



## **Ulster Canal Greenway**

### **Badger Survey Report**

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Billy Flynn  
Flynn, Furney Environmental Consultants

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Scope of Survey

The following report details the findings of badger survey of the route of the proposed Ulster Canal Greenway at Monaghan. The purpose of this study was to assess:

- i. The presence or absence of badgers along the proposed route
- ii. Levels of activity of this species.

The primary objective of this study was to assess the presence and / or activity, if any, of local populations of the badger *Meles meles*. However, the signs of other mammals were also recorded if encountered. Evidence of this activity was to be mapped and reported to Monaghan County Council prior to undertaking of works related to the construction of the proposed Greenway.

### 1.2 Area under survey

The area studied for this report follows the proposed route of the Ulster Canal Greenway. The survey corridor was up to 50m either side of the proposed Greenway route. This route extends from the junction of the Clones Road (N54) with the Newbliss Road (R189) to the south of Monaghan town to the Armagh Road (N12) to the north of the town. An area to the north of the area proposed for works which contains broadleaved woodland was also included in the survey, being of higher ecological value and offering much potential badger habitat area.

For the purposes of this report, the survey sections of a previous report<sup>1</sup> are used (see Appendix 1) to indicate locations on the proposed Greenway route.

### 1.3 Protected / Designated Areas

The area under survey is not currently subject to any statutory designations for nature conservation.

### 1.4 Methodology of Present Work

The present survey involved direct observation (during daylight hours) on the 14 and 22 August 2013 of signs of mammalian activity which included prints, tracks, droppings, holts, other resting places, water access points and evidence of feeding. All tangible signs were recorded and mapped.

These are described in the following sections.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ecological Impact Assessment of Proposed Ulster Canal Greenway* (Flynn, Furney Environmental Consultants, 2012)

## **2. Results**

### **2.1 Badgers**

A total of 4 no. badger setts were recorded. Of these, 2 no. were active and had been recently excavated and/or expanded. The remainder were found to be inactive. The setts and related activity are described below.

Sett 1. This is a single-entrance outlier sett to the north of the route, it is close (<200m) to the MIFET campus in Section 1. The sett showed recent activity, including digging. It appeared that the sett was created from an excavated rabbit burrow. A badger hair was found in the spoil heap. The sett is located in the western facing bank of the towpath embankment. That is, facing the River Blackwater. A limited number of paths were recorded around the sett. A scrape, probably made by badgers was found here.

Sett 2. This is a 3-entrance outlier, also in Section 1 which was disused at time of survey. This was previously recorded in the ecological survey carried out by the author in October 2012. There was leaf litter and fern growth at the largest of the sett entrances, indicating that the sett has been disused for some time. However, there were a number of signs of badger activity close by. These included a wasps nest that had been excavated in recent weeks and a substantial mammal path at the breach in the canal embankment to the south of the sett.

Sett 3. This is a single-entrance outlier which was disused at time of survey. There is a substantial spoil heap here but it is likely that this has been used by rabbits for some time. The sett is located c. 60m south of Horseshoe Bridge on the steep slope on the eastern side of the towpath. The sett is located c. 15m from the canal channel and 4m from the towpath, under a mature hawthorn.

Sett 4. This is a single-entrance outlier which has been recently excavated. This is located in Tom Young's Wood. There was a very clear path showing recent activity. There was also a hair and a partial print. This sett is in use.

### **2.2 Otters**

No signs of otter activity were noted during survey. However, otters have previously been recorded in the Ulster Canal at Monaghan (author's own record<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>2</sup> Otter recorded at Tom Young's in August 2010 during habitat survey of Monaghan Town

### **2.3 Other Mammals**

Prints of fox were found in several locations within the area under study. Mink prints and a slide that was considered to be used by mink were found at the northern end of the route close to the River Blackwater. Deer tracks were also found close to this part of the proposed route.

### **3. Discussion**

4 no. setts were located. A summary of these is given in Appendix B. Of these setts located, 2 no. were active at time of survey. However, it should be noted that inactive setts, even those long disused, are statutorily protected under Irish and European law.

It is not thought that the works proposed by Monaghan County Council will have any impact on the active setts. This is explained below.

- Sett 1. Works are not scheduled in this area.
- Sett 4. This sett is c. 10m from the Ulster Canal. The path here is at grade and no excavations are scheduled here. Provided that works do not encroach into the woodland, no impacts may be expected to this sett. However, it is recommended that the location of the sett be made known to the contractors carrying out the works.

