



**Cyfoeth
Naturiol
Cymru
Natural
Resources
Wales**

Ein cyf/Our ref:
Eich cyf/Your ref:

Welsh Government Building
Rhodfa Padarn
Llanbadarn Fawr
ABERYSTWYTH
Ceredigion SY23 3UR

Kath McNulty
Specialist Advisor Forest Planning
Natural Resources Wales

Ebost/Email:
strategic.assessment@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk
Ffôn/Phone: 0300 065 4687

29th March 2021

Dear Kath,

Habitats Regulations Assessment of the application of acetamiprid and planting of trees pre-treated with acetamiprid on the Welsh Government Woodland Estate April 2021 - March 2022

Thank you for consulting the Strategic Assessment Team, Natural Resources Wales, on the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the application of acetamiprid and planting of trees pre-treated with acetamiprid on the Welsh Government woodland estate (WGWE) between April 2021 and March 2022. Our comments are made in our role as the Appropriate Nature Conservation Body (ANCB) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

In summary:

- in relation to the planting and potential spray sites as set out in the HRA document, **we agree with the conclusion that the application of acetamiprid and planting of trees pre-treated with acetamiprid will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of National Site Network (NSN) sites when considered alone or in combination with other plans or projects.**

Our specific reasons for providing this advice are set out below:

1. We welcome your commitment to the HRA process, and the constructive dialogue that has taken place between our teams during this consultation period. We also welcome the staged analysis presented in the HRA document, which we recognise is not an insignificant piece of work.
2. We note that this year's application is for the planting of trees pre-treated with acetamiprid, and acetamiprid top-up spraying, across the WGWE, should *Hylobius* and/or *Hylastes* outbreaks occur. We also note that whilst top-up spraying is only used as a last resort, based on experience from previous years, it is estimated that approximately 40% of the 4,932.7 ha of 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 crops will be treated during the twelve months covered by this application i.e. up to approximately

1,973 ha. In addition, we note the mitigation measures set out in *Summary table of Mitigation measures* on pgs. 5 and 6.

3. We note the results of the sampling programmes that were run during 2018 and 2019 by both the UK Forest Research Agency and Natural Resources Wales. With regard to the UK Forest Research Agency sampling programme, we note that one of the ninety samples detected low levels of acetamiprid, and this was thought to have come from residues on the planting bags. We note that the additional mitigation recommended by the study to avoid a similar incident, requesting planting teams to avoid placing planting bags adjacent to road drains, has been adopted in relation to the 2021 spraying programme covered in this assessment.

With regard to the Natural Resources Wales passive sampling programme, we note that no traces of acetamiprid were found in any of the deployed samplers at the two forests sampled.

4. The staged analysis presented in the HRA document focuses on the NSN sites with the most vulnerable features, both in terms of their sensitivity, and the magnitude of the impact should an incident occur. This identifies the population of freshwater pearl mussels (FwPMs) on the Afon Eden – Cors Goch Trawsfynydd SAC as being particularly vulnerable, both in terms of their high sensitivity to poor water quality, the fragility of the population (recognised in Natural Resources Wales' *Freshwater Pearl Mussel Conservation Strategy for Wales, 2017*), and that the population on this SAC represents what is considered to be the only viable population of this species in the whole of Wales.

Most of the waters draining from the Cwrt plantation, and from the forested catchment of the Aber-Serw in the northwest corner of Coed y Brenin, are intercepted and abstracted by the Ardudwy Leat. A proportion of this is then discharged it into the headwaters of Afon Eden via the Afon Crawcwellt North, where, in low and medium flows, it is estimated that a significant proportion (ca 50%+) of the Upper Eden flow is made up of leat water. This means that water from the Cwrt Plantation and the Aber-Serw catchment flows over all of the FwPM population within this SAC, thereby increasing the magnitude of any pollution incident, should an incident occur.

We therefore welcome the commitment that top-up spraying will not be undertaken in the Cwrt Plantation and the north western corner of Coed y Brenin (the forested catchment of the Aber-Serw).

5. With regard to the remaining NSN sites identified in the HRA, we consider that the risk to these sites is lower due to a lower spatial risk in the context of the integrity of

the site (i.e. a smaller proportion of the site or feature is exposed), and/or lower sensitivity of the freshwater NSN site features at risk, together with the mitigation measures adopted. It is nevertheless essential that operators adhere strictly to the incorporated mitigation measures outlined in the HRA document. As set out in the HRA document, it is also important to formally record all applications, including should there be any failure to follow the incorporated mitigation measures, or accidents, and to report any spillages immediately as described.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information or clarification via the Strategic Assessment Mailbox at:
strategic.assessment@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



Roger Matthews
Lead Specialist Advisor, Strategic Assessment

References

ⁱ Hatton-Ellis TW, Garrett H, Hearn S, Jenkins M, Jones HP, Taylor J, Watkin N. 2017. *A Freshwater Pearl Mussel Conservation Strategy for Wales*. Bangor, Natural Resources Wales.