

Binfield Badger Group

Protecting badgers across Berkshire

Charity Number: 1075886



Newsletter No. 146

September 2026



****After 13 Years of Culling – Has this Approach been Effective?****

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Binfield Badger Group

Affiliated to the Badger Trust

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GROUP NEWS AND OUR NEXT PUBLIC MEETING

Make a note in your diaries – **OUR NEXT PUBLIC MEETING** will be on **THURSDAY, 29TH OCTOBER** at **Farley Wood Centre, Turnpike Road, Binfield, RG42 1FW**. – Doors open at 7.00pm and the meeting will start at 7.30pm.

‘Let’s Talk About Bats!’ - Emma Turnbull of the Berks & South Bucks Bat Group is kindly coming to give us an introduction to bats and tell us about the work of the Bat Group. She is a fully licensed bat worker and bat carer and also works for the Bat Conservation Trust as their Biodiversity Training Officer.



It should prove to be a very interesting evening.



Come and Meet us at these Upcoming Events:

We are planning to be at :-

- ❖ **Eco Afternoon** at St James Church, Kingfisher Drive, Woodley RG5 3LH on **Saturday, 17th October - 2pm - 4.30pm**
- ❖ **Green Fest** at St Bartholomew’s School, Andover Road, Newbury RG14 6JP on **Saturday, 24th October - 10am – 5pm**





Created during lockdown, BBG's Professor Brock education materials have been used in many ways by a range of groups up and down the country. This Summer, part of or all of our 'Secret Lives of Badgers' video has been shown to some 300 Reading children in a range of schools.

We started in May, with a primary school in the centre of town, giving a whole school badger-based assembly to mark David Attenborough's 100th birthday. We've also taken a Beaver group out to view badger field signs near Reading and, most recently, in July, a team of us went into Little Heath School to take part in their Year 7 'Green Day'.

The school already has many badger-friendly features and a commitment to expanding its green delivery still further. Working with teams of pupils, we held a classroom session to learn about badgers and their environmental needs. We then visited different parts of the school site, encouraging the pupils to come up with a range of ways in which the school might be made even more badger friendly.

The pupils were fantastic, making many insightful and practical observations and suggestions, including planting some more food shrubs, renovating the pond and putting in badger gates to allow badgers access to the grounds. One team even spotted some badger digging on a nearby footpath.

A consistent message from pupils was that they wanted less litter on site; their many proposals on how to achieve this being both affordable and practical. We've since written to the school asking if any of their ideas have gone forwards for consideration and offering to help if we can. Let's hope that those pupil ideas and energy turn into actions.

We've really enjoyed our work with young people and are planning to visit after-school clubs this Autumn. We'd really like to widen our working with young people still further. For primary aged children, we can offer a whole-school assembly or tailored individual class sessions. For secondary pupils, we can offer class sessions now but are still working on a whole school assembly.

If you know of any schools, clubs, groups etc who'd like to hear about badgers, do please pass on our details – we'd love to pay them a visit.



AN ARTIFICIAL BADGER SETT FOR BERKSHIRE – HELP NEEDED!

- Jill

In our June newsletter, we gave an update on our plans to build an artificial badger sett in Berkshire to house orphaned cubs. We now want to provide an update on our plans and to ask for some **Help!!**

As a group, we submitted a grant application to the Badger Trust to fund the build and were successful with obtaining monies so we can commence planning. Our badger friendly landowner is now onboard and we are in the process of signing contracts for the project. We still plan to work in partnership with Oxfordshire Wildlife Rescue who will be coordinating with other wildlife rescues on the logistics to collect the ideal number of cubs when the sett is ready.

We are aiming to start work in March next year – with a potential cub release in late Summer, but **need help with the construction, so are looking for...**



- ❖ Anyone with carpentry or DIY skills who could help construct the wooden “chambers”
- ❖ Anyone who is able bodied and happy to come along with a spade and help dig!
- ❖ Anyone who has experience with driving a mini digger
- ❖ Anyone willing to help with project planning to buy the materials we need

So, if you'd like to be involved with this exciting project, please let us know!

