

**THAMES BASIN HEATHS
JOINT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD**

Date: 27 March 2008

Subject: **Progress on Access Management Measures**

Report of: Natural England

Recommendations:

That the Board:

- (i) notes the formation of the Thames Basin Heaths Access Management Partnership and the initiatives it has taken thus far.
- (ii) supports the proposal for the production of a report from the AMP on access management proposals for consideration by The Board

Purpose of the Report:

To summarise the progress that has been made on access management measures.

Key Issues:

The formation and work of a new Access Management Partnership.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Members will be aware that Natural England is seeking to progress access management measures relating to the SPA and housing delivery within the affected planning authorities. These measures are a key component of the three pronged approach put forward in NE's Draft Delivery Plan and subsequently supported in the EIP Technical Assessor's Report and the draft ISDP.
- 1.2. The objectives of this brief report are to inform Members of the JSP Board of progress on this matter and to advise the Board of the formation of the Thames Basin Heaths Access Management Partnership and its proposals for future work.

2. Background and Considerations

- 2.1. Natural England has arranged events and convened two meetings of countryside management staff and representatives from the local authorities and other bodies or organisations who own or manage land forming part of the SPA or with potential use as SANG.
- 2.2. The well-attended meetings have produced enthusiastic support for the formation of an Access Management Partnership (AMP) to address key issues of estate, conservation and recreation management. This is seen as reflecting and supplementing the detailed considerations and cross-organisation liaison afforded to SPA related planning issues by the long-standing Officer Steering Group (previously acting as SPATBOL).
- 2.3. The focus of the AMP is to utilise the skills and experience of professional countryside management staff in working with Natural England to develop an access management implementation plan and programme and to liaise on sharing knowledge, information and resources that can be of immediate benefit to member organisations.
- 2.4. The meetings have already proved productive in providing a joint response to the draft ISDP in respect of access management issues. Two useful events have also resulted from member initiatives at the AMP meetings thus far – a dog awareness and management seminar in Hartley Witney attended by 49 representatives and a planned training event in Camberley on the ecology and conservation of heathland birds.
- 2.5. Natural England views the AMP as providing valuable experience and a representative range of perspectives in contributing to and advising on access management measures relating to the SPA and SANG land and to raising public awareness on these matters. The group has commenced working on terms of reference and an action plan that will address both short and longer term initiatives. It is intended that these should be submitted to the Joint Strategic Partnership Board for approval at its next meeting.

3. Recommendation

3.1. That the Joint Strategic Partnership Board

- (i) notes the formation of the Thames Basin Heaths Access Management Partnership and the initiatives it has taken thus far.
- (ii) supports the proposal for the production of a report from the AMP on access management proposals for consideration by the Board.

Contact:

Kristoffer Hewitt, Thames Basin Heaths Project Manager, Natural England

Email: Kristoffer.Hewitt@naturalengland.org.uk Tel. 01273 407945