

Record of Meeting

Project	Habitats Regulation Assessment for the Mid Sussex Core Strategy		
Date	28 th April 2008	Time	10:00
Venue	Planning Conference Room Mid Sussex District Council Offices		
Subject	Stakeholder engagement	Page	1 of 4
Attendees	Marina Briggins Shaw	Wealden DC	
	Howard Colmer	Tesserae Environmental	
	Alma Howell	Mid Sussex DC	
	Cath Lang	Natural England	
	Chris Marrable	Conservators of Ashdown Forest (CAF)	
	Nick Pincombe	Tesserae Environmental	
	Ed Sheath	Mid Sussex DC	
Apologies	Neil Davidson	Tesserae Environmental	
	Harriet Dennison	RSPB	
	Jayne Field	Natural England	
	Rebecca Pearson	Natural England	
	Andrew Shaw	High Weald AONB	
	Paul Smith	Environment Agency	

Item	Action
Introductions	
AH welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming, then suggested a round table introduction of names and roles.	n/a
1. Outline of Habitats Regulation Methodology and Stages – where are we now?	
NP described the HRA methodology being implemented for the Mid Sussex Core Strategy giving a brief overview of the process involved and the current status of the Strategy.	n/a
2. Update on progress with Mid Sussex Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal	
ES further described the Core Strategy development to date. AH informed attendees that over 5,000 responses were received from the pre-submission consultation. With such a large number of responses, Mid Sussex DC has proposed a number of topic papers to address these with proposed publications due in September and November 08. ES and AH informed that draft Core Strategy was proposed for internal circulation in late December 08, to be reviewed at members meeting on 13 th January 2009. Submission to full council would then take place in March 2009, with public consultation May 2009.	n/a

Item	Action
Update on progress with CS and SA (contd.)	
AH also outlined that several responses were received from the CS consultation regarding alternative locations, specifically in relation to housing. These alternative areas will need to be considered and incorporated into the SA/HRA.	NP
3. Responses to consultation on HRA Scoping Report	
NP supplied "Analysis of Consultation Responses" spreadsheets and began to briefly describe each stakeholder's response to the consultation on the HRA Screening / Scoping report.	n/a
It was agreed that the HRA should focus only on existing qualifying features, not other features of interest which could become qualifying features in the future (ie, the woodlark), however all agreed that any positive actions taken with regard to the nightjar and Dartford warbler were also like to positively affect the woodlark.	NP
4. Issues arising	
a) vulnerability of Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA	
NP informed attendees that during the scoping study, the SAC at Castle Hill (east of Brighton) was screened-out due to its distance from the MSDC Boundary. Therefore the HRA of the Core Strategy will concentrate on impacts and associated vulnerabilities of the Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA. In studying the potential affects upon the Ashdown forest, NP informed group that the draft Tyldesley methodology would be adapted and applied (David Tyldesley and Associates (for English Nature, draft 2006): <i>The Assessment of Regional Spatial Strategies and Sub-Regional Strategies under the Habitats Regulations</i>). AH and CL also suggested that the Thames Basin SPA and associated strategy would be worth sourcing and gaining guidance on.	NP
NP raised that councils north of Mid Sussex DC should be involved in joint working arrangements where possible. AH confirmed that Tandridge and Tunbridge Wells have been consulted with regards to proposals and their assessment, and will continue to be so. The vulnerabilities of the Forest were discussed and agreed, with the main issues of concern being air quality and disturbance from recreation.	NP
b) recreational disturbance	
Although research has been undertaken into recreational disturbance to ground nesting birds, specifically Dartford warbler and nightjar, surveys assessing visitor numbers and pressure on Ashdown Forest are somewhat limited. In order to quantify and establish visitor pressure on the Ashdown Forest, NP proposed an approach to University of Brighton in relation to establishing a student project to survey visitor numbers with questionnaires. Tesserae to devise a suitable survey methodology and approach UofB in the first instance.	NP
CM informed attendees that visitor surveys for the proposed new AFC visitor centre were currently being undertaken, and data could be made available, although CM informs that data is not robust.	
CM informed that a large proportion of the Ashdown Forest is open access, however, other landowners include MoD and other private owners where access is not possible. CL suggested downloading shape file from NE website for SSSI units and to discuss ownership.	CL/ NP
NP proposed costing a visitor survey to commence this summer, and CM suggested obtaining ornithological data from the Ashdown Forest bird group.	NP

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c) air pollution	
Difficult to analyse, however NP suggested costing a diffusion tube monitoring programme. Current data on the Ashdown Forest is unavailable, however, CL suggested reviewing the South East Plan for data on air pollution and/or methodology, and that also Rebecca Pearson (NE) may be able to provide assistance. NP to investigate.	NP
Transport modelling may also be relevant; NP to contact RP and also Ian Moody re. East Grinstead AAP as modelling reports are available.	NP
d) in combination effects of other plans and strategies	
MB confirmed that Wealden DC propose to have CS consultation in Jan 09, with current allocations for housing at 9,600 dwellings to 2026. Dwellings would predominately be in the south of the district, although other locations are being considered due to environmental designations in the south and the lack of suitable resources, namely waste water treatment. MB confirmed that initial screening for HRA will be conducted in house, examining each site separately, with consultants brought onboard later in the process if required.	n/a
MB further highlighted South East Water's (SEW) proposed new water supply reservoir at Clay Hill, near Ringmer.	n/a
e) other effects (hydrology, eutrophication)	
Hydrology was screened-out of the HRA, however CM confirmed that several bore holes are utilised on Ashdown Forest. Again it is difficult to quantify hydrological / abstraction issues. NP to contact SEW. AH is investigating	NP/ AH
Eutrophication – CM confirmed that large areas of the forest are being encroached by grasses. CAF have proposed a grazing regime to reduce grass encroachment and also eutrophication throughout the Forest. Others issues with eutrophication include dog faeces. Currently no dog bins on the Forest, with dog faeces being an important issue to investigate. With 50+ car parks throughout the Forest, CM confirmed that dog bins would be difficult and time consuming to staff. However, issue still to be investigated.	NP
5. Evidence gathering and further information required – scope for shared working	
CL suggested BRANCH (tool for climate change modelling) and also the Dorset and Thames Basing Heath projects. CL to contact Dorset NE Team regarding obtaining or potentially sourcing traffic monitoring data for the Dorset Heaths.	NP/ CL
Further evidence relates to the Green Crescent around East Grinstead and other main towns, specifically for information in regards to mitigation. NP to request GIS data and also look into EG AAP and open space survey from Andrew Marsh.	NP
BAP and SANGS targets to be investigated by NP, and also general avoidance / mitigation. Data on birds to be sourced from CAF; CL suggested that SxBREC does not hold Annex I birds.	NP
MB confirmed Wealden DC's willingness in principle to share resources on additional survey activities.	NP/ MB
6. Availability of data	
Data, where possible, to be sourced and made freely available.	All

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7. Opportunities for avoidance, mitigation and compensation	
NP confirmed that avoidance will be key to the MSDC CS. However mitigation, where required, should be a direct benefit to the Ashdown Forest. Grazing regimes, visitor management, provision of dog bins and signage, and diversion of visitors away from sensitive ground nesting breeding bird habitat all to be investigated. Again Dorset Heaths could provide good examples.	NP
8. AOB	
None.	n/a