Grassland Translocation Methodology
Land within Cwmbran, Torfaen
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1. Introduction

Ecology surveys were undertaken by Smeeden Foreman Limited in 2009 and 2010 at the Arvin Meritor site in Cwmbran, Torfaen in relation to the proposed re-development of the site for commercial purposes, including a Morrison’s supermarket, hotel, restaurants, etc. An area of semi-improved neutral/calcareous grassland was identified towards the centre of the site and as this habitat will be lost to the development, it was recommended that the grassland is translocated to a proposed area of wildflower grassland to the north of the site. This report outlines the methodology recommended for the translocation of the grassland.

2. Summary of findings

The area of semi-improved neutral/calcareous grassland was detected during surveys undertaken in April 2009 and April 2010. The grassland is based upon a steeply-sloping south-facing verge within close proximity to the northernmost gate house of the Arvin Meritor site (see Phase 1 Habitat Plan, target note 11). Species recorded on this small section of grassland includes those typical of neutral/calcareous grasslands such as common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, perforated st. john's-wort *Hypericum perforatum*, wood rush *Luzula campestris*, cat’s-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and possibly a centaury species *Centaurium sp*. Two orchid plants were also recorded within the strip of grassland. Though the species could not be determined at the time of survey, it is possible that they could be southern marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza praetemissa*. Other species recorded include daisy *Bellis perennis*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, a violet species *Viola sp.*, dandelion *Taraxacum agg.*, mouse-ear hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*, bush vetch *Vicia sepium*, creeping buttercup *R. repens*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, common ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, groundsel *S. vulgaris*, and sun spurge *Euphorbia helioscopia*. This area of grassland was considered to be of nature conservation value comprising a diverse range of species of botanical interest.

3. Translocation Methodology

The proposed receptor site for the translocated grassland is located to the north-eastern corner of the site, where further areas of wildflower grassland are proposed (see figure 02 showing landscape proposals provided by DLA Landscape and Urban Design). The methodology used for grassland translocation is outlined below:

- Prepare the receptor site by stripping topsoil and then ripping the underlying subsoil to relieve any compaction and prevent waterlogging;
- The grassland to be translocated would then ideally be transplanted as turfs. Turfs will be of a sufficient depth to include the root zone and protective layer (approximately 300mm depth). Each turf would then ideally be numbered and then re-laid in the correct order, starting from the far side of the receptor site and working backwards towards the access point to avoid damage;
- Gaps between turfs will be avoided and if any gaps form, these would be filled with soil from the donor site (the area where the grassland is being translocated from);
• If the grassland from the donor site cannot form turfs, the top soil would be scraped off, including roots and vegetation and transported directly to the receptor site without storage. The soil would then be re-spread to the same depth and extent as the donor site;

• The translocation would ideally be undertaken in spring or early autumn, when it is relatively warm and damp, however, if it cannot be undertaken during these times, the translocation works would avoid periods of heavy rain, when the soil may be waterlogged or during cold weather when the soil is frozen.

4. Management

During establishment of the grassland, management should be similar to that of the proposed seeded wildflower grassland areas proposed within the site. This will include spot treatment with a selective herbicide with glyphosate active ingredient to remove large weed species, such as docks, thistles, etc. If the grassland is translocated as turfs and this is undertaken during the summer period, supplementary watering may be required, if it is particularly dry so that that turfs do not dry out. Once established the translocated grassland would be subject to the same management as the proposed wildflower areas including an annual cut taken in late summer (late-August) once flowering species have dropped their seed. A second cut can then be taken in early autumn (October), if necessary, to maintain a dense sward. Following cutting all arisings will be removed from the site to prevent soil enrichment.

5. Translocation and Management Programme

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* Translocation works ideally undertaken during months marked with asterisks, however, if undertaken outside of these months, works should avoid being carried out during periods of very wet or freezing weather conditions.
FIGURES:  
01 – Phase 1 Habitat Plan  
02 – Grassland Translocation