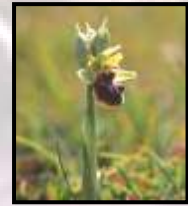


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Former Nursery Gardens, Oaklands Park, Chichester – Slow Worms

Covers Ltd were granted planning permission to relocate Chichester Rifle Club from its existing site in Quarry Lane Industrial Park to an area of land in Oaklands Park. One of their planning conditions required them to re-landscape the former nursery gardens to provide woodland habitat and also open space for the public.

Lindsay Carrington Ecological Services was commissioned to determine whether the proposed re-landscaping would result in significant ecological impacts. An extended phase 1 habitat survey was therefore conducted with the secondary aim of identifying habitats of value and potential habitat for any protected or Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species. Slow worms were subsequently recorded during a targeted reptile survey.

Slow worms are protected under schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and are increasingly (along with other reptiles) becoming an issue for developers. In accordance with legislation and policy, survey and mitigation work must take place before development can proceed.

A reptile mitigation strategy was devised and agreed with Natural England to facilitate the landscaping of the former nursery gardens. This involved creating a fenced temporary exclusion site within an area supporting rough grassland habitat and bramble scrub, with additional shelter in hibernacula (mainly underground). Artificial refugia were placed around the site and slow worms were then captured and translocated into the exclusion zone. Following clearance of the slow worms from the site, destructive searches took place where piles of rubble were present. This involved the careful removal of concrete/bricks (from the demolished buildings), and hand searching for any slow worms. The fencing surrounding the reptile enclosure will remain in place until completion of works, at which point, slow worms will be able to re-colonise the newly created habitat.

Lindsay Carrington Ecological Services has also had considerable input into the landscape design of the site to enhance the ecological value, particularly for reptiles. This includes removal of alien and invasive species such as Rhododendron, management of existing woodland habitat and substantial creation of hay meadows within the site to occupy the areas formerly occupied by hard standing and derelict buildings. Hibernacula and refugia for reptiles are also included within the landscaping.

The agreed mitigation strategy is in the process of being implemented. All slow worms have been translocated and habitat creation and enhancement measures are being implemented on-site under supervision of an ecologist.