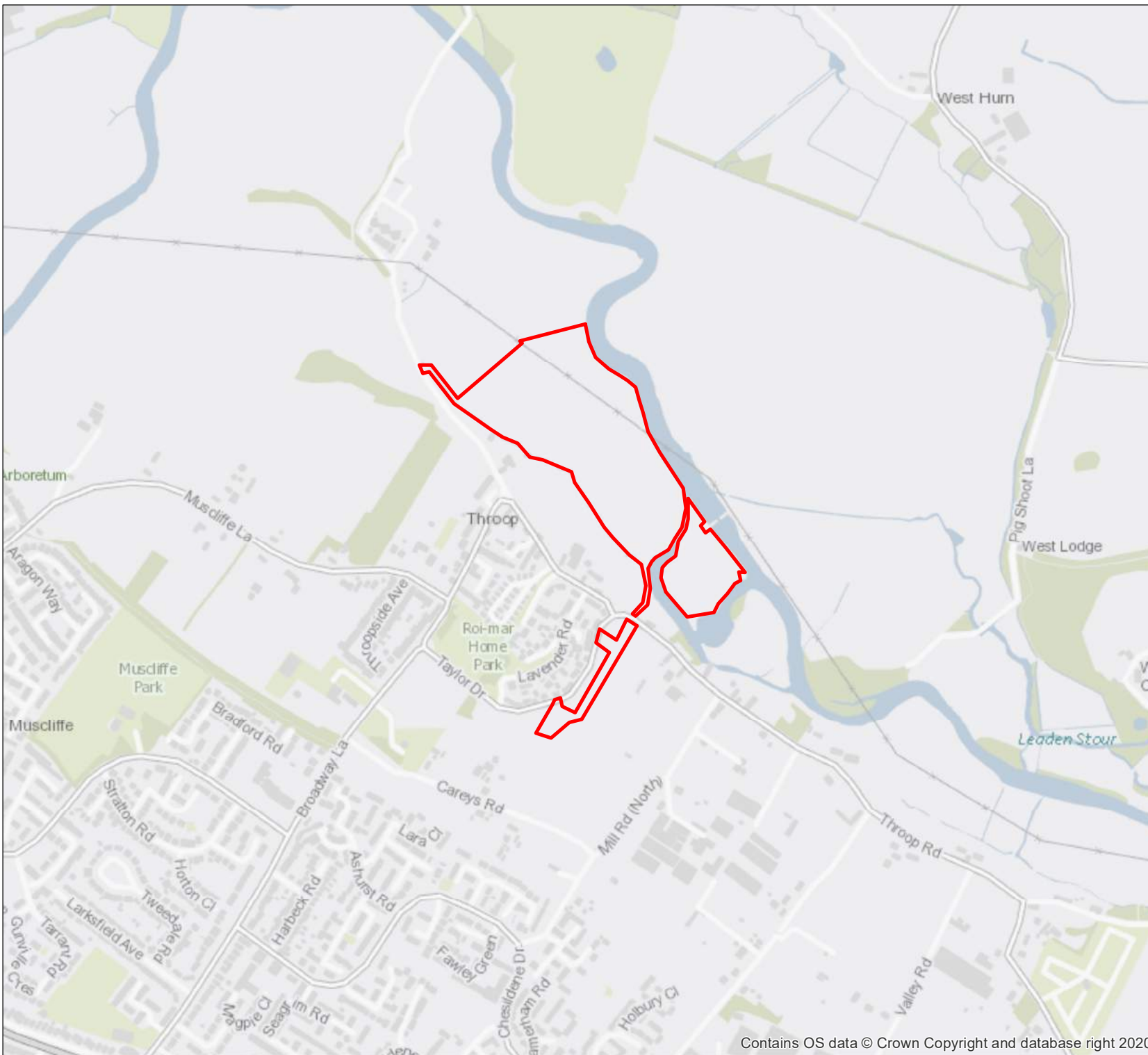
Prepared by: EV	Date: 100822
Last amended by: N/A	Date: N/A



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**Map 2** Otter Survey Results – May 2022

# HICKS FARM SANGS, BOURNEMOUTH

## OTTER SURVEY REPORT

Map 2 - Otter Survey Results -  
May 2022


Client: BCP Council


Date: April 2023

Status: Draft


### KEY

 Site Boundary

 Survey Area

 Suitable Habitat for Otter Holt

### Otter Evidence (May 2022)

 Feeding Remains and Spraint

 Spraint

Scale at A4: 1:3,500

0 35 70 140  
Metres



Prepared by: EV

Date: 230223

Last amended by: EV

Date: 040423

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**Map 3** Otter Survey Results – July 2022



# HICKS FARM SANGS, BOURNEMOUTH

## OTTER SURVEY REPORT

Map 3 - Otter Survey Results -  
July 2022


Client: BCP Council

Date: April 2023

Status: Draft


### KEY

 Site Boundary

 Survey Area

 Suitable Habitat for Otter Holt

### Otter Evidence (July 2022)

 Feeding Remains

 Old Spraint

 Spraint

Scale at A4: 1:3,500

0 35 70 140  
Metres



Prepared by: EV

Date: 230223

Last amended by: EV

Date: 040423

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**Map 4** Otter Survey Results – October 2022

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## OTTER SURVEY REPORT

Map 4 - Otter Survey Results -  
October 2022


Client: BCP Council


Date: April 2023

Status: Draft


### KEY

 Site Boundary


 Survey Area

 Suitable Habitat for Otter Holt

### Otter Evidence (October 2022)

 Feeding Remains

 Spraint

 Old Spraint

Scale at A4: 1:3,500

0 35 70 140  
Metres



Prepared by: EV

Date: 230223

Last amended by: EV

Date: 040423

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**Map 5** Otter Survey Results – January 2023



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## OTTER SURVEY REPORT

Map 5 - Otter Survey Results -  
January 2023


Client: BCP Council


Date: April 2023

Status: Draft


### KEY

 Site Boundary


 Survey Area


 Suitable Habitat for Otter Holt

### Otter Evidence (January 2023)

 Feeding Remains

 Fish Scales

 Feeding Remains and Spraint

 Spraint and Footprints

Scale at A4: 1:3,500

0 35 70 140  
Metres



Prepared by: EV

Date: 230223

Last amended by: EV

Date: 040423

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