

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

County *W*ildlife Sites HANDBOOK



Introduction

This handbook is designed to be a complete guide to how the County Wildlife Site system operates in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is aimed at people who work with this system of non-statutory sites such as land owners and managers, local government officers and officers within statutory agencies, those in the conservation field and anyone who liaises with landowners. Across the country these sites have a number of different names and whilst known locally as County Wildlife Sites readers need to be aware that Defra is promoting the use of the generic term 'Local Site' in Government guidance to promote a common understanding of the kind of sites in question.

The handbook enables relevant organisations to understand their role within the County Wildlife Site system, both in promoting sympathetic land management practices and in forward planning and development control. It is hoped that this handbook will be a useful source of information for countryside advisers, planners and landowners alike.

The handbook has been compiled with reference to the document *Local Sites: Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management* produced by Defra (2005).

March 2008

If you have any queries or would like further information on the County Wildlife Site system in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough please contact:

Biodiversity Officer
Cambridgeshire County Council
Tel (01223) 717930
Email epp@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Wildlife Officer
Peterborough City Council
Tel (01733) 453400
Email wildlife@peterborough.gov.uk

Conservation Manager or Wildlife Sites Officer, Wildlife Trust
Tel (01954) 713500
Email cambridgeshire@wildlifebcnp.org

For information on a specific County Wildlife Site or requests for associated survey information please contact:

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre
Tel (01954) 713570
Email data@cpbrc.org.uk
www.cpbrc.org.uk

The County Wildlife Site Group wish to acknowledge and thank the following organisations for their financial support in the production of the County Wildlife Site Handbook:



Photographic Credits

Front Cover (L to R): *R Hawksley; A Woodgate; C Perry; Wildlife Trust.*

Page i: *L Watson.* Page 1: *I Webb.* Page 3: *C Perry; Wildlife Trust.* Page 4: *I Webb.* Page 5: *A Woodgate; I Webb.* Page 6: *V Lea.* Page 7: *V Lea; Wildlife Trust.* Page 8: *R Pateman; Wildlife Trust.* Page 9: *A Woodgate; Wildlife Trust.* Page 11: *Wildlife Trust.* Page 13: *C Perry; P Stroh.* Page 14: *N Hueber.* Page 15: *A Matthews; C Perry.* Page 16: *J Fisher; Wildlife Trust.* Page 20: *V Lea.* Page 21: *A Woodgate; R Hawksley.* Page 22: *A Woodgate; A Woodgate.* Page 24: *R Hawksley.* Page 26: *A Woodgate.* Page 28: *V Lea; A Woodgate.* Page 29: *R Hawksley.* Page 30: *R Pateman.* Page 31: *A Woodgate.* Page 33: *A Woodgate.*

Back Cover: *A Woodgate; I Webb; Wildlife Trust; A Woodgate*

Contents

Section 1	Background information	
	What are Local Sites?	1
	CWSs in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	1
	What is a Local Site System?	2
	Legislative and Policy Context	3
Section 2	Management of the County Wildlife Site system	
	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CWS Group	6
	CWS Group membership	7
	CWS Group aim	7
	CWS Group objectives	7
	CWS Group members and their roles	8
	The CWS Panel	9
	Role of the CWS Panel	9
	Membership of the CWS Panel	10
Section 3	Operation of the County Wildlife Site system	
	CWS selection criteria	11
	CWS selection	13
	CWS survey	13
	Landowner consultation	16
	CWS assessment	16
	Objections to County Wildlife Site status	17
	CWS ratification	17
	Notifying landowners	18
Section 4	County Wildlife Site data	
	Ownership of data	20
	Confidentiality and data protection	20
	Distribution and use of data	21
	The CWS Register	21
	Obtaining information	22
Section 5	Site safeguard and management	
	Environmental Impact Assessment	24
	Planning policies and using the planning system	25
	Promoting the positive management of CWS	26
	Developing links with CWS owners and managers	26
	Advice to CWS owners	27
	Publicity and raising awareness	27
	CWS condition monitoring	28
Section 6	Other non-statutory sites	
	Protected road verges	29
	City Wildlife Sites	29
	Geological sites	29

Continued >

Section 7	Supporting documentation	
	CWS Selection Criteria	30
	City Wildlife Site Selection Criteria	30
	Protected Road Verge Selection Criteria	30
	CWS Condition Monitoring	30
	Publicity materials	30
Section 8	Contacts for further information and advice	31
Section 9	Potential sources of funding	33
	Glossary	34
	References	36



Section 1

Background information

What are local sites?

The term Local Site may be subdivided into Local Wildlife Site, Local Geological Site or Local Wildlife/Geological Site if interests happen to coincide. The principle is that whilst they may provide other benefits a Local Site contains features of '*substantive nature conservation value*'. The selection criteria define what qualifies as 'substantive' in the local context. The purpose of selection is to provide recognition of the site's value and to help conserve those features by affording it a degree of protection (Defra 2005).

Local Wildlife Sites or County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) as they are known in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are defined areas, identified and selected locally for their nature conservation value based on important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species within a national, regional and importantly a local context.

CWSs are areas of land important for their wildlife and can be found on public and private land. They vary in shape, size and may encompass a variety of different habitat types such as ancient woodland, species-rich grasslands, wetlands, roadside verges and hedgerows. The habitats and species present are often there because of past management and many sites provide a refuge for rare or threatened plants and animals.

These sites play a vital role in the conservation of the UK's natural heritage by providing essential wildlife refuges,

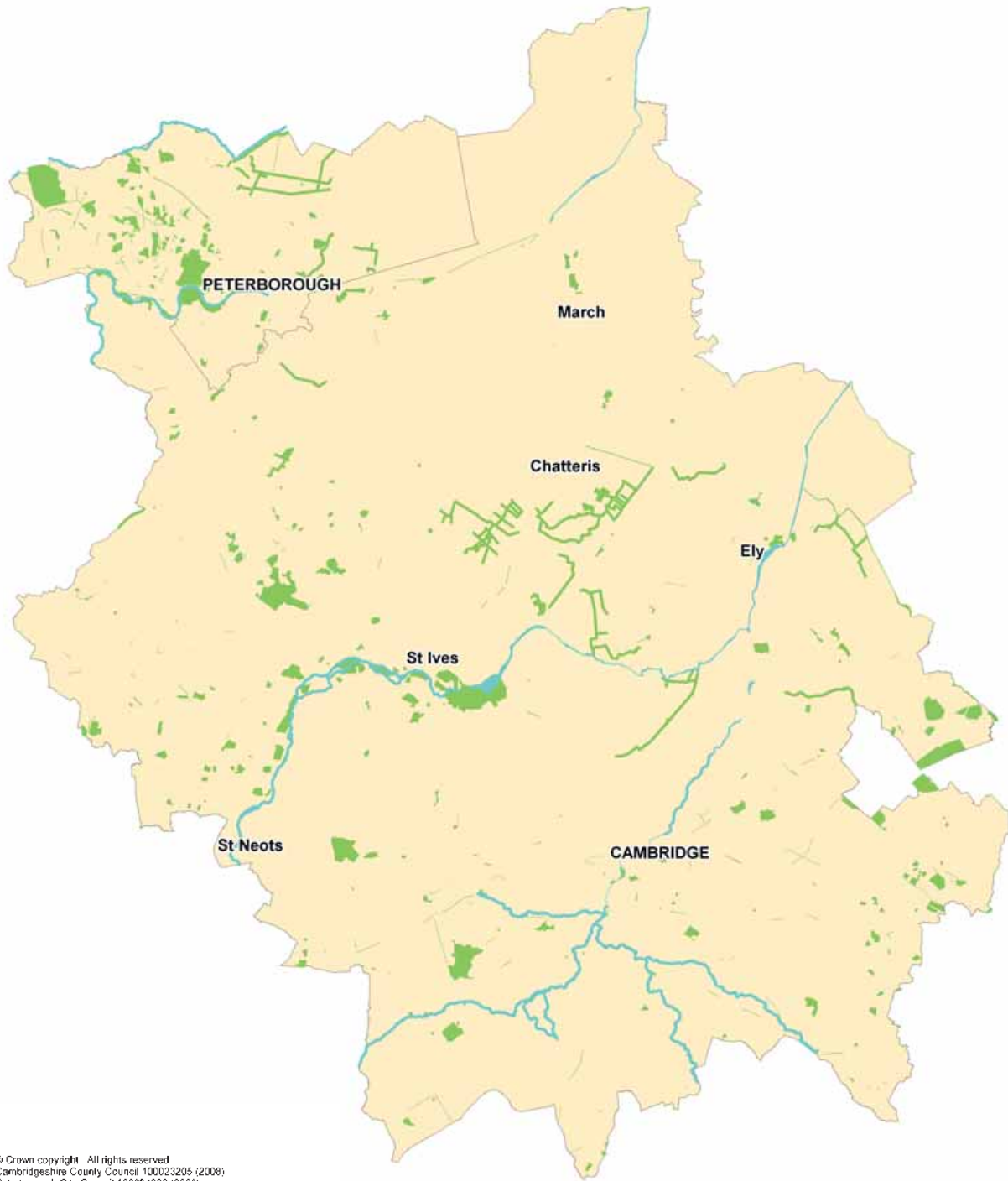
stepping-stones, corridors and buffers, linking and protecting other site networks and open spaces found in towns and the wider countryside.