Please email: badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk



BADGER RESCUES/CALLS FOR HELP - SPRING/SUMMER 2026 - Carol & Trevor

It has been a challenging few months for badgers across the UK particularly in the south-east. With prolonged periods of lack of rain and drought conditions, badgers and all wildlife have struggled to find enough food and water to survive. We have seen a sharp increase in reports of underweight and dehydrated badgers, especially this year's cubs who are particularly vulnerable.

80% of a badger's diet consists of earthworms. During drought conditions and baked, hard ground, earthworms move deeper into the soil where conditions are cooler and damper. They can become dormant, a type of hibernation known as estivation. During such times, badgers will spend more time looking for insects, slugs, beetles and invertebrates. They will also be more reliant on fruits, nuts and berries. As they travel further in search of food it puts them at greater risk of collisions on local roads.





The Environment Agency (EA) stated that, despite some wet weather during the first half of September, almost three-quarters of England remains in drought following an exceptionally dry spring and summer as well as a succession of heatwaves. Prolonged periods of rain will be needed to alleviate the dry conditions over much of the UK.

Leaving out water and supplementary feeding badgers in times of drought can be a lifeline for these animals.

The Group's Record of Rescues/Requests for Help this Summer:

JUNE - Report of a badger caught in garden netting at allotments in Caversham. The gardener managed to cut the netting and free the badger. She was concerned that the badger was injured so we set up a trail camera overnight. It revealed a sow and cubs looking healthy with no signs of injury so no further action needed by us.

JUNE - Report of a limping badger at a residential retirement home in Caversham. We attended and checked the area with a thermal imaging scope but were unable to find any signs of the badger. There were known setts in the area, so it was likely that the animal went to ground. We asked the staff to keep an eye out and let us know if the injured badger returned. No further communication was received from them.

JULY - Report of a sick cub hiding under patio decking at an estate in Midgham, Woolhampton. We managed to free the badger, which had recently passed away, sadly.

JULY - Report of an underweight badger cub dragging its back legs in the grounds of a school in Slough. It was dehydrated and very hungry. We rescued the cub and took it straight to Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital. The badger was blind and suffering from neurological problems and unfortunately had to be euthanised.

AUGUST - Report of a badger that had fallen into a pond and unfortunately was unable to climb out and drowned. We retrieved the body of the cub from the pond and took it to a local vets to be collected for cremation. We asked the owner of the pond to leave out bowls of water to prevent animals using his pond for a source of water. We also asked him to provide a means of escape for any unfortunate animals that may fall in.

AUGUST - Report of an emaciated female badger in Caversham. We took the badger to Tiggywinkles, but it passed away two days later, sadly.

AUGUST - report of an injured/dead badger by a member of the public and the police. The animal was in the middle of a road in Lower Earley. We were able to move the badger, which had already passed away, sadly.

AUGUST - Karen and Andy received a call about an injured badger in Knowl Hill. They managed to catch the badger and took it to Tiggywinkles. The badger had numerous health issues and had to be euthanised, sadly.

AUGUST - Report of a large badger trapped at the back of a shed in Charvil. We managed to release the badger. It was a healthy looking animal with good body weight, very feisty and ran off at great speed. He seemed to know where he was heading!



HAVE YOU REMEMBERED TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP? - Judith

Thank you to all of our members who have now renewed for another year. However, if you find a further Reminder Form included with this newsletter, then I have not yet received your 2026 form and subscription, which is now overdue. (If you have asked for this newsletter to be emailed to you, a blank form will be attached.)



If you wish to remain a member, please return your form and pay the subscription by 1st December 2026.

Ways to renew:-

- **You can use the 'Join Us' page on our website:**
<http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/join-us> **OR...**
- **Scan and email your completed form to:**
membership@binfieldbadgers.org.uk **OR...**
- **Post your completed form** to the address on the form.
- **Please pay** via BACS, Paypal or cheque, as you prefer:
 - (1) **paying by BACS-** our bank details are: Name: Binfield Badger Group / Sort code: 40-47-39 / Account number: 71496212;
 - (2) **paying via Paypal** - please use the 'Donate' button in the 'Join Us' section on the website;
 - (3) **paying by cheque** - please make payable to 'Binfield Badger Group' and post, along with your membership form, to our address as given on the form.
- **Please make a note on the form to indicate your payment method and please indicate if you are able to Gift Aid any donation to the Group by ticking the box.**
- **How can you help?** - You will also see a section asking for details of how you can help - you are sure to find something that interests you, but more ideas are always welcome! Please get in touch today with your ideas, or comments on current issues – contact details are all listed on the back page of this newsletter.

