



## Surveys and mitigation

### Reptile presence / absence survey

You will usually be asked for a reptile survey if you've had a preliminary ecological appraisal that has identified habitats on site that are suitable to support reptiles.

A reptile presence / absence survey is the next step, which checks to see whether the site does support reptiles, and if so, what species and how many.

A reptile presence / absence survey involves three survey techniques:

- Walkover survey to check suitable basking spots
- Checking refugia already on site, such as log piles and discarded rubbish, for sheltering reptiles
- Checking artificial refugia added to site, such as corrugated metal sheets and carpet tiles, for sheltering reptiles

The refugia are checked seven times and any reptiles seen are recorded.

Our experienced ecologists can complete reptile surveys from March through to October, although the optimal months are April, May and September.

If we record reptiles, a further eight surveys are required to form a population size class assessment (fifteen surveys in total). We use the results from these surveys to design a suitable mitigation strategy.

### Reptile method statement

If we've recorded reptiles on your site, you will usually have to submit a method statement to the Local Planning Authority as part of your planning application.

The method statement demonstrates how you will prevent your development from affecting reptiles. Our ecologists are experienced at developing mitigation strategies that not only ensure the safety of reptiles on site, but take into consideration your construction timings and development proposals.

### European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence

You'll only need a EPS licence if smooth snakes or sand lizards have been recorded on your site. This is unlikely to be the case though as they are very rare and confined to sandy heaths and sand dunes in Dorset, Hampshire, Surrey and Lancashire. Reintroduced populations are also present in West Sussex, Devon and Wales.



If your development does have the potential to harm or disturb sand lizards or smooth snakes, the works must be carried out under a EPS mitigation licence issued by Natural England, Natural Resources Wales or Scottish Natural Heritage.

We can provide advice on whether or not you'll need to apply for a licence, and what information will be needed if so.

EPS mitigation licences are separate to planning permission, and we can apply for a licence once you've secured planning permission (or any other relevant consents).

#### **Ecological clerk of works (ECoW)**

Once you are ready to start on site, you will need an ecological clerk of works to ensure your method statement is full implemented, and that no reptiles are harmed throughout the development.

Your ECoW will usually carry out an ecological toolbox talk to contractors, hand searches and soft demolition of refugia, supervision during vegetation clearance and reptile fencing installation, and translocation of reptiles off-site.

#### **Capture and translocation**

Capture and translocation is the process of installing reptile fencing around a site and placing refugia within the enclosed area. This allows us to capture the reptiles on site and translocate them to a safe receptor site.

Translocation can be a long and expensive process, requiring an ecologist to be present on site for at least 30 days. This can often be avoided though by using reasonable avoidance measures, such as reducing the vegetation cover and having an ecological clerk of works present to search refugia and move any reptiles off-site prior to the start of works.

If reptile fencing is required, we work with specialist contractors to install fencing which meets the requirements of your method statement.