



1. First stage of construction is to build the bases. These are usually reinforced with metal rebars in order to try and stop them cracking over time given the weight of earth and potential movement of the earth beneath. Hardcore is often used as well depending on the type of soil beneath.



2. The next day, once the concrete bases have been completed and have set, the pipework is assembled and roughly laid in place as the chambers are constructed using breeze blocks.



3. It's important to keep the ends of the pipes temporarily blocked during construction, especially overnight. This stops any soil and other rubbish ending up in the pipework and also stops wildlife adopting the sett before it's finished.



4. Once the chambers are completed, and before the roof is fixed in place, the chambers are filled with bedding.



5. Lintels are concreted into place across the middle of the chamber and paving slabs are laid over the top on both sides.



6. Paving slabs being fixed in place.



7. Inspection 'chimneys' are fixed into the corner of each chamber to allow the chambers to be checked ahead of the release to ensure nothing has collapsed. It also allows, should the sett be vacated in the future, for the chambers to be checked in future years to help decide whether the site can be re-used. It's important to note however that the chambers cannot be checked whilst badgers are resident since this would require a disturbance licence from Natural England.



8. Chambers are checked using a 'Go Pro' type camera, on a 'selfie stick' with an LED light source.



9. Once construction is completed, the chambers are wrapped in plastic sheets to ensure they remain weatherproof. This shouldn't be essential but is preferred. Damp proof course material is often used, or butyl pond liner could also be utilised.

Inspection chimneys are 'capped' and the pipes and chambers are partially filled in by hand in order to ensure nothing is dislodged or damaged once the digger returns to carry out the heavy work.



10. Filling in is then completed by digger. The inspection chimneys are ultimately cut to ground level and hidden under spare paving slabs, bricks or logs.

Ideally the sett will then be left to settle and naturalise for 3-4 months before the cubs are released. It's vital during this time that all the sett entrances are hard blocked to prevent badgers, rabbits or foxes moving in before the release can take place. We generally use spare breeze blocks, fixed in place with garden spikes but anything which is fixed strongly enough, or heavy enough to stop a badger moving them is fine.





11. Immediately prior to release, and once the electric fence is erected, the hard blocked entrances are opened up 'soft blocked' with straw/hay. One entrance is left open to release the badgers into and this is then soft blocked behind them once they're all in. Don't cut corners with the amount of straw/hay or the badgers may well exit the sett quicker than you can put them in. (We've had this happen!)

In this photo you can see the electric fencing to the rear. 100m of electric fencing is used to create a soft release enclosure and this remains in place for 2 weeks before being removed. By then the badgers should be used to their new home and be able to return should they venture further afield.



12. A badger being released into the sett. Again, the electric fencing can be seen in the background.