We hope you'll wish to continue as part of our 'clan'. If you know of anyone who would like to become a member, they can go to the 'Join Us' page on our website: <http://www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk/join-us>



WHAT YOUR MEMBERSHIP FEE HELPS US DO:

- **SURVEYS & ADVICE:** Monitor badger sett activity; liaise with Councils on planning proposals; advise on badger issues - casualties; persecution.
- **RESCUES & RELEASES:** Call-outs to sick or injured badgers; rescue badgers trapped in awkward situations!; release badgers back into their former habitat.
- **EDUCATION:** Promote awareness by Newsletters; Public Meetings; Talks to Schools & Groups; Website & Facebook
- **SUPPORT THE BADGER TRUST:** which represents Badger Groups in the UK, working to protect their local badgers.



A BADGER SETT DESTROYED! – HOW MUCH EVIDENCE IS ENOUGH? - BBG

This is the story of a large badger sett in Berkshire and what happened to it during development works in December 2024.

Detailed badger surveys in 2019 identified a large badger sett with at least 14 active entrances together with two annexe setts close to the proposed works. The surveys recorded frequent evidence of badger use.

This was followed by a wider ecological survey, which also confirmed the presence of the badger setts and concluded that the development would not impact the badgers stating that *“no development or works will take place within the eastern section of tall ruderal and scattered scrub where the badger sett is located”*. In other words, the development plans did not include any works within the area occupied by the sett.

The presence of the setts was subsequently recognised in the pre -construction documents for the development, in particular, the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP - Biodiversity) - a document that sets out how impacts on wildlife and habitats will be avoided or minimised during and after construction. The CEMP specifically required that *“immediately prior to the works commencing the sett will be re-inspected by a suitably qualified ecologist to determine if site conditions have changed”*.

Was the sett still being used by badgers in 2024?

There was certainly evidence of continued use. In March 2024, a local Eco Club recorded a badger at the main sett, and the sett was subsequently observed and mapped. A further badger was recorded on camera at the sett on 2 July 2024.

Photo 1 – The main badger sett before destruction



Development works at the site commenced over Christmas and the New Year.

On 19 December 2024, the area containing the sett was dug out and flattened by heavy machinery, despite no works being planned in this area.

Photo 2 - The area following the works, showing the scale of the destruction.

The matter was reported to the police and evidence was provided, including the previous ecological surveys and details from the 2024 records of badger activity at the sett.



In July 2025, the police decided not to take the matter further. Our understanding is that one of the difficulties identified was proving, beyond reasonable doubt, that there was an active badger sett on the site immediately before the area was developed.

This case demonstrates how difficult it can be to prove that a badger crime has been committed, even when the sett has been remarkably well documented through professional surveys and there are records of badger use in the same year that it was destroyed.

What does “current use“ mean?

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 defines a badger sett as *“any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger”*. It does not, however, define what is meant by *“current use”*.

Natural England has issued guidance ** on the interpretation of *“current use”* as per the Badgers Act. This guidance makes it clear that current use is not the same as current occupation and a sett remains protected where it displays signs indicating current use - so a badger does not have to be physically present when a sett is inspected. The guidance also notes that signs of current use can remain for several weeks after the last actual occupation. Importantly, it states that *“a precautionary approach must be taken to interpreting evidence of use at a sett”*. As such, there is no fixed period of time after which a sett can be assumed to have ceased to be in *“current use”*.

We are not suggesting that evidence of a badger using the sett several months earlier automatically proves that the sett was still in current use on the day that it was destroyed. Our question is *‘what evidence was there to establish that the sett had ceased to display signs of current use?’* This is the part of the case which we find difficult to understand.