CWSs complement the series of internationally and nationally designated sites such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas for Conservation (SACs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). However, because the SSSI system is representative rather than comprehensive many sites of SSSI quality are not designated as such. Instead sites of SSSI quality are selected locally as CWSs. The CWS system operates on a comprehensive basis, therefore all sites that meet the given selection criteria are selected. CWSs are often viewed as a tier below SSSIs in terms of their conservation value, but in reality this is often not the case. The comprehensive nature of the CWS system means that as a suite of sites they are at least of national importance for nature conservation, supporting significant areas of national priority habitats.

CWSs in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

There are over 400 CWSs in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and in the region of 35,000 across the country. This figure is subject to change as survey data is continually gathered and the complement of sites amended. The map overleaf illustrates the geographical spread of CWSs across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in 2008.

County Wildlife Sites in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved.
Cambridgeshire County Council 100023205 (2008);
Peterborough City Council 100024236 (2008)

What is a local site system?

Local Site systems now exist across most of the UK. A Local Site system is a partnership for the identification, selection, assessment and protection of Local Sites with the objective of ensuring conservation and enhancement of habitats and species.

The comprehensive network of sites selected within Local Sites systems

contribute significantly to delivering both UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets and are therefore of county, regional and national importance. They represent local character and distinctiveness, and can contribute to the quality of life and the well-being of the community, with sites often providing opportunities for research, education and informal recreation.

Legislative and policy context

The **EU Habitats Directive** requires Member states to 'encourage the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna'. This requirement has been transposed into UK law in regulation 37 of the **Habitats Regulations** 1994. Policies should therefore be included in development documents to promote the conservation of networks of natural habitats that link sites of biodiversity importance. The Directive refers to features in the landscape that are often linear and continuous in nature such as hedgerows, ditches and banks, woodland and ponds. These features provide routes or stepping-stones for species migration, dispersal and genetic exchange. Local Sites systems contribute to fulfilling this requirement and can play a very important part in maintaining the links that join up and support nationally and internationally recognised sites.

Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS9) provides a statement of national planning policy for biodiversity and geological conservation in England. It recognises that Local Sites have a fundamental role to play

in helping to meet overall national biodiversity targets, contributing to the quality of life and the well-being of the community and in supporting research and education.

The policies set out in PPS9 need to be taken into account by regional planning bodies and by local planning authorities in the preparation of local development documents. PPS9 sets out a series of key principles to ensure that the impacts of planning decisions on biodiversity are fully considered. It also advises that **Local Development Frameworks** (LDFs) should indicate the location of designated sites of importance for biodiversity and geodiversity on proposals maps, making clear distinctions between the hierarchy of international, national, regional and locally designated sites. Criteria based policies should be established showing how proposals for any development on or affecting such sites will be judged.

LDFs are replacing Local Plans and are prepared by County Council (Minerals and Waste) all District Councils or Unitary Authorities. LDFs are at various stages of completion in the districts in Cambridgeshire and Unitary Authority of

Chalk grassland



Bee orchid



Peterborough. They will provide detailed policies for development control. **Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks** is the current policy statement with regard to LDFs and states that *"areas to which detailed policies and proposals in the development plan document may apply such as ... areas of regional or local importance for biodiversity and where biodiversity will be enhanced"*.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation sets out the Government's policies for the protection and creation of open spaces, sports and recreational facilities. Local authorities are expected to protect all open space required by communities and they should assess community needs for open space, sport and recreation and carry out audits of open space and sporting and recreational facilities. It recognises that open space of high quality or of particular value to a local community should be identified and given protection by local authorities through appropriate policies in plans. Areas of particular quality may include open spaces that also benefit biodiversity and geodiversity. Local authorities should take account of the various functions of open space, including that of providing havens and habitats for flora and fauna, when deciding on the most appropriate way to treat such spaces.

The **East of England Plan, the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)** contains policies that refer directly to Local Sites and support green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement. The section under Biodiversity and Earth Heritage has text that states *"Planning authorities and other agencies should ensure that the region's wider biodiversity, earth heritage and natural resources are protected and enriched through the conservation, restoration and re-establishment of key resources by...ensuring that new development minimises damage to biodiversity and the earth heritage resource by avoiding harm to county wildlife sites..."*.

Under Section 74 of the **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act)** every minister and Government department has a duty to have regard to the purpose of the conservation of biological diversity in the exercising of its functions; and to take, or promote the taking by others steps to further the conservation of the habitats and species which together are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity. The DETR circular on the CROW Act makes clear that Local Sites are important components within Local BAPs.

More recently the **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006** introduced a

Brown tail moth caterpillar





Teasel



Common morel

new duty for public authorities stating that *'Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'*. The role local authorities have in land use planning and managing their own land is obviously relevant to the CWS system.

The **Biodiversity Strategy for England** is the principal means by which Government in England will discharge the duties referred to above including the promotion of a more consistent approach to the operation of Local Sites systems (Working with the Grain of Nature, Defra 2002). The **UK Biodiversity Action Plans** originated from the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Plans, devised and implemented at a county level, have become an increasingly important framework for the work of many nature conservation organisations. Locally important species and habitats, along with actions needed to maintain and enhance them, take account of priorities identified nationally. CWSs

present an ideal framework of known sites for implementing many Habitat and Species Action Plans in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Copies of the plans are available on line at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/biodiversity-partnership and further information on the biodiversity process is available from the Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator hosted by Cambridgeshire County Council on behalf of the Biodiversity Partnership.

There are also a number of other strategic plans which should give due consideration to CWSs. These include:

- ◆ Sustainable Community Strategies should demonstrate how local biodiversity planning has been considered.
- ◆ Catchment Flood Management Plans and Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies prepared by the Environment Agency.
- ◆ Water Level Management Plans.
- ◆ Regional Strategy documents for example the Regional Woodland and Environment Strategies.



Section 2

Management of the County Wildlife Site system

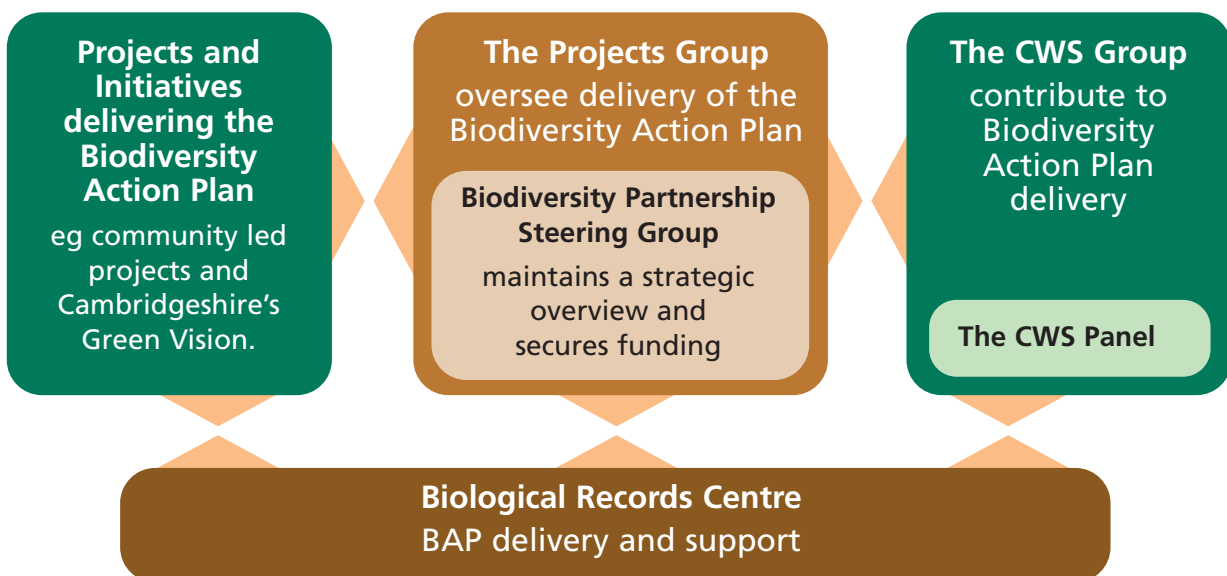
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CWS Group

The County Wildlife Site (CWS) Group is affiliated to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership (see diagram below) and is contributing to many of the actions contained within the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). The CWS Group operates under its own aims and objectives and is funded separately. The CWS Group maintains an overview of the CWS system, meeting annually to network, share information, plan and monitor CWS activities. Membership of the CWS Group remains open to anyone who expresses an

interest. All members share ownership of the CWS system (including this document), and have a responsibility to contribute to and play an active role in helping to administer the CWS system to help meet objectives.

