

Update on the status of PE-ENV-07005 Survey and Mitigation Standards for Barn Owls to Inform the Planning, Construction and Operation of National Road Projects

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This Technical Bulletin provides an update on the status of the current standard document *Survey and Mitigation Standards for Barn Owls to Inform the Planning, Construction and Operation of National Road Projects (PE-ENV-07005)*. In its existing form, several issues have arisen regarding the application of the mitigation measures set out within the document.

Firstly, in locations where there is significant barn owl activity, the prescribed mitigation, namely the planting of trees at an initial height of 3.5–4 metres, is inappropriate from both an economic and an availability perspective. Secondly, apart from road safety considerations, barn owl mitigation currently supersedes all other mitigation requirements, including those relating to environmental and landscape/visual impacts.

In light of these issues, a decision has been taken to temporarily redesignate the PE-ENV-07005 standard as a Technical Document while revisions are undertaken. These revisions will likely focus on developing a more refined mitigation hierarchy for schemes with high levels of barn owl activity. Under a potential proposed revised approach, road corridors within such schemes will likely be subdivided into three mitigation zones: Zone A (≤ 500 m from breeding and regularly occupied sites and other high-risk locations), Zone B (500–1000 m from breeding and regularly occupied sites), and Zone C (the remainder of the scheme). Therefore, mitigation measures for barn owls will be applied most intensively within Zone A, with progressively less intensive measures in Zones B and C.

The revised standard will also be aligned with the forthcoming Biodiversity Impact Assessment document, which is scheduled for publication in the second half of 2026.

Notwithstanding the temporary redesignation of PE-ENV-07005 as a Technical Document pending its revision, Project Managers and their teams are reminded of the ultimate need to ensure that their projects are compliant with all environmental law, including, *inter alia*, Article 5 of the Birds Directive and Section 22 of the Wildlife Act 1976, as amended.



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