If the July record alone can’t tell us that the sett was still in current use in December, then what level of evidence is sufficient? And how recent would the evidence need to be - would it be 2 months, 1 month, 1 week or 2 minutes before the sett is destroyed?

In summary then, the question is not just about how long it had been since a badger was last recorded at the sett, but our question is *‘what evidence there was to suggest that the sett had actually ceased to display signs of current use before it was destroyed?’*

This raises a wider question about *whether the interpretation of ‘current use’ provides sufficient protection for established badger setts.*

We would be interested to hear what you think, so please let us know - badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk For example:-

- How would you have viewed the status of the sett, based on the evidence available?
- And how much evidence would you expect to see before being happy that a well-established main sett was no longer in ‘current use’?

** Natural England (2009) Guidance on ‘Current Use’ in the Definition of a Badger Sett. Natural England, Peterborough.



LATEST ON DEVELOPMENT ON MAIDENHEAD'S 'GREEN LUNG'! - Carol & Trevor

In our last two issues, we told you about a well-established, active main badger sett and subsidiaries on the former Maidenhead Golf Club site, which are under great threat due to development of 1500 houses over a planned period of 13 years by developer, Cala Homes.

The Friends of Rushington Copse was formed to advocate for the protection of the ancient /mature woodlands, fearing the eventual demise of the resident badgers. They have been told that the main sett in Rushington Copse will be retained, but that some outliers setts will be closed.



Here is the Latest Update on Rushington Copse:

The Friends of Rushington Copse are continuing their bi-monthly meetings with RBWM Council and representatives from Cala Homes. Their main focus is to protect Rushington Copse and as much of the woodland as possible across the 132 acre green field site. This will help minimise the impact on the main badger sett in Rushington Copse and badgers across the wider site.

The Council confirm there are on-going discussions with third parties to manage the ancient woodland of Rushington Copse. They have already received three quotes. Their preference is the Land Trust. This would mean the Council will no longer own the land incorporating Rushington Copse which is very disappointing. The final decision on the management and ownership of Rushington Copse is still a number of years away. Cala Homes calculate approximately £1.6 million to pay for the overall upkeep of Rushington Copse which would be raised from management fees.

The Council confirmed that the archaeological digs will be delayed until next year. The trenches are planned to be 50 to 80 cm deep and will be backfilled once the digs are completed. As such there should be minimal impact on the badgers.

The planning application for Phase 1 (Harvest Hill end) of the development is planned to be submitted by Cala Homes by the end of September 2026. Cala Homes confirmed that they are planning to start building on site September 2027 with the show house available early 2028. FORC representatives asked whether the Maidenhead councillors would now be permitted to vote in view of the fact that outline planning permission has already been granted. It was confirmed that, as they are still considered "predetermined" (publicly against the development) they would not be allowed to vote. FORC representatives said that they should now be allowed to vote to ensure that there is the best outcome for Maidenhead residents. They voiced concerns that important decisions in the interests of the Maidenhead community are not being taken by the Council - Council decisions are being dictated by Cala Homes, even though the land is still currently owned by RBWM.

A Reserved Matters application (26/00983/REM) has already been submitted relating to the Green Spine (tarmac road) which will run through the centre of the development and has yet to go to planning committee. A BSG Ecology report is included in the application detailing the potential impact on protected species. FORC raised concerns that the 30m buffer zone around the badger sett will be breached. They told the Council and Cala that



improved mitigation, including mammal tunnels, would be needed to give more protection to the badgers. The planning application and BSG Ecology Report can be viewed on the RBWM Planning Portal and anyone can raise comments or objections on the Portal.

We need to keep banging the drum for our wildlife, the welfare of the resident badgers and our precious green spaces!



WALES CULL PETITION & UPDATE

- Badger Trust



Badgers have shaped the Welsh landscape for thousands of years, living quietly in our woodlands, fields, hedgerows, and now our urban spaces as they adapt to changing habitats.

They're a vital part of our rich wildlife heritage and deeply rooted in Welsh folklore.

But today, badgers face real and growing threats.