No impacts from works are predicted at the disused setts. This is explained below:

- Sett 2. Works are not scheduled in this area.
- Sett 3. This sett is c. 4m from the towpath. However, the sett is located on a very steep slope to the east of the towpath and works will not take place on any part of this slope.

It is not considered that the proposed Ulster Canal Greenway works will have any negative impacts upon badger populations located within the area surveyed. However, it is recommended that some measures be undertaken to ensure these sites are protected.

These are:

The location of all setts is to be brought to the attention of relevant officer of Monaghan County Council. The location of Sett 4 should be made known to the contractor carrying out the construction works in order to avoid any unintentional impacts.

With the exception of relevant project members, the location of setts is to be kept confidential in order to avoid any persecution or disturbance to these setts.

#### **4. Conclusion**

it is not considered that the proposed Ulster Canal Greenway works will have any negative impacts upon badger populations located within the area surveyed. However, some measures are recommended to ensure these sites are protected.

If further works to the north of the proposed route are proposed, measures should be taken to protect Setts 1 and 2 from unintentional impacts.

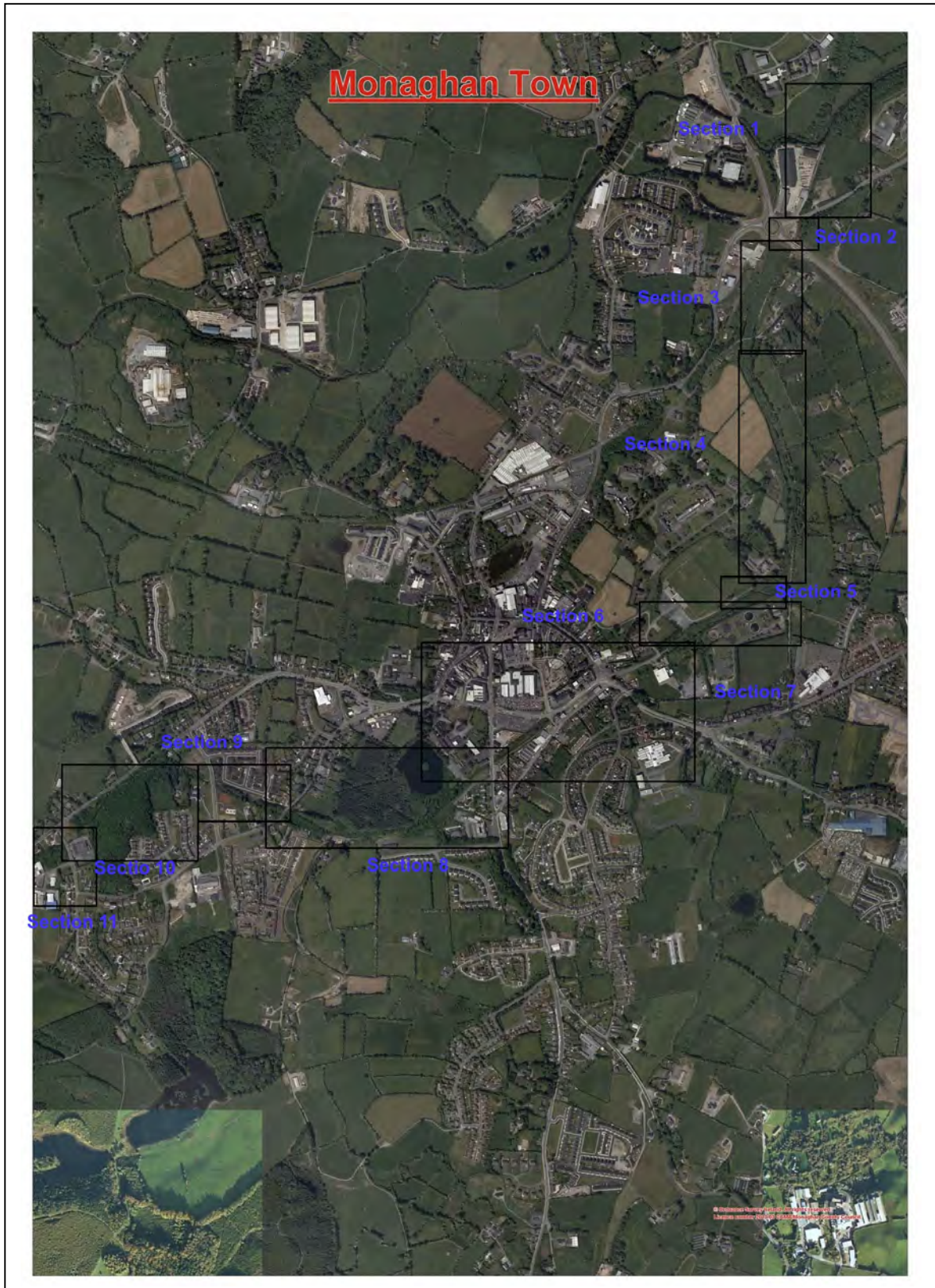
It is recommended that the results of this survey be made known to National Parks and Wildlife Service for their records.



