

THAMES BASIN HEATHS SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA JOINT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Tuesday 3 June 2008 10.00-12.00

NOTE OF MEETING

Attendance:

Board Members:

Cllr Mary Ballin	Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Cllr John Butcher	Elmbridge Borough Council
Cllr Jenny Wicks (Vice Chair)	Guildford Borough Council
Cllr Jonathan Glen	Hampshire County Council
Cllr James Radley	Hart District Council
Cllr David Hilton	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Cllr Geoff Woodger	Runnymede Borough Council
Cllr Roland Dibbs	Rushmoor Borough Council
Cllr Moira Gibson (Chair)	South East England Regional Assembly
Cllr David Harmer	Surrey County Council
Cllr Keith Bush	Surrey Heath Borough Council
Cllr Carole Cockburn	Waverley Borough Council
Cllr Graham Cundy	Woking Borough Council
Cllr Angus Ross (for Cllr Cowan)	Wokingham Borough Council

Advisory Board Members:

Matt Jackson (for Ian Hepburn)	Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust
Charlotte Cordy-Redden	Defence Estates
Stan Abbott	Forestry Commission
Lesley Creedon (for Howard Ewing)	GOSE
Pete Errington	HBF
Rob Cameron	Natural England
Samantha Dawes	RSPB

Apologies:

Cllr Barry Cheyne	Elmbridge Borough Council
Cllr Gary Cowan	Wokingham Borough Council
Stuart Hylton	Berkshire Joint Strategic Planning Unit
Hayley Fry	Federation of Master Builders
Stan Abbott	Forestry Commission
Howard Ewing	GOSE
Kristoffer Hewitt	Natural England
Kate Ashbrook	Open Spaces Society
Martin Tugwell	Regional Assembly
Ian Hepburn	Wildlife Trusts in the South East
Cllr Gary Cowan	Wokingham Borough Council

Officers/Observers:

Rachel Martin	Berks, Buck and Oxon Wildlife Trust
Allison Hulbert	Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Ben Kite	Ecological Planning and Research Ltd
Martin Parker	Elmbridge Borough Council
Lesley Waddell	Guildford Borough Council
Rosalind Rutt	Hampshire County Council

Phil Allen	Hampshire County Council
Daniel Hawes	Hart District Council
Roger Hutton	Howard Hutton Associates
Stephen Miles	Member of Public and British Entomological and Natural History Society
Richard Hawkey	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Andre Farrar	RSPB
Carrie Temple	RSPB
John Willmott-French	Runnymede Borough Council
John Thorne	Rushmoor Borough Council
Cath Rose	South East England Regional Assembly
David Payne	South East England Regional Assembly
Jenny Rickard	Surrey Heath Borough Council
Graham Parrott	Waverley Borough Council
Geraldine Molony	Waverley Borough Council
Kathy O'Leary	Woking Borough Council
Jane Ireland	Wokingham Borough Council

1. Apologies and Introductions

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Stuart Hylton from Berkshire Joint Strategic Planning Unit, Stan Abbott from the Forestry Commission, Kate Ashbrook from the Open Spaces Society, Kristoffer Hewitt from Natural England and Martin Tugwell from the Regional Assembly. Cllr Angus Ross was substituting for Cllr Cowan from Wokingham Borough Council and Matt Jackson was substituting for Ian Hepburn from Wildlife Trusts in the South East. Cllr John Butcher was substituting for Cllr Cheyne from Elmbridge Borough Council.
- 1.2 Following the local elections, a number of new members are welcomed to the Board including Cllr David Harmer (Surrey County Council) Cllr Keith Bush (Surrey Heath Borough Council) and Cllr Carole Cockburn (Waverley Borough Council).

