

Badgers (*Meles meles*)

The badger is an easily recognisable native British mammal. At 1m long, it is our largest Carnivore. Badgers are omnivorous and forage in grasslands, woodlands and arable fields. In most places in England, earthworms make up the majority of their diet. They live in social groups, occupying a territory which they defend against other groups, and which contains sufficient foraging habitat to sustain them throughout the year. The boundaries of this territory are regularly patrolled and are generally denoted by well-worn pathways. Each territory will contain a main sett, which tends to be where breeding occurs. It may also contain numerous other setts, the size, function and level of activity at which varies, and may change throughout the year.

The UKBAP priority habitats of importance to badgers are: ancient and/or species-rich hedgerows, lowland and upland calcareous grasslands, lowland meadows, and lowland and upland woodlands, although badgers are not restricted to any habitat type.

Current status

National status

Badgers are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act (1992), and Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended). Badgers are found throughout England, and are relatively common. There are about 300,000 in the UK, and they are increasing in number. The badger is not a Priority Species in the UKBAP.

Status on the network

Badgers are present in all areas of the network (numerous setts, paths, road traffic accidents, and areas of the soft estate where badger tunnels and fencing have been installed are referred to in the Highways Agency network ecological information).

Current factors affecting the species

Road traffic related mortality

The main known cause of badger deaths in England is fatalities on the road, with approximately 50,000 badgers killed annually on the roads. New road developments may divide existing territories resulting in increased road deaths as badgers attempt to cross busy new roads on their existing pathways.

Loss or fragmentation of habitat and loss of features

New roads can contribute to habitat fragmentation and the isolation of badger populations. Very large new interchanges and multiple road developments may have significant effects on individual badger social groups through loss of habitat, but in most cases new roads and improvements are more likely to affect badgers through loss of or disturbance to setts.

Current action

Badger surveys are carried out as part of the Environmental Assessment process for any proposed new scheme and thus avoidance or mitigation can be proposed at the earliest possible stage.

Purpose-built badger tunnels and badger/otter ledges on culverts, along with appropriate fencing, are now incorporated into the design of most new roads, where necessary. Fencing is also designed to encourage badgers to use other underpasses and over-bridges as safe crossing points.



There has been research carried out into the effectiveness of measures to protect badgers on roads and the subsequent refining of the design of such features. Roadside reflectors have been used in certain situations but their efficacy is questionable. Occasionally retrospective mitigation measures are applied to 'black-spots' on existing roads.

Best practice guidelines for work affecting badgers and suitable mitigation measures are provided in DMRB Volume 10.

Information on badger deaths on the road is compiled by some local Badger Groups and Biological Records Centres.

Objectives

The aim of the Highways Agency Species Action Plan for badgers is to reduce the number of deaths of badgers on existing and new roads, and to avoid or fully mitigate any adverse impacts of new road schemes on badgers.

	Objective	Proposed actions
A	To avoid impacts of new road schemes or improvements on badgers.	6
B	To mitigate unavoidable impacts of new road schemes or improvements on badgers and/or their habitat.	7
C	To reduce the number of badger deaths on existing roads by installing mitigation features where appropriate.	2
D	To ensure that existing badger tunnels and fencing are maintained.	4
E	To safeguard known badger setts on and close to the network.	5
F	To maintain detailed records of known badger setts on and close to the network.	3
G	To raise the awareness of HA staff, Managing Agents and consultants regarding the significance of badgers on the network.	1, 8

Proposed action

The following table lists the actions required to achieve the objectives set out in this Plan. For some of the actions, potential partners have

been assigned as likely sources of cooperation. Targets are provided to give an indication of the timescale for the proposed action.

	Action	Potential partners	Target
	<i>Policy, guidance and advice</i>		
1	Quinquennial Review of the Badger Advice Note.	NFBG	2002
	<i>Research and monitoring</i>		
2	Compile a list of sites at which repeated badger deaths occur, from road casualty records. Investigate the possibility of installing badger tunnels and fencing at these sites.	LBRCs, WTs, Local Badger Groups	2003
3	Collate records of badger setts on or close to the network.	As above	2003

	Action (continued)	Potential partners	Target
	<i>Mitigation and Management</i>		
4	Managing Agents should ensure that badger tunnels are free of debris, are not waterlogged, and that fencing is intact. Where it is obvious that badgers are still crossing the surface of the road, consideration should be given to reviewing the mitigation measures for the scheme.	-	Ongoing
5	Where badger setts occur within the soft estate, maintenance works should be carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines and current legislation.	-	Ongoing
6	For all new road schemes and road improvements, include search for records of badger setts in desk study at stage 1 and in surveys at stage 2. Early identification of this constraint may allow impacts to be avoided.	-	Ongoing
7	Continue to mitigate impacts on setts and potential mortality on new schemes and improvements.		Ongoing
8	Where significant impacts of new schemes and road improvements on badger habitat are unavoidable, consider the options for habitat re-creation, improvement and enhancement, and mitigate fragmentation by designing safe means of crossing the new roads (see 7 above).	-	Ongoing
	<i>Communications and publicity</i>		
9	Information on badgers should be included in environmental training for HA staff and Managing Agents.	-	2003

Links with other plans

This plan should be read in conjunction with the HAPs for woodland, grassland and boundary features.

Badgers are identified as a Priority Species in the following LBAPs: Gosforth Park - Cromlington

Wildlife Corridor, Birmingham and Black Country, and Telford and Wrekin. None of these plans ascribed specific actions to the Highways Agency.

The badger is not identified as a Regional Biodiversity indicator in any EN region.

Lead partners

The lead partner for the badger in the UKBAP is DEFRA.

