

## Badger Vaccination, Castle Woods Nature Reserve, Carmarthenshire Year Two Report (2015)

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### Introduction

The Wildlife Trusts across the UK have been working on the issue of bovine TB and its links to badgers for many years, as different Governments have put forward proposals for culling badgers as a strategy for controlling bovine TB. We are very conscious of the hardship that bovine TB (bTB) causes in the farming community and the need to find the right mechanisms to control the disease. However, we believe that a badger cull is not the answer. Lord Krebs, who designed a previous trial, concluded that that “culling is not a viable policy option”.

We recognise the seriousness of the situation for farmers but the emphasis of all our efforts should be to find a long-term solution. We therefore support badger vaccination, alongside a comprehensive package of cattle measures: better biosecurity, stricter movement controls, improved TB testing and development of a cattle vaccine. As such we strongly support the current Welsh Government TB Eradication Programme.

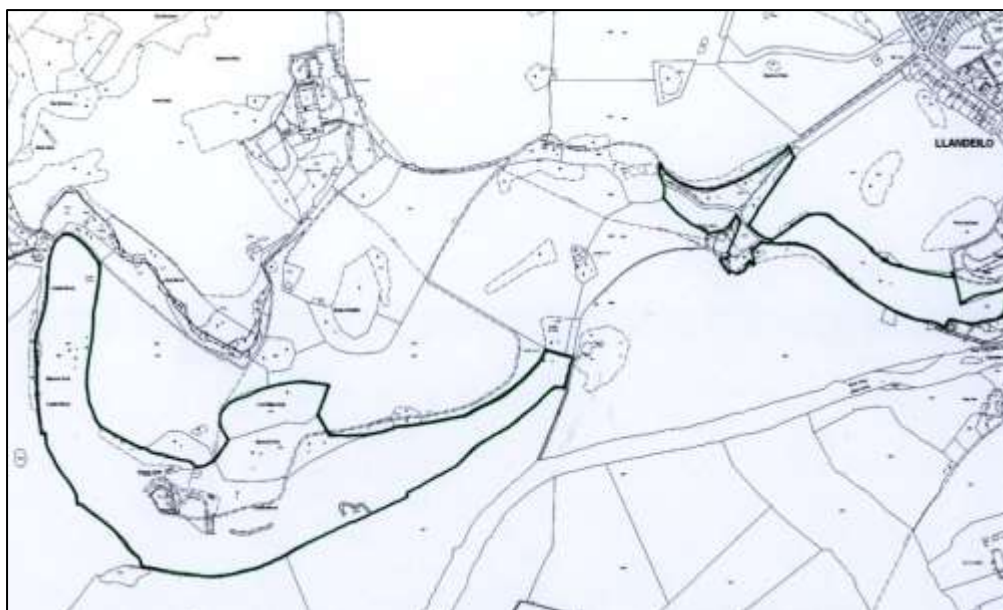
For this reason, the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales (WTSWW) decided to invest in a badger vaccination project at its Castle Woods nature reserve, Llandeilo. We felt it was important to be part of the solution, and to play a role in demonstrating that badger vaccination is financially and logistically viable on individual holdings.

### The site: Castle Woods nature reserve

Castle Woods is an ancient, semi-natural woodland lying on the outskirts of Llandeilo in Carmarthenshire. It is a SSSI and National Nature Reserve, and it has been a WTSWW nature reserve since 1979. It is well known for its badger population and many local people watch badgers here. The adjacent parkland of Dinefwr, largely in National Trust (NT) ownership, also has a strong badger population. Both the park and tenanted farmland surrounding Castle Woods is grazed; some areas are sheep grazed but a large number of cattle are also kept on this land, both on the flood plain (by tenant farmers of the NT) and in the park itself, in the form of the NT’s rare breed White Park Cattle. TB breakdowns have occurred in local herds.

The Castle Woods nature reserve itself comprises 25 ha of steep hillside broadleaf woodland, providing ideal habitat for setts, some of which are extensive and well established. The surrounding land (not in WTSWW ownership) provides excellent foraging for badgers.





Map 1: The extent of Castle Woods nature reserve in relation to Llandeilo town

## The badger population of Dinefwr

A complete survey for badger signs across WTSWW property was undertaken during 2013-2014. This was not repeated prior to the 2015 vaccination as the locations of the main and outlier setts were already known, but a site visit to the main sett areas to check for the presence of badger activity, prior to vaccination, confirmed that all sites were still in use. Prior to any future vaccination work it is intended that the full survey be repeated as a precaution to pick up any new areas of activity.

## Funding

We have been fortunate to benefit from financial support to undertake the badger vaccination work at Castle Woods. Fifty percent of the project costs are being met by the Welsh Government badger vaccination grant. The rest has been provided by WTSWW core funds, a badger vaccination appeal by WTSWW to its members, and funding from the players of the People's Postcode Lottery.

## Vaccination in 2014

We were fortunate to work in partnership with Andrew Crace-Calvert of EcoCon Ltd. to deliver our badger vaccination<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> EcoCon Limited, Leon Villas, Ash Rd, Lightpill, Stroud, Gloucs GL5 3PD / 01453 840395 / [info@ecocon.co.uk](mailto:info@ecocon.co.uk)

SSSI consent for the work was secured by WTSWW from Natural Resources Wales before work began. All other licences and permissions were secured by EcoCon with support from WTSWW and the National Trust in liaison with local landowners.



This year, the vaccination programme began on 02 July with a site visit to check current sett activity, followed by a period of pre-baiting and four nights of trapping and vaccinating. Vaccination occurred in the Castle block on the mornings of 28 and 29 July and in the South Lodge / Church block on the mornings of 30 and 31 July.

Trapping was very successful, with a total of 27 unique individuals vaccinated over the four nights, including 23 cubs. A significant number of re-traps occurred on the second night of each session. On this basis we have good grounds for believing we successfully vaccinated a large proportion of the resident badger population.

## Finances

The costs of this year's programme are laid out in the table below.

Cost item	2014
<b>EcoCon Ltd.</b>	
Mileage	£750.87
Van rental	£206.00
Animal grade peanuts	£412.00
Incidentals	£41.20
Overnight costs	£309.00
BCG vaccinations	£618.00
Labour and overheads	£3502.00
<i>Subtotal</i>	£5839.07
VAT	£1167.81
<i>EcoCon Total</i>	£7006.88
<b>WTSWW</b>	
Labour (vaccination) & travel	£1130.52
<i>WTSWW Total</i>	£1130.52

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our funders and volunteers who made this work possible. We would also like to thank the National Trust for their support and for allowing us use of their storage facilities.