The Wildlife Trust in conjunction with Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council take the strategic lead with respect to the management of the CWS system. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre (CPBRC) are responsible for disseminating information and making data on CWSs available and accessible to all those who need to use it.

The relationship between the CWS Group and the Biodiversity Partnership



CWS Group membership

- ◆ Cambridge City Council
- ◆ Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre
- ◆ Cambridgeshire County Council
- ◆ East Cambridgeshire District Council
- ◆ Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- ◆ Fenland District Council
- ◆ Huntingdonshire District Council
- ◆ Natural England
- ◆ Peterborough City Council
- ◆ South Cambridgeshire District Council
- ◆ The Environment Agency
- ◆ The Wildlife Trust

The success of the CWS system depends on the support of the organisations listed above and the involvement of land owners and managers who influence the protection and enhancement of sites.

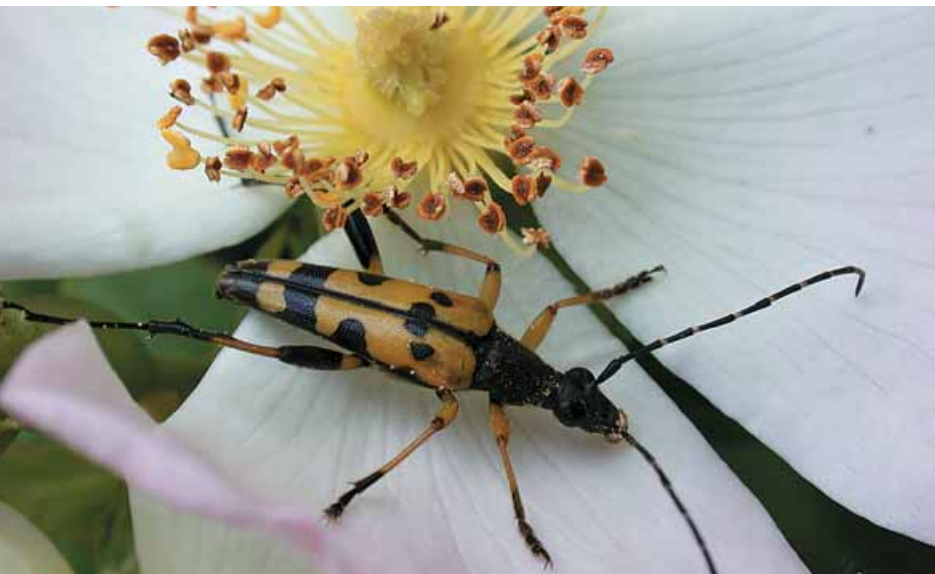
CWS Group aim

To conserve and enhance the important habitats, natural features and populations of notable species that are of national, regional or county importance outside of statutory designated sites in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

CWS Group objectives

- ◆ Promote and develop the CWS system as a mechanism for maintaining and enhancing the wildlife resource in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- ◆ Promote the role and importance of CWSs at a strategic level (for example in delivering BAP targets, delivering green infrastructure, land use planning and the targeting of agri-environmental schemes).
- ◆ Encourage the sympathetic management of CWSs and measures to improve habitat connectivity.
- ◆ Ensure the protection of CWSs through policies within local development frameworks and their inclusion on proposals maps.
- ◆ Develop the CWS system as a comprehensive mechanism for recording and monitoring BAP priorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- ◆ Identify and promote funding opportunities for CWS work and management.
- ◆ Promote access to and educational use of CWSs where appropriate and supported by landowners.
- ◆ Review the operation of the CWS system at suitable intervals to ensure that, in principle, it follows national guidelines whilst accounting for local experience and circumstances.

Longhorn beetle



Great Fen





Marjoram



Farmland

CWS Group members and their roles

The resources available define the extent and success of the CWS system. The CWS Group actively seeks funding to undertake survey, monitoring and other work associated with the objectives described in this document. All members are involved in raising awareness of the importance of CWSs.

Wildlife Trust

Manages the CWS system and maintains a database of landowner contacts. The Trust co-ordinates and undertakes site survey work and provides management advice to land owners and managers.

Cambridgeshire County Council*

Has a leadership role relating to the operation of the CWS system through the CWS Group and Panel. Encourages a collaborative approach and liaison between members.

Peterborough City Council*

Peterborough already has a CWS system up and running in partnership with the

Wildlife Trust. Under a service level agreement a number of CWS are re-surveyed each year. The Council encourages a partnership approach, liaison between partners and has a leadership role relating to the operation of the CWS system.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre

Collates and stores CWS information and co-ordinates the exchange of information ensuring it is available to all who need to use it. The Records Centre also produces an annual update to the CWS Register.

Natural England

Provides support and input to the CWS system through its role as the statutory nature conservation organisation for England.

The Environment Agency

Has a particular role in the protection of rivers and wetlands, but also a wider conservation role as a regulator and consultee in the planning process, aiming to protect and enhance the environment.

* Like District Councils both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have a responsibility to ensure that they use up to date information in their decision making processes particularly for development control and forward planning. They also have powers to promote the social, environmental and economic well-being of their administrative area and have a range of statutory roles and responsibilities including those relating to land use planning, biodiversity, waste, education and transport.

**Cambridge City Council,
East Cambridgeshire District Council,
Fenland District Council,
Huntingdonshire District Council,
South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Have a responsibility to ensure that they use up to date information in their decision making processes particularly for development control and forward planning. They also have powers to promote the social, environmental and economic well-being of their administrative area and have a range of statutory roles and responsibilities relating to land use planning, biodiversity, waste, education, transport, land reclamation, pollution and land drainage.

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

Assist the people who manage the countryside with environmental management expertise and are a dedicated provider of environmental and conservation advice and consultancy to farmers and landowners.

The CWS Panel

The CWS Panel is a sub-group of the CWS Group that carries out the majority of the

practical work on their behalf. The CWS Panel meets two or three times a year as necessary and reports back to the CWS Group on an annual basis.

Role of the CWS Panel

- ◆ Agree the basis for site selection, the CWS selection criteria, reviewing and amending them as necessary.
- ◆ Co-ordinate site selection and the identification of candidate sites.
- ◆ Co-ordinate the survey, re-survey and condition monitoring of CWSs.
- ◆ Establish and develop a process for monitoring the condition of CWSs.
- ◆ Promote and support the provision of advice to CWS owners to ensure the appropriate management of the CWSs so that they are in a favourable condition.
- ◆ Raise awareness of CWSs (e.g. general public, landowners, decision makers) and the need for management.
- ◆ Maintain a register of CWSs in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- ◆ Work with CPBRC to ensure the effective and efficient dissemination of information on CWSs.

Marbled white



Common frog



Membership of the CWS Panel

The Panel includes suitably qualified and experienced representatives from:

- ◆ The Wildlife Trust
- ◆ Natural England
- ◆ The Environment Agency
- ◆ Cambridgeshire County Council
- ◆ Peterborough City Council
- ◆ District Councils
- ◆ Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre

The chair and secretariat for these meetings is agreed by the membership and approved

for a period of 2 years at a time. The role of members is to represent their organisation in respect of the organisation's functions related to nature conservation and ecology. It is anticipated that the Wildlife Trust, Cambridgeshire County Council or Peterborough City Council where sites are within the unitary authority, and Natural England staff will form the permanent members of the CWS Panel, with local authority representatives attending as and when it is relevant. As a minimum, 3 members of the CWS Panel must be present to approve a new CWS or de-select a site, one of which must be the Wildlife Trust.



Section 3

Operation of the County Wildlife Site system

The purpose of the County Wildlife Site (CWS) system is to identify, protect and enhance the most important places for wildlife outside land with legal protection. The 'system' is a simple way of describing the processes involved in the selection and assessment of sites, the informing and advising of land owners and managers about management, and the protection and monitoring of sites. In broad terms CWSs are selected by assessing their wildlife importance in a county context. Site selection is based on available information. Programmes of survey are resource dependent however a proportion of sites are surveyed each year. The survey data is assessed against carefully constructed selection criteria. Those meeting the thresholds contained within the selection criteria are put forward for selection. Throughout this section please make reference to the table on page 19.