**Appendix A**



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Area Under Study - Proposed Greenway Route





**Appendix B**

Summary of Setts

No.	1	
Section	1	
Description	Single-entrance outlier	
Status	Active	
Notes	Fresh digging	
No.	2	
Section	1	
Description	3-entrance outlier	
Status	Inactive	
Notes	Fresh digging	



No.	3	
Section	9	
Description	Single-entrance outlier	
Status	Inactive	
Notes	Long inactive	

No.	4	
Section	10	
Description	Single-entrance outlier	
Status	Active	
Notes	Fresh digging	

Appendix C

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Sett Locations

Fig 1. Setts 1 and 2

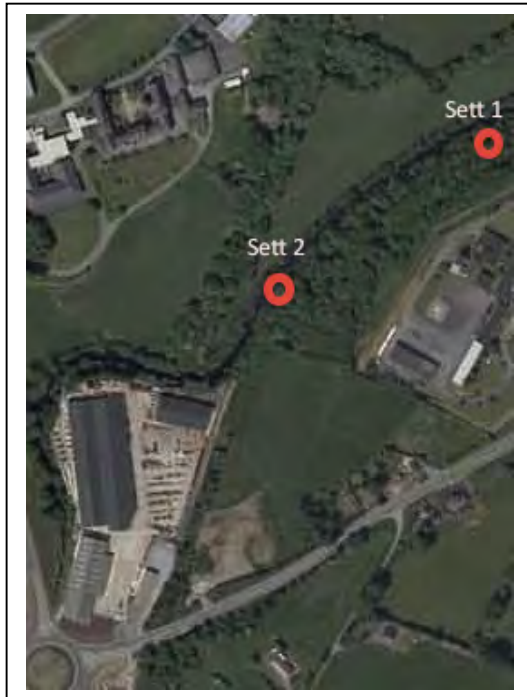


Fig 2. Sett 3

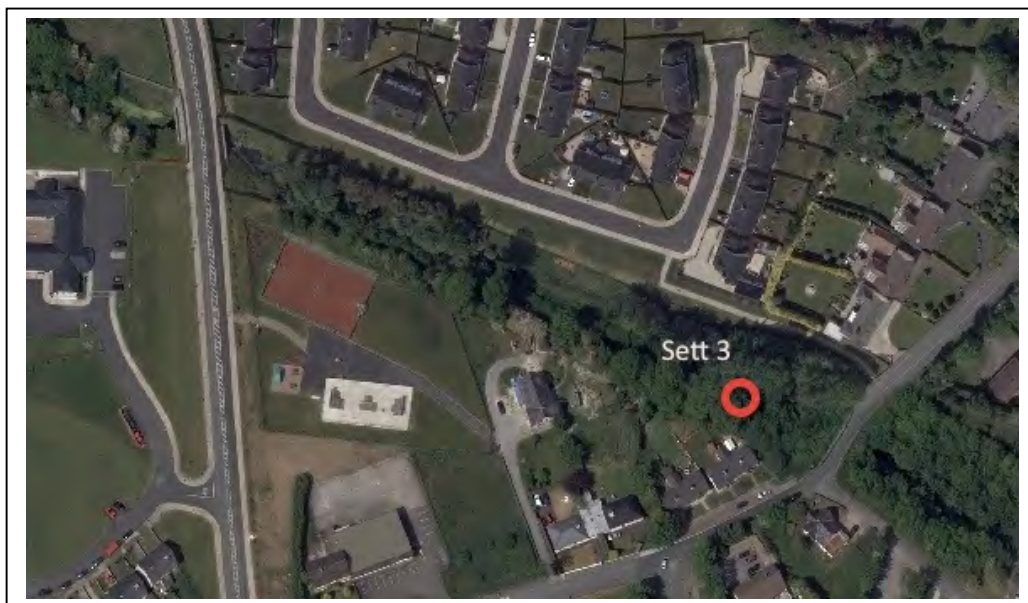


Fig 3. Sett 4

