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Dear Marian

Bexhill to Hastings Link Road

I have been asked to provide further assurances about the proposals for dormouse mitigation on this scheme. I am sorry that it was not possible to discuss these with you but having spoken to your colleague Louise Bardsley my understanding is that you were concerned that the population of dormice south of the road might be lower than predicted and therefore more vulnerable to extinction.

My mitigation proposals were based on the assumption that it was necessary to retain the links between dormouse populations on either side of the road, not that the southern population would be viable in its own right.

From the work we have been doing on dormice living on the roadside in Cornwall, it is clear that the values normally given for dormouse population densities are much lower than we are finding – probably because we are marking individuals and therefore have a much more accurate estimate of minimum numbers. Thus any calculations that have been made as to the viability of populations south of the road will be based on inaccurate estimates.

The evidence that dormice will cross roads is increasing. We have demonstrated that dormice will cross one lane of a dual carriageway which includes 8m of tarmac and 4m of verge. Other workers are accumulating evidence that this is not a unique observation and there is even one observation of dormice crossing gaps on the ground of 50m – though not across a road..

In conclusion, I stand by my original recommendations for mitigation and I note that these recommendations are being followed in this scheme. I would also point out that evidence is steadily accumulating to show that dormice will cross a road of this size where there is suitable habitat on either side of it irrespective of such mitigation.

I am aware that EPR have undertaken a further programme of surveys in 2008 and have seen the results. These do not alter my initial assumptions, as set out in this letter.

Yours sincerely,

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