That's why the Badger Trust have launched our campaign, **"CYMRU - Badgers Belong Here"**, to educate, inform, and protect, and we need your voice to help us do it.

With the Senedd elections coming up in 2026, we want to ensure badgers are kept at the forefront of conversations; that's why we've launched the Cymru Badger Manifesto.

We need Senedd candidates to commit to keeping Wales on the right path and increasing the pace of progress.

Wales is making progress. Don't take us backwards.

Bovine TB is falling in Wales without the widespread badger culling seen in England. Yet once again, killing badgers is back on the political agenda.

We don't believe Wales should turn its back on the progress already being made.



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- ❖ The Welsh public doesn't want a cull.
- ❖ Farmers deserve disease control that actually works.
- ❖ And our wildlife deserves protection, not to be made the scapegoat for a complex disease in cattle.

So, to those calling for badger culling and claiming the science supports it:

Show us the evidence

Wales has taken a different path..... Let's keep it that way.

Learn about the campaign: <https://www.badgertrust.org.uk/cymru>

There is a huge amount going on behind the scenes as we work collaboratively to prevent badger culling becoming part of bovine TB policy in Wales.

We are working with a growing number of Welsh organisations, planning new actions, events and resources, and having meetings and discussions with all who can be of influence, more will begin to come out over the next two weeks.

Wherever you live, a reminder to please also sign and share the Senedd Petition, which closes on 7 October and is expected to go forward for Senedd debate. Thank you to Sarah at Dyfi Badger Group for starting it, and to Protect the Wild for continuing to share it so widely, it currently sits at just under 18,000 signatures.

This is not only a Wales issue. Groups in England know first hand how devastating and divisive the cull has been, and we cannot allow Wales to repeat it. Wherever we are based, there is a role for all of us in supporting the campaign, sharing actions when they come out and keeping this issue visible.

Sign the Petition :- <https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/247039>

We will need everyone behind this as the next stages unfold.





Commentary Article by Nigel Palmer, Chief Executive, Badger Trust:

England's badger culls have been divisive for thirteen years, affecting farming communities as well as our native wildlife. More than 50% of the last estimated badger population has been killed to tackle bovine TB in cattle. But after 254,038 badgers have died, we have to ask: has this approach been effective?

A frequently repeated claim is that badger culling reduced bovine TB by 56%, but this overstates what the research demonstrated. The study measured changes following the wider Badger Control Policy, where cattle testing and other disease-control measures were also strengthened. It could not isolate the effect of killing badgers. No wonder farmers are confused.

The government pledged to end the “ineffective badger cull” and has since confirmed that 2025/26 was the end of industry-led culling, with future policy placing greater emphasis on cattle controls, improved testing and vaccination.

Badger Trust opposes culling, but also questions the emphasis on badger vaccination as its replacement. Badger vaccination can protect individual badgers, **but bovine TB is primarily a cattle disease.**

So why has cattle vaccination taken so long, and why shouldn't accelerating it now be a national priority? Most dairy cattle are housed part of the year, and intensive cattle are kept indoors year-round, so vaccinating cattle is more manageable than trapping and vaccinating sufficient numbers of nocturnal, ground-dwelling wild animals.

There is also no evidence for claims that badger numbers are “out of control”. The last national population estimate was in 2011, and more than half of that estimate has been killed. Claims of a national badger population boom have no sound evidential basis.

One obstacle to cattle vaccination has been testing. The statutory SICCT skin test cannot distinguish between infected and vaccinated cattle and, although it has very high



specificity, its sensitivity is imperfect. This means infected cattle can remain undetected within herds, allowing infection to persist and spread despite repeated testing.

Ten years ago, while working with Dr Brian May's Save Me at Gatcombe Farm, featured in the BBC documentary 'The Badgers, the Farmers and Me', the film revealed that the SICCT test was less than 50% effective in the field.

Alternative tests including Enferplex and Actiphage were already being explored. These can now be used privately in England in limited circumstances with APHA permission, but neither forms part of routine statutory cattle TB testing. Diagnostic technology has continued to develop, yet England remains heavily reliant on an old testing system

You have to ask why?

Surely farmers deserve access to the best possible tools for identifying infection quickly and accurately.