2. Minutes and Matters arising

- 2.1 Matt Jackson from BBOWT requested that para 5.4 be revised to make it clear that it is the implications of new housing in the vicinity of the SPA that must be addressed. The minutes of the March 08 meeting have been updated accordingly.
- 2.2 Cllr Butcher asked whether the Board meeting was a public meeting. It was confirmed that the Board meetings are public meetings, with papers being made available on the Assembly website. Parties who have expressed an interest are also directly notified about the meetings.
- 2.3 Cath Rose gave an update on progress in seeking Counsel's opinion on the Delivery Framework. It was agreed that the Instruction to Counsel would be circulated to members, and a summary of Counsel's advice circulated to

members as soon as possible. Cllr Woodger and Cllr Hilton sought clarification on the pooling of contributions and the issue of flexibility.

- 2.4 Cath Rose then outlined the intention to invite Kate Ashbrook to talk at the next meeting about common land, its protection and the consent procedures.

3. Monitoring Strategy

- 3.1 Rob Cameron introduced the two draft monitoring strategies produced by consultants for Natural England, one looking at ecological monitoring, and the other at monitoring planning aspects.

- 3.2 He presented the initial recommendations of the consultants. For ecological monitoring these included measures to:

- Refine baseline information
- Monitor visitor trends and the impacts of SPA visitors
- Assess catchment areas and SANG capacity.

- 3.3 For planning, the proposed monitoring would include:

- Compliance with Framework standards and exceptions
- SANG quality and quantity
- SANG delivery relative to housing completions
- SPA policy in DPD/SPD
- The collection and spending of developer contributions.

- 3.4 Rob also summarised the alternative options for undertaking monitoring work, including the use of existing in-house resources, consultants and / or volunteers. A copy of Rob's presentation is available at:

http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/sustainability_tbh_jsp.html.

- 3.5 Natural England is undertaking a consultation on the technical aspects of the monitoring strategies from 9 June to 25 July 2008. Members should forward comments to Kristoffer Hewitt (kristoffer.hewitt@naturalengland.org.uk).

- 3.6 Members then discussed the draft monitoring strategies, including:

- The need to ensure the long-term protection of SANG land, especially that provided by developers, and the need to consider corrective action should the monitoring indicate that avoidance measures are not succeeding in protecting the SPA.
- The relative value of 'hard' measures such as car park closures versus 'softer' measures to influence visitor behaviour such as education and wardening.
- The need to take account of the wider influences on bird populations, such as climatic conditions and bird predation by corvids, and the need to consider the 'bigger picture', including economic factors.
- The need to monitor both the birds themselves but also those factors that may affect them, such as visitor footfall.
- That monitoring was an ongoing process and establishing baseline information for SANG will take some time.

- The opportunity for monitoring to demonstrate the benefits of mini-plan proposals to local residents, but that ‘gold plating’ must be avoided – the focus must be on what actions were genuinely needed.
- That the proposed ‘planning’ monitoring should generally be undertaken by local authority officers ‘in-house’, although a standardised methodology would be required as well as a central resource for collating this information, who could be hosted by a member authority. Other than this, it was not felt that there was an additional staff for the planning monitoring.
- A desire to see a concise single monitoring document which clearly establishes responsibilities.
- Whether historical data was available about the impact of past housebuilding on the SPA, and whether NE had explored options for European funding.

3.7 Rob Cameron confirmed:

- The potential role of the Board in assessing monitoring results and the need for corrective action.
- The importance of reviewing monitoring results in the light of national research by the Joint Nature Conservancy Council.
- The scope to reduce measures proposed if some were considered unnecessary.
- The need for standardised reporting and a mechanism for collating; as well as staff resources to undertake ecological monitoring.
- That it had proved difficult to use much historical data given its patchy nature.
- That NE were not aware of any European funding streams that they are currently able to access.

The points above raised by members would be fed into the consultation.

3.8 The Board **agreed** to endorse consultation by Natural England on the monitoring strategies to member organisations of the Joint Strategic Partnership Board and Access Management Partnership between 9 June and 25 July. The Board also **agreed** to support further investigation of upfront funding for a monitoring officer with consideration of access management proposals with pay back from developer contributions, and to support further investigation of upfront funding for baseline information with pay back from developer contributions.