An integrated and effective CWS system can contribute greatly to the delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets, however for the effective operation of the CWS system as described in this document adequate resourcing is essential. The CWS system is designed to be flexible, and is considered to be 'live' and evolving. As information becomes available newly discovered sites that meet the selection guidelines can be added and existing ones amended. Exceptionally sites may also be removed.

The CWS system provides the framework for

- ◆ The selection of CWSs
- ◆ Site survey
- ◆ Notifying landowners
- ◆ The compilation and updating of a CWS Register
- ◆ The dissemination of information on CWSs
- ◆ Liaison with land owners and managers
- ◆ CWS condition monitoring
- ◆ Site safeguard and management
- ◆ Raising awareness of the importance of CWSs

CWS selection criteria

The current selection criteria were developed during the 1990s and last updated in 2006 (please refer to Section 7: Supporting documentation). The application of selection criteria in a standardised, objective manner promotes confidence that a CWS meets a minimum standard. The selection criteria take into account available information on habitats and species as well as historical and structural aspects where relevant.

The thresholds contained within the selection criteria are sensitive to local conditions and are a matter of judgement based on a number of factors including an

understanding of ecological processes, the distribution, abundance and trends in the wildlife resource. The selection criteria therefore have been developed to define what qualifies as ‘substantive nature conservation’ value in a local context.

The habitat thresholds are linked to the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) and the UK biodiversity habitat priorities. Thresholds are based on the numbers of species that are particularly indicative of naturalness, a lack of improvement and or longevity of that habitat type. The presence of a red data book species, nationally rare, locally scarce or BAP priority species may also be considered.

The aim is to select all sites that meet the thresholds within the selection criteria. This enables sites to be evaluated against a structured framework and demonstrates why some are selected and others are not. The selection criteria will be reviewed in

full by the CWS Panel every five years, though more frequent reviews may occur if relevant information becomes available, for example information related to a particular species group.

The selection criteria were developed using widely accepted habitat attributes, adapted from those used in the assessment of the national series of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and other publications. The degree of significance of the attributes varies between different habitat types, and when used in evaluation of sites of county scale significance, will generally have lower thresholds than those applying to SSSIs.

The attributes taken into account in identifying CWSs are described in general terms below.

Additional elements that may also be considered are recorded history and connectivity within the wider landscape.

Naturalness	Assessment of the closeness of a habitat to its form unmodified by human influence. As elsewhere in Britain, all terrestrial habitats have been modified to varying extents. In many cases, therefore, this characteristic seeks to relate a site to its state under traditional management.
Diversity	Most sites will show diversity in vegetation communities and in complement of species. Many will be species-rich in county terms.
Size	The importance and value of a site generally increases with its size. It is generally accepted that each habitat has a size below which its nature conservation value may not be sustainable.
Rarity	The decline and thus increasing rarity of semi-natural habitats is a basic presumption of the CWS designation. The presence of rare or scarce species may warrant CWS status.
Typicalness	This is important when including intrinsically species-poor habitats, which need to be included in the CWS system as characteristic and important habitats of the county.
Fragility	All sites are sensitive to environmental change. Some sites may be particularly susceptible, and as a consequence may be particularly rare and therefore important, but also difficult to safeguard.
Potential Value	Some sites with remnants of former habitats will often show a substantial increase in their nature conservation interest through positive management. Similarly sites with a predictable course of natural succession can show an increase in their nature conservation interest through non-intervention.
Intrinsic Appeal	Some sites may have considerable and widely perceived intrinsic appeal such as encouraging people’s contact with nature. Others may be important for informal recreation or education.

CWS selection

A site will be selected for CWS status based on up to date survey information with other factors also being considered such as current management and land use. The CWS Panel carries out the selection process by collating a list of sites to survey including new sites, existing and any for proposed de-selection, however anyone can ask for a site to be considered (please refer to the diagram at the end of the section). A professional approach is taken to the consideration of sites and the CWS Panel will ensure that it has the technical knowledge to make informed decisions. The CWS Panel will make decisions on robust information and will seek further advice from particular specialists or experts as necessary.

If the site meets the thresholds within the selection criteria the site is put forward for selection as a CWS. The justification for its selection is noted. If a site does not qualify the reasons for this are also noted. Amendments to the boundaries of existing CWS can also be considered.

It should be noted that inevitably there will be sites of CWS quality that have been missed to date. Some may have been overlooked or undervalued in previous

surveys and deserve consideration as new CWSs. Positive management subsequent to previous survey may also have brought the site up to the thresholds contained within the selection criteria. Examples of these types of sites could include:

- ◆ Borderline CWSs
- ◆ Sites where access for survey was refused, but whose owners may have recently changed
- ◆ Sites recommended by others
- ◆ De-notified SSSIs
- ◆ Former mineral workings
- ◆ Habitat creation areas (e.g. landscape scale environmental projects, new areas associated with development)
- ◆ Mitigation areas associated with development

CWS survey

Habitat survey for CWSs is based upon an extended Phase 1 type survey with site and habitat descriptions, a habitat map and species list. Phase 2 survey may also be collected and used on some occasions. Surveyors will record details of structures and features on the site, current or

Pasque flower



Pyramidal orchid



desirable management, potential threats to the site, and any contact made with the landowner or manager during survey.

Where a CWS is designated due to the presence of a species or species assemblage of conservation value then re-survey effort will focus on this CWS feature. The habitat assessment methodology described above can be useful in conjunction with this targeted survey work. However, in order to establish presence or absence and likely population of the species of interest a specific species survey will be required. CWSs designated for their species interest can for example include invertebrates and amphibians.

Ideally a list of up-to-date information on all species of flora and fauna present on any given site would be available. However, it takes time and resource to accumulate and maintain species information at a useful level, and such work is ongoing. The main sources of information on species are county recorders and amateur naturalists. A further source of species information comes from strategic surveys carried out by organisations such as the Environment Agency and increasingly through the work

of organisations and projects related to BAP initiatives.

Permission for access to survey an existing or potential new CWS will be sought through writing or telephoning the landowner where ownership information is available; otherwise approaches will be made on the day of proposed survey. This might be the first contact a landowner has with the CWS system and provides the foundation for later liaison. At this point information will be provided on how the CWS system works, the importance of CWSs and the implications of owning a CWS.

When requesting access, the landowner will be provided with a clear and unambiguous explanation of the purpose of the survey. The landowner should be fully informed of who is to undertake the survey on whose behalf, and why. The CWS Group believes it is important that a landowner feels involved and informed throughout.

If no permission is forthcoming, either through inability to contact the landowner or through refusal, then surveyors will not trespass on land in order to acquire data. If access permission is refused, then the landowner's wishes will be respected.

Surveying for shieldbugs





Ragged robin



Buff Wood

CWS surveyors should carry identification when conducting surveys. Once a survey has been completed, the landowner will be informed of the findings and offered management advice as appropriate.

Surveys of existing sites

Existing CWSs may be resurveyed for the following reasons:

- ◆ As part of a monitoring or resurvey programme.
- ◆ To provide further information required by the local authority for use in planning casework.
- ◆ To provide extra information on a site, which may be available at a different time of year from the time of the original survey. This might be for a variety of reasons such as in connection with a planning application or for deciding on appropriate and sensitive site management.
- ◆ To survey for particular species not covered by previous survey.

Where permission for access is unobtainable for an existing CWS, the site will remain a CWS on the basis of previous data.

A number of existing and new sites may be surveyed each year depending on the

resources available. As a result of survey some CWSs may be added to the CWS Register, some may be deleted and others may have their boundaries amended.

Survey reports on sites should include:

- ◆ Who conducted the survey and or collected the data used in the assessment and when it was collected.
- ◆ As many species groups as possible and be clear about data that is not available and any limitations.
- ◆ A map showing habitats occurring on site.
- ◆ A justification for the site to be selected as a CWS.
- ◆ The reasons for any proposed boundary or boundary change, and a map of an appropriate scale that clearly identifies the boundaries of the CWS.
- ◆ An assessment detailing if the site either qualifies or continues to qualify as a CWS and recommendations for site management to either bring it into a favourable condition or to maintain and enhance the features of the CWS.
- ◆ A brief report on the site if it has been significantly damaged or destroyed outlining what has happened and the opportunities for recovery of the site.

In exceptional circumstances, certain records (particularly of sensitive features) collected as part of a survey for a CWS, may not be widely released (please refer to Section 4 for further information).