M. bovis infection can persist in cattle without being detected by routine testing, helping to explain recurrent breakdowns, including in closed herds. It can also persist in the farm environment and infect a range of mammals including cattle, wildlife and some domestic animals, while environmental contamination can contribute to transmission and M. bovis has even been detected in earthworms.

Badgers can become infected, as can other animals and organisms, and transmission between species and through the environment can occur. But that does not mean killing badgers is an effective way to eradicate a predominantly cattle-maintained epidemic.

Whole-genome sequencing has shown that cattle are driving transmission, with cattle-to-badger transmission more common than badger-to-cattle transmission and the overwhelming majority of infection spreading from cattle to cattle.

There must be proportionality.

Farmers have lived with the burden of bovine TB for far too long.

Badgers have paid an enormous price too.

With the Government's 2038 eradication target getting closer, policy must focus on finding infection in cattle earlier, preventing cattle-to-cattle spread, improving testing and movement controls, and bringing cattle vaccination into practical use, supported by government, farmers and vets.



It is time to move beyond the badger blame game!



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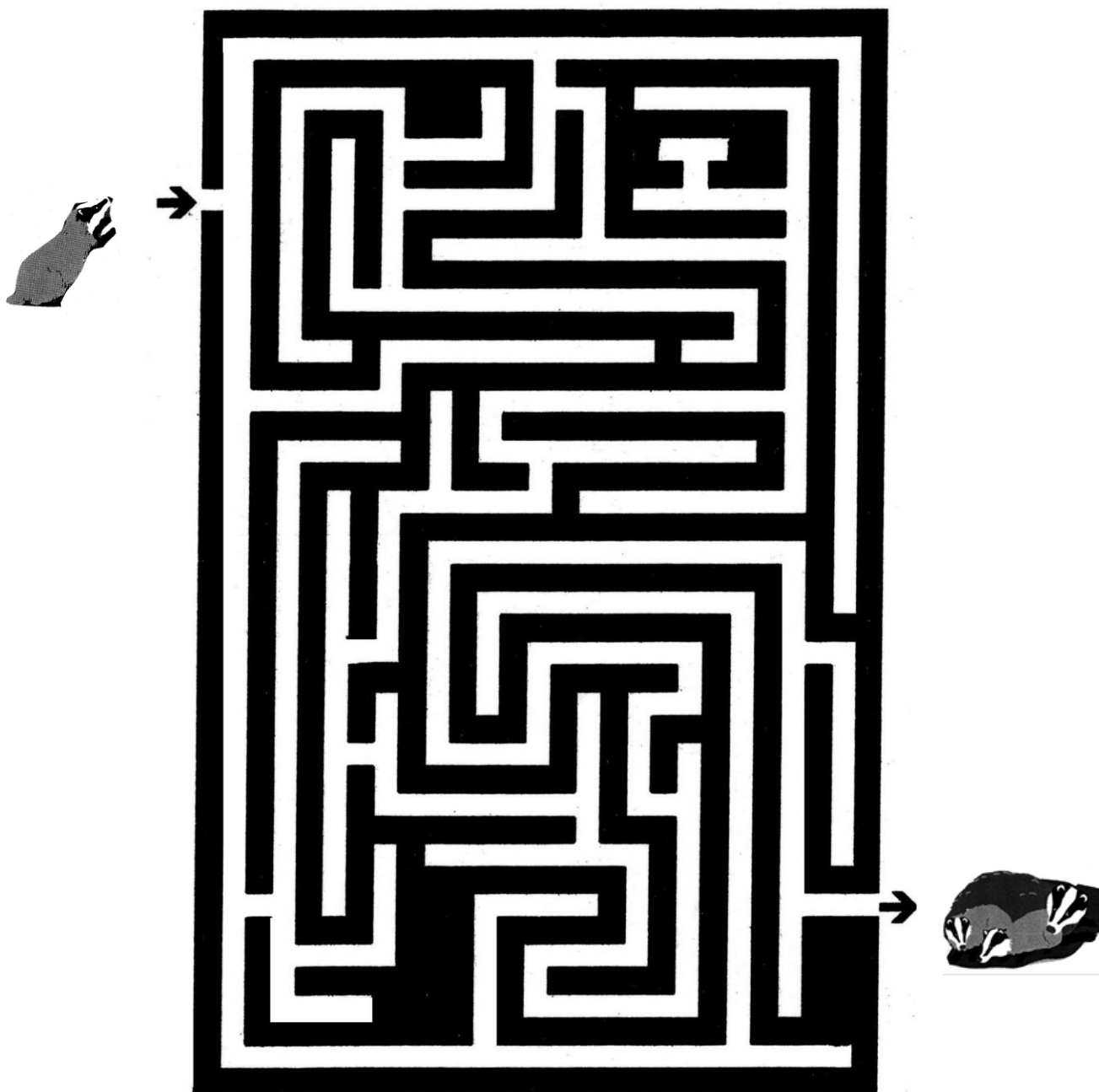
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BADGER MAZE

