Cumberland Council

Ecology Team Consultation Response	
Date:	27.10.2026
Planning Ref:	4/26/2307/0F1
Description:	Prior notification for proposed upgrade of fibre optic infrastructure.

The County Ecologist notes that the following surveys are required prior to this application progressing:

- An otter survey to check for the presence of otter is conducted where works are scheduled to cross the Skellerah Bridge, Corney (NGR: SD 1156 9170).
- There are 22 ponds within 250m of planned work where eDNA analysis of the ponds within 250m of the planned works is to be undertaken performed to confirm presence or absence of GCN, it is recommended that the presence of natterjack toads is also assessed,
    - Should it not be possible to undertake eDNA analysis this must be justified to the council and, planned works in close proximity to these ponds must be undertaken under ecological supervision from a licenced ecologist and following protection measures detailed within the CEMP. If GCN are present, then a District Level Licence (DLL) may be required to facilitate the works. Where vegetation clearance and works are to take place in close proximity to suitable habitat for GCN, protective measures detailed within an EMP must be followed.
    - If natterjack toads are present, Natural England licence may be required to facilitate the works. Where vegetation clearance and works are to take place in close proximity to suitable habitat for natterjack toad, protective measures will be detailed in an EMP and must be followed.

Suggested Planning Conditions

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

A CEMP is to be produced in conjunction with the HRA, to detail the procedures for protecting the environment during construction to address the following points (but not limited to):

- Pollution prevention control
- Dust mitigation
- Impaction of habitats both onsite and offsite within the National Site Network sites or neighbouring SSSIs
- A sensitive lighting scheme for bats and other wildlife

- Species protection during construction (see below)

Small Mammals

All development work should be carried out with care to avoid small mammals such as hedgehogs. Contractors should be briefed about the potential presence of small mammals and should adopt the following precautionary method of works:

- All work must take place during daylight hours.
- Should any trenches and excavations be required, an escape route for animals that enter the trench must be provided, especially if left open overnight. Ramps should be no greater than of 45 degrees in angle. Ideally, any holes should be securely covered.
- All excavations left open overnight or longer should be checked for animals prior to the continuation of works or infilling. Back filling should be completed immediately after any excavations, ideally back filling as an on-going process to the work in hand.
- Stored materials should be raised (i.e. stored on pallets) in order to ensure that wildlife such as hedgehogs do not shelter in the piles.

Red Squirrels

If any trees are to be felled or pruned to facilitate the works then they must be subject to a pre-construction survey for red squirrels.

Bats

Most of the works are within existing infrastructure and are unlikely to require vegetation clearance, however, tree felling should be avoided and pruning minimised. If trees will be impacted by the proposed works, a Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW) will be required to assess the impacted trees potential to support roosting bats and identify if further survey or mitigation is required.

Reptiles and Amphibians

A precautionary working method will be implemented for widespread reptiles and amphibians (herptiles) during construction, including the following measures:

- Vegetation will be maintained at a short sward (5cm) to discourage herptiles.
- A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow any herptiles to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter amphibians from the working area.

- Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape.
- Any rubble piles will be dismantled by hand and debris and brash will be stored on pallets or removed from the site to prevent herptiles from utilising these areas.
- Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats.
- Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations.
- If any herptiles are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.
- In the unlikely event that a herptile is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

The Hodbarrow area is known to host a population of natterjack toad. In the unlikely event of a natterjack toad being found during the works, works must stop and advice sought from the project ecologist or Natural England.

Invasive Non-Native Species Walkover

A pre-construction walkover of works close to records of INNS, watercourses or ditches, as well as within the following grid references: SD1280, SD1281, SD1577 and SD1578 and SD1778. These walkovers will identify any INNS present adjacent to the works and where measures will be required to prevent the spread of INNS. These measures should be outlined within the CEMP.