4. The role of the Board in implementing the Delivery Framework

4.1 Cath Rose introduced the paper, explaining that it sought to clarify the role of the Board in the short term as an advisory body to oversee the implementation of the delivery framework, and the principle that the delivery of strategic avoidance measures and collation and distribution of developer contributions could be delegated to a member organisation.

4.2 Sam Dawes stressed the RSPB position that the Board should have greater powers to ensure that the proposals within the final Delivery Framework

were properly implemented. Cllr Cundy felt that it was difficult to endorse the principles for the management and delivery of strategic measures until a better idea of the likely costs was available.

- 4.3 Cllr Glen considered that Recommendation 2 read as if there is potential for wholesale changes once the delivery mechanism was agreed, and felt strongly that the Board, or something similar, should remain in place. Cllr Radley questioned why the paper had been included at this stage in implementing the delivery framework.
- 4.4 It was **agreed** that there was value in the Board in the long term and that it was likely to remain appropriate, and that governance issues should be considered in more detail at the next Board meeting once further detail about the delivery of strategic avoidance measures is available.

5. Progress on access management measures

- 5.1 Phil Allen summarised progress by the Access Management Partnership (AMP), including agreement of a constitution and action plan, and development of key principles for the delivery of strategic access management measures. Initial thinking was that there should be a small strategic team to work across the SPA on access management, complementing the work of existing landowners and managers. There may be a role for a third party wardening service in the longer term, which could be provided by existing land managers, for example the Wildlife Trusts.
- 5.2 Cllr Wicks felt that there was a need to keep the proposals to the minimum necessary to deliver the required service, and to carefully justify detailed proposals. She also stressed that local authority officers wardening SANG land should not be replaced by a central resource.
- 5.3 Cllr Glen explained that whilst Natural England has been proposed by the AMP as the 'first choice' organisation for hosting the strategic access management resource, Hampshire County Council are also well placed to assist in the delivery of strategic avoidance measures should NE be unable to host a strategic team. He suggested that the Board should formally approach Natural England about their willingness to host the strategic resource. Cllr Gibson noted and welcomed Hampshire County Council's offer.
- 5.4 Cllr Butcher requested that further consideration be given to the validity of proposals to pool and manage funds.
- 5.5 Cllr Hilton requested that parish councils were able to input into the AMP and that the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead be represented on the partnership. Phil Allen considered that this would be appropriate.
- 5.6 Matt Jackson expressed interest on behalf of his colleagues in Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Surrey Wildlife Trusts in contributing to the strategic access management resource. He requested further clarification on

the definition of an 'access authority', and the need to focus on wardening the SPA rather than SANG.

- 5.7 Sam Dawes requested that links were made between the delivery of strategic access management and the monitoring strategy.
- 5.8 There was some discussion about the availability of European funding for this work. Cllr Glen suggested that county councils were well placed to explore these options. David Payne reported on initial exploratory work undertaken by the Regional Assembly into the potential for INTERREG funding, but that there had been limited interest from European partners.
- 5.9 It was suggested that SEEDA be formally invited to attend future meetings in advance of the anticipated transfer of regional planning powers under the Sub-National Review.
- 5.10 The Board **agreed** the recommendations to note the work of the Access Management Partnership in progressing access management measures and to welcome the offer of the AMP to work together to prepare a costed proposal for discussion at the October meeting of the JSPB.

6. Items for information

- 6.1 Further information was circulated in relation to Hart District Council.
- 6.2 John Thorne confirmed that the Rushmoor strategy was work in progress.
- 6.3 Cllr Radley stressed that the information in the paper about the High Court Challenge at Dilly Lane was an officer interpretation of the judgement, which may not have fully captured the detail of the judgement. The judgement was formally published on 2 June. Hart District Council's challenge was dismissed.

7. AOB

- 7.1 Sam Dawes alerted members to the letter from the RSPB and Wildlife Trusts to the Chairman of the Board.

8. Date of Next Meeting

- 8.1 The next meeting will be held on 21 October 2008 from 10.00-12.30. The venue is still to be confirmed and will be notified to members as soon as possible.