Dawn is breaking. The badger must find its family before it is light. He may get lost because there are so many turnings.

Can you show him the way?





Would you know the signs of a blocked sett if you saw one?.....

Blocked entrances; fresh soil piled unnaturally; bricks, timber, fencing or debris forced into sett holes.

Would you know what to do next?

The Trust's Crime Fact Sheet: **Sett Blocking**, shows you exactly what to look for, how to respond safely, and how to gather evidence of this serious wildlife crime.

Every report matters. Every badger counts.

Read the fact sheet and help protect our native wildlife.

Read the fact sheets >



For countless animals — and many people too — fireworks are not a celebration, they feed anxiety, fear and cause injury or, in the worst cases, death. Awareness is rising, but the law is lagging behind.

Change is overdue, and **we still need YOUR voice** to make it happen.

We have until October 7th to make history for animals. **The UK Government wants your views on changing fireworks laws.**

Will you take 2 minutes to help make fireworks kinder for animals? :-



<https://www.rspca.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign/fireworks>



COMMITTEE

Chairpersons: John Fennell & Jill Hoblin

Secretary: Judith Darnell, Woodley

Treasurer: Karen McCoy, Sonning

Membership Secretary:

Judith Darnell, Woodley
Binfield Badger Group
c/o Unit 38 Suttons Business
Park, Suttons Park Avenue,
Reading RG6 1AZ

Group email: Mike Coon, Maidenhead

Talks: John Fennell, Binfield

Copse maintenance: Cathy Holwill, Reading

Newsletter: Judith Darnell, Woodley

Vaccination: Jill Hoblin, Newbury

Sett/RTA Records: Karen McCoy, Sonning

Surveys: Committee members

Planning: Committee members

Rescues: Carol and Trevor Samuel, Maidenhead

Website: Karen McCoy and Cathy Holwill

Postal Address:

Binfield Badger Group
c/o Unit 38 Suttons Business Park,
Suttons Park Avenue,
Reading RG6 1AZ

Email:

badgers@binfieldbadgers.org.uk

Facebook:

fb.me/binfieldbadgers

Website:

www.binfieldbadgers.org.uk

Your MP: www.writetothem.com/



Badger Trust, 95 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 4ST

Phone - 01273 033440

Web - www.badger.org.uk

EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

Binfield Badger Group	0844 804 1146 (<i>Premium Rate</i>)
BBG Emergency Badger Rescue (<i>requiring immediate attention</i>)	07942 909427
RSPCA 24 hour <u>emergency</u> call out number	0300 1234 999
Police emergency only (use 101 for non-urgent)	999
Harper Asprey Wildlife Rescue, Camberley	01344 623106
Oxfordshire Wildlife Rescue	07549 322464
Leatherhead Wildlife Aid, Surrey	09061 800132
Aylesbury Wildlife Hospital Trust, Haddenham, Bucks	01844 292292

PLEASE PASS THIS NEWSLETTER ON TO A FRIEND WHO MIGHT LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT THE GROUP - HELP THE BADGERS BY INTRODUCING A NEW MEMBER – YOU CAN NOW JOIN ONLINE.

A FULL COLOUR VERSION OF THIS NEWSLETTER CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE.



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