

# OTTER SURVEY

## OLD TAIL PONDS AT WANLOCKHEAD



Prepared by:  
Stuart Spray MSc MCIEEM  
Ecologist

**STUART SPRAY**  
Wildlife Consultancy

September 2016

## Contents

<b>1 Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2 Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3 Survey Methodology</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4 Results</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5 Recommendations</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6 References</b>	<b>9</b>

## 1 Summary

Bucleuch Estate are proposing to erect a fence around the tail ponds at Wanlockhead in an attempt to deter visitors from walking over the site. The tail ponds are part of the Wanlockhead Remains of the Lead Mining and Smelting Scheduled Monument and Historic Scotland have requested an otter survey as part of the Scheduled Monument Consent prior to the fence being erected.

This otter survey was carried out, therefore, at the request of Buccleuch Estate in order to confirm that no otter holts are present within the footprint of the proposed fence line.

As no otter holts were recorded during the course of the survey a license to disturb a European Protected Species is not required at this time.

Although no evidence of otter was recorded during the survey, one record of otter on Wanlock Water in 1995 was reported during the data search and the good foraging habitat indicates that otters are still likely to be active in the survey area.

Recommendations include:

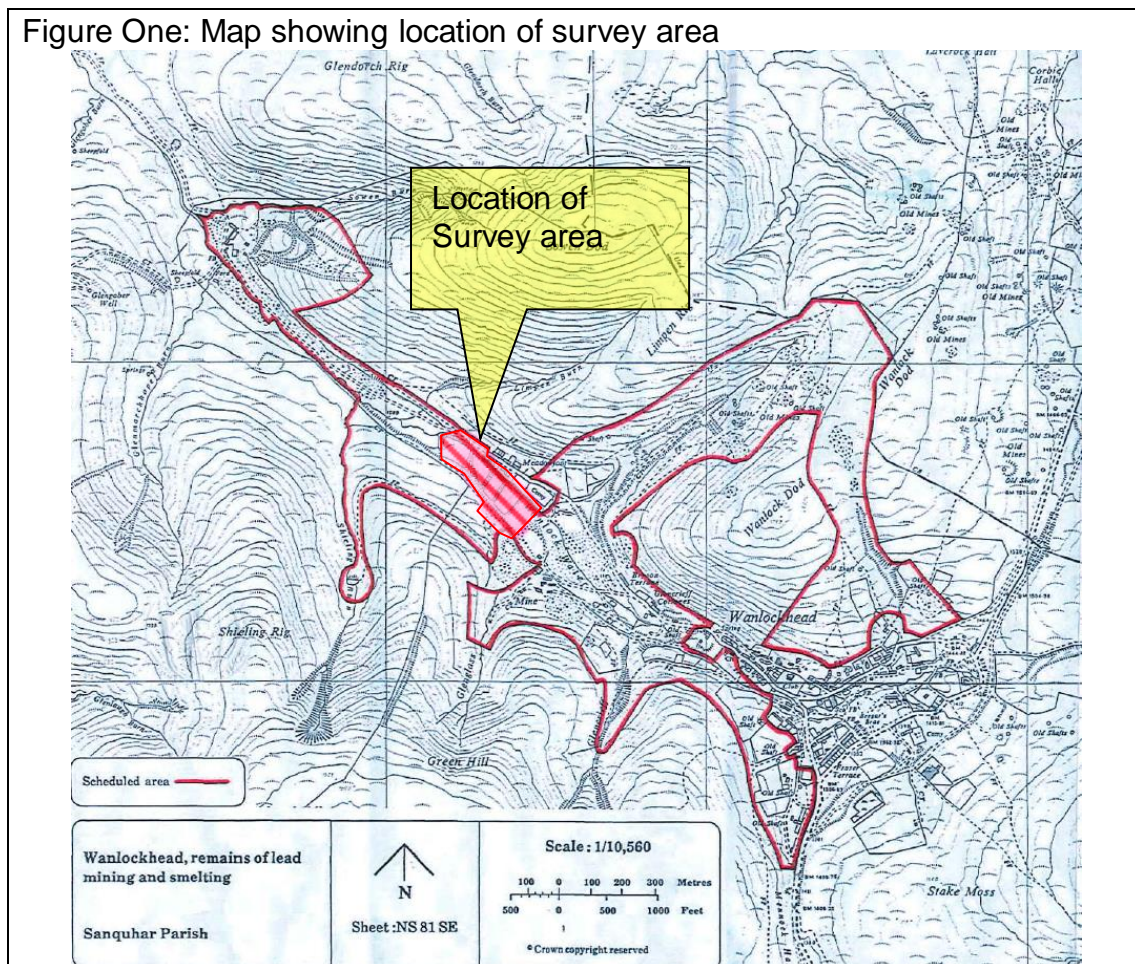
- As a precaution, any deep excavations during the construction phase of the fence are covered up overnight. Alternatively, a ramp could be provided to allow otter and other mammals to escape should any become trapped in a trench or excavation;
- It is important that the otters continue to be able to navigate Wanlock Water. Any fencing constructed across Wanlock Water should be designed to have a gap large enough to allow otters to pass underneath but low enough to fence out livestock when the water level is low; and
- Depending on the design of the fence, it is also recommended that as a precaution otter gates, designed to a similar specification as a badger gate, are provided at regular intervals along the fence line.