However, to ensure decisions are taken on the best available data sensitive records will be made available to the CWS Panel when assessing whether a site is of CWS standard.

Landowner consultation

Following survey the Wildlife Trust will send the landowner a letter thanking them for allowing the survey to be carried out. It will detail the outcome of the survey work, indicate the wildlife interest of the site and inform them of any protected species recorded in the survey including the potential implications of this in proposed management works. A site management statement and where appropriate advice on grants available should be included.

In addition an invitation to submit any comments or observations on the outcome of the survey is offered for a period of three months between October and December. Any feedback received from the landowner is collated and submitted to the CWS Panel when they consider sites for

selection at their meeting in January or February (please refer to the diagram at the end of the section).

CWS assessment

The CWS Panel will consider each site (please refer to the diagram at the end of the section) and make a decision to recommend whether a site should:

- ◆ Be accepted as a new CWS. (At this point the site is considered a 'proposed CWS'.)
- ◆ Be rejected as a CWS.
- ◆ Remain a CWS with its existing boundaries or with an amended boundary.
- ◆ Have its status of CWS removed.

This decision is based on information collected as part of survey and any other relevant factors that may have arisen. If it is not possible to make a decision it may be deferred with a suggestion for further survey work or further liaison with the landowner to encourage sympathetic land management that could bring the site into a favourable condition to reach CWS status. Rejected sites could be re-considered at a later date if they subsequently come into a favourable condition.

Chalkhill blues



Wildlife in churchyards



At least three members of the CWS Panel must be present to make recommendations on sites, which should include representatives from Natural England, The Wildlife Trust, Cambridgeshire County Council or Peterborough City Council where sites are within the unitary authority. As a minimum, 3 members of the CWS Panel must be present to approve a new CWS or de-select a site, one of which must be the Wildlife Trust. Decisions will be made by consensus. The CWS Panel will confirm their final recommendations and put them forward for endorsement by the CWS Group.

Removal of CWS status

A site, or part thereof will remain a CWS until data is collected that proves otherwise. A site cannot have its status removed or be removed from the CWS Register for political reasons or as a result of wilful and deliberate destruction or neglect. The presumption is to avoid de-selecting sites.

Sites will be considered on a case-by-case basis and take account of all factors. Any site that is being considered for de-selection would be subject to a survey. Once this has been undertaken the landowner will be contacted with the outcome and a three month period of consultation will commence.

The survey information and any feedback from the consultation will be submitted to the CWS Panel for consideration. As with all sites the CWS Panel will consider and evaluate the survey information against the selection criteria and take account of any other factors before making a recommendation to the CWS Group for ratification.

The CWS Panel may recommend de-selection if the site's nature conservation interest has deteriorated to such an extent that it no longer qualifies as a CWS and it is not feasible to restore it through appropriate management. The potential for restoring the site's features of interest will be an important factor in the decision.

Objections to County Wildlife Site status

The CWS Group is aware that some of the primary concerns of landowners about CWSs are development restrictions, constraints on agricultural practice and fear of public access implications.

Representations against selection of a CWS can be made in writing to or in person at a meeting of the CWS Panel. Sites will be judged on a case by case basis. The main reasons for objection need to make reference to the ecological status of the site, however all other factors will be taken into account.

With respect to planning, local authority commitments to biodiversity mean that consideration of planning applications takes into account biodiversity issues including the presence of a CWS and areas of CWS quality. It should be noted that there are sites reaching CWS status that have yet to be selected. Surveyors and advisers should point out to site owners that sympathetic management of CWSs for wildlife is voluntary and is encouraged. It is hoped that by building rapport with a CWS owner and by providing information and support the number of objections to CWS status will be reduced.

CWS Ratification

Formal ratification is the endorsement made by the CWS Group for each site that is recorded in the minutes. This formal procedure endorses the selection of new CWSs, amendments to existing CWSs or the potential removal of a CWS (please refer to the diagram at the end of the section). It is required to prevent a site being included or excluded from the CWS Register without the knowledge and agreement of the CWS Group or landowner. This helps ensure accountability and demonstrates integrity of the CWS system.

It is at this point proposed CWS receive their full CWS status. The CWS Register will be updated to show which sites have been added, deleted or had their boundaries

amended and the landowner will receive confirmation about the site's status. Annual updates will be distributed to ensure that information on CWSs is given to those who need to know in a reasonable timescale.

Notifying landowners

Ensuring that CWS owners and managers are informed of the wildlife value of their land and the significance of CWS status is an ongoing, but important aspect of the CWS system. Sites can change ownership frequently and information is not always passed onto the new owner. The aim is to provide information and support through further liaison, advice and practical assistance if possible. It is acknowledged that by building relationships with owners and managers and working together the wildlife resource can be safeguarded and improved.

Operational stages in the CWS system

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
CWS selection process		CWS Panel collates a list of sites to survey (new, existing and any for proposed de-selection).										
			Landowners identified and contacted for permission to survey.									
CWS survey and assessment		CWS Panel assesses sites against selection criteria and considers any consultation feedback.										
			CWS Panel makes recommendations to CWS Group for ratification.									
					Site surveys undertaken by competent surveyors at appropriate times of year.							
CWS ratification									Survey information is compiled and site management statements are sent to the landowner.			
										Formal consultation period with landowners undertaken.		
			CWS Group meets to endorse Panel decisions.									
			Landowners notified of final decision.									
				Register updated & updates distributed.								

Section 4

County Wildlife Site data

The County Wildlife Site (CWS) system generates a wide range of data such as those listed below that need to be stored:

- ◆ Habitat surveys
- ◆ Species records
- ◆ Site records
- ◆ Site ownership records
- ◆ Liaison and contact records

The Wildlife Trust holds site records, habitat surveys, site ownership records, liaison and contact records in various paper and electronic formats in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre (CPBRC) hold a copy of the site information in relation to species and habitats to disseminate to others on behalf of the CWS Group. Once decisions on sites have been ratified each new CWS has what is termed a citation sheet written for it, which contains a site description, information on the habitats contained within it, the reason for selection, and a map. The citations of existing sites are updated (please refer to diagram on page 19). Detailed habitat information and species records may be available on request from CPBRC.

Ownership of data

The CWS Group and the funding bodies (as appropriate to the data in question) own the data collected as part of the CWS system. As much of this information is commissioned by, and provided to local authorities and public bodies, much of it is technically in the public domain.

Confidentiality and data protection

The systems used to store and handle CWS data have been assessed against the relevant data protection legislation and are, to the best of the CWS Group's knowledge, fully compliant.

Information on protected species and advice on relevant legal implications is given to the owners and managers of the sites where appropriate. CPBRC, the Wildlife Trust and the landowner will consider the release of sensitive species information for each potential CWS.

All data collected as part of surveying, both current and potential CWSs, is covered by the provisions of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. This means all species and habitat data will be considered available for release to third parties (including consultants and developers) unless it is in the public interest not to do so. On balance there is a policy in favour of the release of survey data.

In exceptional circumstances certain records (particularly of sensitive features) collected as part of a CWS survey may not be released. If release of the data would jeopardise relationships with a particular landowner leading to the landowner not granting permission to survey, it may be considered that it is in the public interest not to release the data.

Data that has historically been in the public domain and a comment on the reason for a site being selected as a CWS will remain available for release.

Permission to release data collected as part of the survey process is requested on initial contact with the landowner when discussing site survey. The purpose of the survey, who is to undertake it and on whose behalf, why, and what happens to the information afterwards should be explained.

Land ownership details are covered by the Data Protection Act and are not divulged without prior permission.

Distribution and use of data

The following parties are the main users of CWS data:

- ◆ Site owners
- ◆ Planning authorities
- ◆ Statutory organisations
- ◆ Advisory organisations
- ◆ Consultancies and private companies

As the manager of the information on behalf of the CWS Group the Wildlife Trust is responsible for ensuring that CPBRC is provided with the most up to date information on CWS for it to be

disseminated to those who need to use it. The Wildlife Trust also acts as a point of contact for enquiries relating to the CWS system except for formal enquiries for information from consultancies and private companies, which should be directed to CPBRC.

The CWS Register

The CWS Register comprises a list of sites with CWS status. It includes information on the reason the site was selected and is accompanied by a digital mapping layer. This list of the current approved CWS is prepared and maintained by the Wildlife Trust and shared with CPBRC in conjunction with the CWS Panel.

Key organisations such as planning authorities, statutory and advisory organisations (see list below) are provided with a copy of the CWS Register that is updated at least annually.

- ◆ Cambridge City Council
- ◆ Cambridgeshire County Council
- ◆ East Cambridgeshire District Council
- ◆ Environment Agency

Red admiral



Yellow flag



- ◆ Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
- ◆ Fenland District Council
- ◆ Forestry Commission
- ◆ Huntingdonshire District Council
- ◆ Natural England
- ◆ Peterborough City Council
- ◆ South Cambridgeshire District Council

This service is currently funded from the Wildlife Sites budget. The Register is distributed by CPBRC on behalf of the CWS Group.

Obtaining information

The Wildlife Sites Officer should be contacted to discuss survey information and programmes of CWS survey. CPBRC can be contacted for more detailed information on sites. An administration charge may be made to meet the costs of searching for, collating and preparing data on request. The table opposite summarises the data that can be provided and associated costs. For further information on charging and the Terms and Conditions under which data is supplied please contact CPBRC Tel (01954) 713570 www.cpbrc.org.uk

Tawny owl



Arable margin



Summary of data provided and associated costs

Query from	Can expect to receive	Received from	Can not expect to receive	Cost
A CWS owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map of site. Species list from most recent survey and previous surveys if requested. Citation for site (including reason for designation). Management advice (including condition assessment). 	Wildlife Sites Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records other than those collected on CWS surveys (will be treated as separate query by CPBRC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of survey free. Other requests vary depending on the request.
An organisation with a Service Level Agreement with the CWS Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual report for authority area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - citation for each site in area. - status table for all sites in area. Annual update of GIS layer showing distribution of CWS in authority area (including the reason for designation). Will have access (through CPBRC) to species lists from CWS survey. These will not ordinarily be distributed. 	Wildlife Sites Officer CPBRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CWS owner contact details Records classed as sensitive by data provider / CWS owner (if from survey) Map showing distribution of interpreted habitat data (e.g. BAP habitat data derived from NVC data). This can be obtained through SLA with CPBRC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of the Service Level Agreement with the CWS Group via the Wildlife Trust.
An organisation without a Service Level Agreement with the CWS Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GIS layer showing distribution of CWS (including the reason for designation). Licence for GIS layer limited to one year for use as a gazetteer for statutory responsibilities only. 	CPBRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GIS layer will not include citation or species list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £70 +VAT for provision of GIS layer. Further information can be provided and will be subject to an additional charge.
General public/academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will vary with the request. 	CPBRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records classed as sensitive by data provider/CWS owner (if from survey). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free for small queries. A charge is levied for larger requests.
Other queries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map showing outline of CWS/map showing distribution of CWS in search area. Reason for designation of CWS Species list (not part of standard search). 	CPBRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CWS owner/contact details. Full CWS citation. All species records, including those classed as sensitive by data provider/CWS owner (if from survey). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £10 +VAT for small query. £70 +VAT for other requests.



Section 5

Site safeguard and management

Environmental impact assessment

Whilst County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) are not designated on a statutory basis, they do receive some protection through inclusion in the formal planning and development control process. In this context site protection largely relies on the commitment of local authorities, public bodies and utilities to protect sites against damaging development, such as a through Environmental Impact Assessments of different kinds.

The **Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (Agriculture) 2006** also provide a measure of protection against changes in land management. For those landowners in the Single Payment Scheme, cross compliance and the codes relating to maintaining land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition require that semi-natural habitats be protected. If intensification of land use is being considered it may be necessary to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment under the 2006 regulations.

The Forestry Commission is responsible for administering the **Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999**. These regulations affect four “forestry” projects. These are:

- ◆ **Afforestation:** Planting new woods and forests - includes direct seeding or natural regeneration, planting Christmas trees or short rotation coppice;

- ◆ **Deforestation:** Felling woodland to use the land for a different purpose;

- ◆ **Forest roads:** The formation, alteration or maintenance of private ways on land used (or to be used) for forestry purposes. This includes roads within a forest or leading to one;

- ◆ **Forestry quarries:** Quarrying to obtain materials required for forest road works on land that is used or will be used for forestry purposes or on land held or occupied with that land.

If work is planned that could be classed within these four forestry projects the Forestry Commission should be contacted for further information and advice. If the Commission’s opinion is that the proposed project will have a significant impact on the environment, consent for the work needs to be sought.

However, beyond this, there is little protection against changes in land use that do not require planning permission and crucially sites are not protected from damage through neglect. CWSs therefore rely on the goodwill and interest of owners and managers if their wildlife is to thrive.

The network of CWSs provides a comprehensive framework and proactive approach for the promotion and prioritisation of nature conservation including the implementation of Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and targeting of grant schemes to priority habitats.

A further important function is their use in monitoring the condition of the best habitat remaining in the area and to some extent the effectiveness of conservation action being taken. Most Local Sites systems in the UK are small and under resourced in relation to their potential, so regular comprehensive monitoring of the condition of sites remains a luxury to many, however, the usefulness of such an exercise should not be underestimated.

Planning policies and using the planning system

There are a number of planning policies that can offer protection to CWSs. The main framework for considering nature conservation within the planning system, including the protection of non-statutory sites, is laid out in Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS9). The accompanying legal circular (OPDM circular 06/2005) and a Good Practice Guide give more information and advice.

It is important that CWSs are afforded the protection currently available to them through the planning system. The planning system should be used to encourage appropriate management for the conservation of these important sites, at the very least to maintain present conservation interest, and ideally to enhance them. Mechanisms to deliver this already exist through Section 106 agreements, planning conditions and local development frameworks.

Development plans should include provision for the protection of nature conservation in the wider countryside. Policies and proposals to protect and enhance CWSs should be included as well as their locations shown on proposals maps. If not they may be placed in an appendix and include a brief description or explanation of what these sites represent. It is important that policies are written in such a way that they apply to all sites that meet the CWS selection guidelines whether or not they currently appear on the CWS Register.

In line with the recommendations of PPS9 the presumption should always be in favour of site protection rather than mitigation. Development on CWSs is to be avoided. Where it is not possible to do this, impacts should be mitigated wherever possible to maintain the value and integrity of sites and of the CWS system as a whole. PPS9 states that if significant harm to biodiversity interests cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated for, or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Policies should indicate that where development is approved which affects a CWS, appropriate measures would be required to protect the interest of the site.

Applications that may impact a CWS should be accompanied by an appraisal of likely impacts and recommendations of how such impacts can be avoided or mitigated. The report should also identify residual impacts and compensatory measures to offset them. A suitably qualified ecologist should produce such appraisals with other specialist input as required e.g. arboricultural assessment or pollution control measures.

Where sites are affected by development, conditions and/or planning agreements should be used to minimise the impact of development on any CWS, secure recommended mitigation and/or compensatory measures and measures to enhance the sites wildlife value. With careful thought and planning these can bring positive benefits. An imaginative and flexible approach by planning authorities is therefore encouraged, although work of this kind is largely reactive and the success of this approach will need to be reviewed.

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 and subsequent amendments, grants rights known as permitted development rights to carry out certain limited forms of development without the need to make an application for planning permission. Operations outside planning control may still have impacts on CWSs and therefore consultation in such cases should be encouraged wherever possible. Some



Redshank and mayweed

developments, such as agricultural operations, are excluded from the planning process altogether, but may be covered by the agriculture and forestry Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations. In these circumstances positive management is to be encouraged.

Promoting the positive management of CWS

The key to conservation is information. It is crucial that people are aware of where CWSs are and why they are important. With this information landowners, planners and conservation bodies can work together to safeguard sites and secure their future management.

Local authorities have a duty to have regard for biodiversity and as part of their planning function take account of CWSs alongside other material planning considerations. Land owners and managers play a crucial role in protecting and enhancing sites. The CWS Group offer support and advice as far as resources allow and aim to foster working relationships with CWS owners to benefit wildlife.

Unfortunately the CWS Group does not have funding that they can offer towards the costs of land management.

Developing links with CWS owners and managers

The CWS Group recognises that it is important that landowners are aware of the presence and significance of their site for wildlife, its value in a wider county context and the role of the CWS system as a tool for achieving nature conservation objectives. Landowners are offered support and encouragement to maintain and enhance the wildlife habitat.

To achieve this consistent and regular contact with landowners is essential. From the outset, CWS owners will be provided with both information on how the CWS system works and its implications, and survey information for their site(s). This approach provides a baseline from which site management is encouraged and supported.

A leaflet on CWSs can be sent to landowners. This emphasises that the majority of ordinary land management and agricultural operations remain unaffected

and that identification of a CWS does not give anyone other than the landowner or manager control over land management, but there is a need for positive management for the site to retain its wildlife interest. The ownership or presence of a CWS does not mean that the land is available for public access. Where present existing public rights of way (e.g. footpaths, bridleways and byways) remain unaffected and no rights of access are created when a CWS is selected. This means that the public must keep dogs under close control and keep to paths. However this does not preclude negotiation of informal access through any agri-environment scheme or other initiative.