## 2 Introduction

Buchleuch Estate are proposing to erect a fence around the tail ponds at Wanlockhead in an attempt deter visitors from walking over the site. The tail ponds are part the Wanlockhead Remains of the Lead Mining and Smelting Sheduled Monument and Historic Scotland have requested an otter survey as part of the Scheduled Monument Consent prior to the fence being erected (See Figures One and Two).

This otter survey was carried out, therefore, at the request of Buccleuch Estate in order to confirm that no otter holts are present within the footprint of the proposed fence line.

Figure One: Map showing location of survey area



### 2.1 Relevant Legislation

Otter *Lutra lutra* and their places of rest (holts) are protected by law under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act<sup>3</sup> as amended by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004<sup>2</sup>. As a 'European Protected Species', further protection is also afforded to otter under the Regulation 39(1) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994<sup>1</sup> and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004<sup>2</sup>.

Stuart Spray Wildlife Consultancy

[www.stuartspraywildlife.co.uk](http://www.stuartspraywildlife.co.uk)

Mobile: 07894081164 Email: [info@stuartspraywildlife.co.uk](mailto:info@stuartspraywildlife.co.uk)

Figure Two: Images of survey area.



## 2.2 BAPs (Biodiversity Action Plans)

Otter is listed as a priority species in both the UK and the Dumfries and Galloway Biodiversity Action Plans<sup>11&15</sup>.

## 2.3 Site Description

The monument consists of the above and below-ground remains of lead mining and smelting in Wanlockhead including shafts, adits, underground workings, above-ground remains of buildings and machinery used in mining, tracks, roads, railways and water-courses associated with lead working, waste heaps and the remains of at least two lead smelters.

The survey area comprised an area of approximately 12ha of wetland habitat located on the site of the old tail ponds within the Wanlockhead Remains of the Lead Mining and Smelting Scheduled Monument and adjacent to Meadowhead Cemetery. The habitat comprised areas of marshy grassland, shallow ponds and Wanloch Water.

The bed of Wanlock Water was stony bed with potential for a variety of fresh water invertebrate and fish.

The terrestrial habitat was very sandy with several rabbit burrows.

## 3 Survey Methodology

### 3.1 Data Search

A desk top survey was carried out in September 2016 to identify any records of otter within 1km of the proposed work site<sup>12</sup>.

### 3.2 Field Survey

Approximately 12ha of wetland habitat located at the site of the old tail ponds within the Wanlockhead Remains of the Lead Mining and Smelting Scheduled Monument adjacent to Meadowhead Cemetery was surveyed on September 07 2016 looking for evidence of otter including<sup>5,12&16</sup>:

- Spraints (droppings);
- Feeding remains;
- Footprints, footpaths;
- Otter couches (otter shelters above ground) and
- Otter holts (otter shelters below ground).

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Data Search

One record of an otter from 1995 was reported at NS856143 on Wanloch Water approximately 800m north west of the survey area. Although this was over 20 years ago it is likely that otters still frequent Wanloch Water to forage for small fish.

### 4.2 Field Survey

No otter holts were recorded during the course of the survey.

It should be noted that any one of the many rabbit burrows within the survey area could relatively easily be occupied by an otter in the future.

No other evidence of otter, such as spraints, footprints or feeding remains, was recorded within the survey area.

## 5 Recommendations

As no otter holts were recorded during the course of the survey a license to disturb a European Protected Species is not required at this time<sup>10&14</sup>.