In recent years letters have been sent to all known site owners to notify them about the presence and value of their CWS. A regular newsletter for CWS owners is now being produced and is sent out once or twice a year.

Advice to CWS owners

Organisations advising on CWSs in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough need to work together closely to ensure that expertise is used to its full potential for the benefit of the CWS. It is important to avoid duplication of effort on sites that have been, or are being, worked on by others, especially where the advice leads to securing a management grant. Much of the communication needed for this work is delivered through the CWS Panel and by maintaining a high level of contact with other conservation organisations.

Advice includes identification of appropriate grants, assisting with application forms or help with writing management plans. Funding is often the key to encouraging positive management for nature conservation on a CWS because management sympathetic to wildlife is characteristically less intensive and often less economically productive than the current 'norm'. Providing information on appropriate grants is therefore an important part of the CWS system.

Publicity and raising awareness

Awareness of CWSs plays an important part in the overall success of the CWS system. A core feature is to encourage a sense of 'ownership' of, and pride in, the nature conservation value of CWSs. In providing information and general advice on CWSs, the value of individual sites, and the incentives available for their management, enthusiasm for wildlife is encouraged, which not only helps protect CWSs against development, but also ensures their long-term management. A professional and diplomatic approach is essential in this very sensitive area of work.

Organisations involved in work on CWSs need to be aware of what the CWS system is trying to achieve to help further understanding of it. Communication between members of the CWS Group will have benefits for all concerned and most importantly maximise the success of CWSs in delivering nature conservation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The exchange of information, expertise and local knowledge is invaluable in furthering work on specific sites and developing work in the wider countryside and on BAP delivery.

It is also important that the general public are made aware of the CWS system in order to increase awareness of the need to conserve and enhance biodiversity in the wider countryside (as opposed to a perception that conservation is solely nature reserve based). Raising awareness encourages local communities to take action on land in their control and to become more involved in practical nature conservation work such as surveying and site management.

However, the availability of detailed information on CWSs to a wide audience may, unintentionally imply unrestricted access to sites, which is a major fear of many landowners. Such publicity may jeopardise relations with landowners and therefore undermine the success of the

whole CWS system. Therefore promotion of access for informal recreation and education will be restricted to those CWSs that are owned by a local authority or voluntary organisations and where public access is appropriate without being detrimental to the nature conservation value of the site.

CWS condition monitoring

Monitoring the condition of CWSs is essential for the following reasons to:

- ◆ Ensure data is up-to-date
- ◆ Help focus resources on priority sites
- ◆ Assess the effectiveness of site protection
- ◆ Assess the effectiveness of site management
- ◆ Increase the understanding of causes of site loss and damage and habitat change
- ◆ Establish and justify the need for continued action
- ◆ Report against performance indicators.

The distribution and abundance of habitats and species is always changing in response to natural and man-made influences. CWSs

are vulnerable to change so regular surveying and monitoring is needed to help keep the CWS Register up to date and support action to protect and enhance CWSs.

In general terms the CWS Panel aims to ensure that all CWSs are comprehensively resurveyed on a rolling programme. For sites that are prone to rapid change such as grasslands each site should be checked at least once every five years. For more robust habitats such as ancient woodland or gravel pits, sites should be checked at least once every ten years.

Monitoring is a valuable tool in assessing how successful the CWS system is in achieving its aim of protecting and enhancing sites, and in determining how to use the system to maximise its effectiveness. A common condition monitoring methodology for use in Cambridgeshire is currently in development. When complete it should be capable of providing robust information to inform monitoring of the BAPs and other indicators such as those included in Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Development Frameworks.

Longhorn beetle



Oak bush-cricket





Section 6

Other non-statutory sites

In addition to County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) there are a number of other types of non-statutory sites that are worth mentioning for completeness. Different sets of selection criteria are used containing different thresholds. Further information on these can be found in Section 7.

Protected road verges

Some roadside verges are of special botanical significance, and some are even the last havens for particular plants. Verges also establish continuity of habitat across intensively managed land and can form important sanctuaries for a wide range of wildlife.

Cambridgeshire County Council and the Wildlife Trust are co-ordinating efforts to identify and protect verges of special wildlife value in the county. A few of these verges have been selected as CWSs, while the rest have been selected as Protected Road Verges (PRVs). In conjunction with colleagues in the Highways Authority work is ongoing to ensure that these verges receive appropriate conservation management.

Road verges of nature conservation value in Peterborough are designated as CWSs and are covered as part of an ongoing work programme by the Unitary Authority.

City wildlife sites

Within the urban district of Cambridge City a complementary sites system has been developed. The CWS system is still used, but an additional system of City Wildlife Sites (CiWSs) has been developed, in order to take account of urban greenspaces. The CiWS system also has a set of selection criteria, though the biological thresholds are set at a lower level than for CWSs.

Other local authorities could use the CiWS selection criteria as a basis to assess sites within towns and cities or they could be developed for inclusion within the CWS selection guidelines.

Geological sites

In the future, it may be desirable to establish a system of Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGs) alongside the CWS system, perhaps run by a RIGs Group. Further work and resources would be needed to launch this and until they become available the focus will continue to be on CWSs.

There are a number of RIGs in Peterborough, which are considered separate from the suite of CWSs.



Section 7

Supporting documentation

The following documents are available in support of the CWS Handbook. Copies can be downloaded from www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cws or requested by contacting the Biodiversity Officer, Tel (01223) 717930 Email epp@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

CWS Selection Criteria	Version 4.3, 2006
City Wildlife Site Selection Criteria	Version 2.2, 2005
Protected Road Verge Selection Criteria	Version 2, April 2007
CWS Condition Monitoring	In development - please contact the Wildlife Sites Officer at the Wildlife Trust Tel (01954) 713500 for further information.
Publicity materials	The CWS Group has produced a CWS leaflet for landowners and managers and a regular newsletter is also available. Hard copies are available from the Wildlife Sites Officer at the Wildlife Trust Tel (01954) 713500 or available to download from www.wildlifebcnp.org



Section 8

Contacts for further information and advice

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Biological Record Centre

www.cpbrc.org.uk
The Manor House
Broad Street
Great Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6DH
Tel (01954) 713570
Email data@cpbrc.org.uk

Country Land and Business Association

www.cla.org.uk
Aspen Grove Farm
Assington Green
Stansfield
Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 8LY
Tel (020) 7235 0511
Email info.eastern@cla.org.uk

Cambridge City Council

www.cambridge.gov.uk
The Guildhall
Cambridge
CB2 3QJ
Tel (01223) 457 000
Email guildhall.reception@cambridge.gov.uk

East Cambridgeshire District Council

www.eastcambs.gov.uk
The Grange
Nutholt Lane
Ely
Cambs
CB7 4PL
Tel (01353) 665555
Email info@eastcambs.gov.uk

Cambridgeshire County Council

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cws
Environment Policy and Projects
Cambridgeshire County Council
Box ET1001
Castle Court
Shire Hall
Castle Hill
Cambridge
CB3 0AP
Tel (01223) 717701
Email ep@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Environment Agency

www.environment-agency.gov.uk
Central Area Office
Bromholme Lane
Brampton
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE28 4NE
Tel 08708 506 506 (Mon - Fri 8-6)
E-mail enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

**Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
(FWAG)**

www.fwag.org.uk
Cambridgeshire & Hertfordshire FWAG
3b Penn Farm Studios,
Harston Road,
Haslingfield,
Cambridge,
CB23 7JZ
Tel (01223) 874558
Email cambs.herts@fwag.org.uk

Fenland District Council

www.fenland.gov.uk
Fenland Hall
County Road
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 8NQ
Tel (01354) 654321
Email info@fenland.gov.uk

Forestry Commission

www.forestry.gov.uk
East Anglia
Santon Downham
Brandon
Suffolk
IP27 0TJ
Tel (01842) 810271
Email east.fce@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Huntingdonshire District Council

www.huntsdc.gov.uk
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
Cambridgeshire
PE29 3TN
Tel 01480 388388
Email mail@huntsdc.gov.uk

National Farmers Union

www.nfuonline.com
Agriculture House
Willie Snaith Road
Newmarket
Suffolk
CB8 7SN
Tel (01638) 672100
Email east.anglia@nfuonline.com

Natural England

www.naturalengland.org.uk
Eastbrook
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge
CB2 2DR
Tel (01223) 462727
Email Enquiries.east@naturalengland.org.uk

Peterborough City Council

www.peterborough.gov.uk
Bridge House
Town Bridge
Peterborough
PE1 1HB
Tel (01733) 747474
Email ask@peterborough.gov.uk

South Cambridgeshire District Council

www.scambs.gov.uk
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA
Tel 08450 450 500
Email scdc@scambs.gov.uk

Wildlife Trust

www.wildlifebcnp.org
The Manor House
Broad Street
Great Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6DH
Tel (01954) 713500
Email cambridgeshire@wildlifebcnp.org



Section 9

Potential sources of funding

The County Wildlife Site (CWS) Group plays a valuable role in identifying, publicising and providing access to sources of information, advice and funding for environmental land management.

Potentially there is a wide range of sources for land management advice and funding support such as:

Planning conditions and Section 106 agreements used with developers to secure public benefit. These could include measures to improve public access and interpretation. Section 106 agreements could also include one-off or ongoing payments for positive management.

Local authorities can make payments under Section 39 of the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** for entering into management agreements in respect of any land in their area for the purpose of conserving or enhancing its natural beauty, or promoting its enjoyment by the public.

Natural England now administers **agri-environment schemes** set up under Section 18(1) of the Agriculture Act 1986 and Section 98 of the Environment Act 1995. The habitats and species contained within CWSs can contribute towards qualification under the **Higher Level Stewardship** scheme.

In economically depressed and socially deprived areas, **regeneration funding** for activities to improve the social value of sites

may be available. This might include training towards accredited qualifications in environmental and land management skills, as well as improving public access, educational value, and community safety around sites.

A range of **lottery, landfill tax credit schemes, aggregates levy sustainability fund, foundation and trust grants** are available for voluntary and community sector led initiatives geared to environmental, health, quality of life, social inclusion and other objectives which may be relevant. These links should be identified through work with Local Strategic Partnerships on Sustainable Community Strategies.

The **England Woodland Grant Scheme** is the Forestry Commission's suite of grants designed to sustain and increase the public benefit given by existing woodlands and help create new woodlands to deliver additional benefit. Further information and deadlines for applications are available from the Forestry Commission.

Locally the **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership** has a small projects fund for supporting projects that will help deliver biodiversity action plan targets. The local **District Council** may also have a small grants or community fund programmes that offers a contribution towards the costs of environmental projects.

Glossary

Agri-environment schemes

Schemes offering payments to farmers to promote farming methods that can deliver benefits to the environment.

Biodiversity

The variety of living things around us, from mammals and birds to plants and microbes, and the habitat they live in.

Biological Records Centre

A Centre based often at county level for the collection, management, analysis and dissemination of information on wildlife and habitats within the geographic area covered.

City Wildlife Site/City Wildlife Site system (CiWS)

A complementary system to the County Wildlife Sites system developed and used within Cambridge City that takes into account the value of urban greenspaces for people and wildlife. Sites are identified against a set of selection criteria, although the biological thresholds are set at a lower level than for County Wildlife Sites.

Convention on Biological Diversity

The Prime Minister and other Heads of State of Governments at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 signed this Convention.

County Wildlife Site (CWS)

A non-statutory site identified for its local importance for wildlife.

Diversity

An assessment of the richness of different types in a location (can be a large or small area) including the number of different habitats or numbers of different species.

Earth Summit

International conference held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 to discuss issues concerning climate change, world poverty, environment and development, the world's forests and biodiversity.

Fauna

All animal life.

Flora

All plant life.

Geodiversity

Incorporates all the variety of rocks, minerals and landforms and the processes that have formed these features throughout geological time.

Geological sites/RIGs

Identified using locally developed criteria these sites are the most important places for geology and geomorphology outside statutorily protected land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Habitat

A place in which a particular plant or animal lives. Shaped by the underlying soils, hydrology, topography and climate, habitats have a characteristic fauna and flora, with some species being confined to a particular habitat. Priority habitats for conservation are described and defined in the UK BAP.

Habitat Action Plan (HAP)

A document that describes current status, sets objectives, targets, management/restoration or creation measures and proposes action necessary to achieve them. A part of the Biodiversity Action Plan process.

Habitats and Species Directive

This Directive promotes the conservation of certain key habitats and species within the European Union by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and populations of wild species.

Indicator species

A species indicative of a particular habitat which can be used to assess habitat quality, age, context etc.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP)

A framework for the delivery of the UK BAP at a local level. Identifies priorities and establishes a program for the conservation of local and nationally important biodiversity.

Nature conservation

The mechanisms to protect and conserve the natural environment, which includes geological features, landforms, hydrology, soils and wildlife. Biodiversity conservation focuses on wildlife and its support systems (soils, water, air).

Phase I (habitat survey)

A land survey to establish land-uses and, in particular, the location of important wildlife sites and habitats within a given area. Extended Phase 1 goes beyond this scope, but doesn't quite reach Phase II coverage.

Phase II (habitat survey)

A detailed survey of an area of land, identifying precise vegetation communities and important habitats, species or other features.

Priority Habitat

Habitats targeted for action through habitat action plans. Can be targeted at national, regional or local levels

Priority Species

Species targeted for action through species action plans. Can be targeted at national, regional or local levels

Protected Road Verges (PRVs)

A section of road verge that has been surveyed and selected for protection because of its wildlife interest.

Red Data Book species

A species listed in catalogues published by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), national agencies or county-level organisations. The catalogues list species that are rare, endangered or vulnerable to extinction. Local Red Data Books also exist compiled against local criteria.

Semi-natural vegetation/habitats

There are virtually no purely natural habitats (those that haven't been influenced by people's activities) in England. To reflect this, ecologists often term the present-day woodlands, wetlands, heaths and downs as semi-natural.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

An area of land notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as being of special nature conservation interest.

Species Action Plan (SAP)

A conservation plan for a species based upon knowledge of its ecological and other requirements. Sets out objectives and targets for maintenance or enhancement of population size/range and actions necessary to achieve them. A part of the Biodiversity Action Plan process.

Special Protection Area (SPA)

Legally protected sites designated for rare and vulnerable birds and for regularly occurring migratory species as listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive.

Special Area for Conservation (SAC)

Legally protected sites designated under the EC Habitats Directive.

Survey

An inventory of the attributes of a site, area or region, usually in terms of habitat and associated species and normally following a standardised procedure.

Sustainable

In ecological terms, a process or activity that can be maintained into the future without adverse environmental impacts (for example on water resources or species populations).

Target (biodiversity target)

A quantified conservation objective. Targets state, for example, projected population numbers for species or areas of habitats. Setting such numerical targets provides a tight focus for what the Biodiversity Action Plan is aiming to achieve.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)

The UK Government's plan published in 1994, which has its roots in Rio Summit. Various documents have been produced detailing action for habitats and most threatened plants and animals. It forms the basis for all Local BAPs. Also refers to a plan to conserve or enhance biodiversity. Can refer to the whole process or the document that sets out how it will be achieved.

References

- Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan* (1990) HMSO, London.
- Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report* (1995) HMSO, London.
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership *Biodiversity Action Plan for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough* www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/biodiversity-partnership
- Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geographical Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System* (2005) HMSO, London.
- Colston, A., Gerrard, C. and Parslow, R. *Cambridgeshire's Red Data Book* (1997) The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act* (2000) HMSO
- Defra, *Entry Level Stewardship Handbook, Higher Level Stewardship Guidance Handbook and Farm Environment Plan Guidance* www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/default.htm
- Defra, *Local Sites: Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management* (2005) www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/ewd/local-sites/index.htm
- English Nature, Environment Agency, The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, *Action for wildlife in East Anglia: a guide to biodiversity planning in Cambridgeshire, Essex, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk* (1996)
- Environmental Information Regulations* (2004) HMSO, London
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* (2006) HMSO, London
- Nature Conservancy Council, *Guidelines for the selection of biological SSSIs*. (1989) NCC, Peterborough.
- "*Our Environment, Our Future*" - a regional environment strategy for the East of England (2003) East of England Regional Assembly
- Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: A Guide to Good Practice* (2006) HMSO, London.
- Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation* (2002) HMSO, London
- Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks* (2004) HMSO, London
- Planning Policy Statement 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* (2005) HMSO, London.
- Ratcliffe, D. A. (ed.) *A Nature Conservation Review*. 2 vols. (1977) Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (The East of England Plan)*, East of England Regional Assembly
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations* (1994) HMSO, London
- The Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (England) Regulations* (2006) HMSO, London
- The Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations* (1999) HMSO, London
- The Wildlife Trusts, *The Wildlife Sites Handbook: version 2*. (1997) The Wildlife Trusts, Lincoln.
- Working with the grain of nature – a biodiversity strategy for England* (2002) Defra