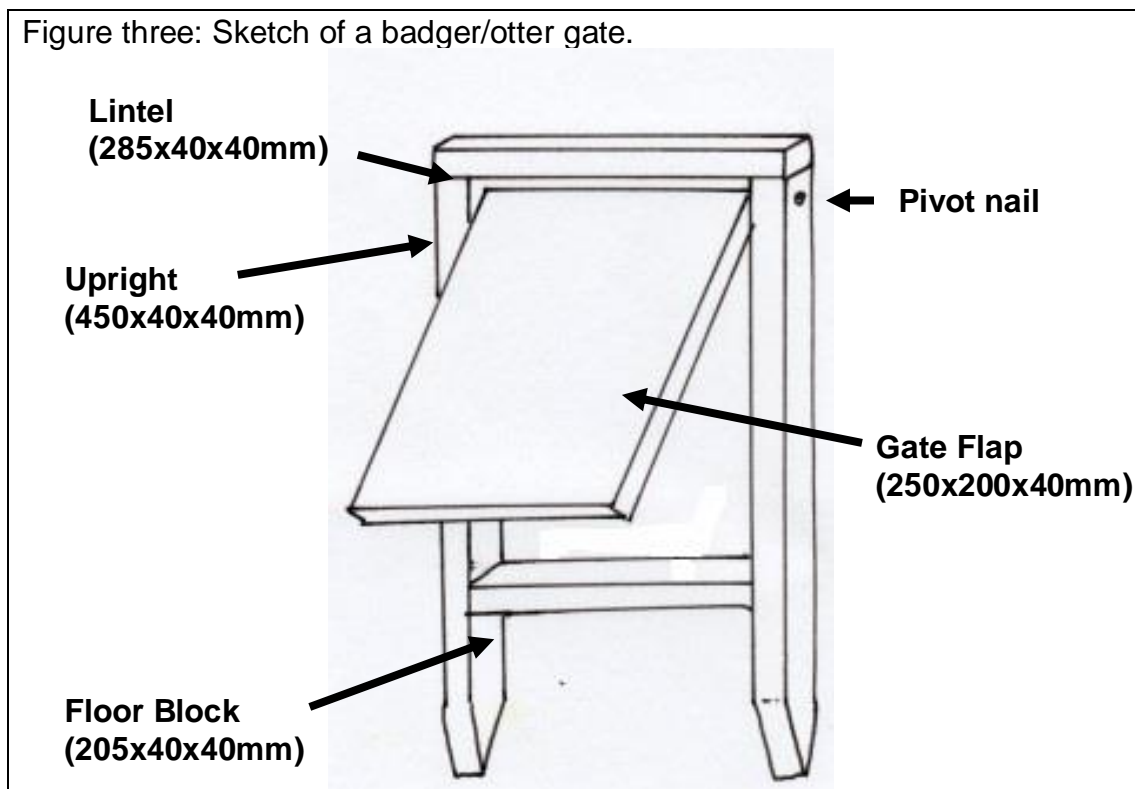
Although no evidence of otter was recorded during the survey, one record of otter on Wanlock Water in 1995 was reported during the data search and the good foraging habitat indicates that otters are still likely to be active in the survey area<sup>6,7,8,10,12&14</sup>.

It is recommended that, as a precaution, any deep excavations during the construction phase of the fence are covered up overnight. Alternatively, a ramp could be provided to allow otter and other mammals to escape should any become trapped in a trench or excavation<sup>6,7,8,12&14</sup>.

It is important that the otters continue to be able to navigate Wanlock Water. Any fencing constructed across Wanlock Water should be designed to have a gap large enough to allow otters to pass underneath but low enough to fence out livestock when the water level is low<sup>6,7,8,10,12&14</sup>.

Otters are known to be able to climb over most fences designed to deter humans. They can, however, find it more difficult to traverse fences designed to keep out rabbits and livestock. Depending on the design of the fence, therefore, it is also recommended that as precaution otter gates, designed to a similar specification as a badger gate (See Figure Three), are provided at regular intervals along the fence line<sup>6,7,8,10,12&14</sup>. Other mammals such as foxes are known to use the gates. However, as long as the flap is of sufficient weight, rabbits are effectively excluded.

Figure three: Sketch of a badger/otter gate.



Stuart Spray Wildlife Consultancy

[www.stuartspraywildlife.co.uk](http://www.stuartspraywildlife.co.uk)

Mobile: 07894081164 Email: [info@stuartspraywildlife.co.uk](mailto:info@stuartspraywildlife.co.uk)

## 6 References

1. Anon., 1994. The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994: HMSO.
2. Anon., 2004. The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations. HMSO, London.
3. Anon., 1981. Wildlife and Countryside Act. London: HMSO.
4. Chanin, P., 2003. Ecology of the European Otter. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Ecology Series No.10. English Nature, Peterborough.
5. Chanin, P., 2003. Monitoring the Otter *Lutra lutra*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No.10. English Nature, Peterborough.
6. Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), 2006. Guidance Note 31 Forest operations and wildlife protection. FCS, Edinburgh.
7. Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), 2006. Guidance Note 34 Forest operations and European Protected species in Scottish Forests. FCS, Edinburgh.
8. Findlay, M., Alexander, L. & Macleod, C., 2015. Site condition monitoring for otters (*Lutra lutra*) in 2011-12. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 521.
9. Grogan A., Philcox C. & Macdonald D., 2001. Nature Conservation and Roads: advice in relation to otters. Wildlife Conservation Research Unit/Highways Agency.
10. Kruuk, H., 2006. Otters: Ecology, Behaviour and Conservation. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
11. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, 2008. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, Balloch.
12. Norman, P., 2009. Dumfries and Galloway Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Dumfries and Galloway Council: Dumfries.
13. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), 2007. Scotland's Wildlife: Otter and Development. SNH, Battleby.
14. Strachan, R. (2007) National survey of otter *Lutra lutra* distribution in Scotland 2003-2004. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No.211 (ROAME No. F03AC309).
15. The Scottish Office Development Department, 1999. National Planning Policy Guideline NPPG 14 Natural Heritage. Scottish Office, Edinburgh.
16. UK Biodiversity Steering Group, 1995. Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report - Volume II: Action Plans Tranche 1, Vol 2, p89. English Nature, Peterborough.
17. Ward, D., Holmes, N., and José, P. 2001. The New Rivers and Wildlife Handbook. RSPB, Bedfordshire.