

The Bedfordshire and Luton Wildlife Sites system

County Wildlife Site Panel

Terms of Reference, Roles and Responsibilities

“A local site system should be fair, open, transparent and work to common principles, and should follow standard guidelines both in terms of site selection and administering the system” English Nature, Local Sites Position Statement, 2002.

The role of the County Wildlife Site Panel

To act on behalf of the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Forum in respect of the detailed and complex process of maintaining the CWS system to the above standard and in particular to:

- set, monitor and review the CWS selection guidelines. Guidelines to be adopted and published by the Biodiversity Forum.
- ensure that the selection guidelines and principles of the CWS system follow national guidelines for such systems.
- oversee the CWS system, develop and draft the 'rules' for managing the system to be discussed, amended and adopted by the Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Forum.
- advise on application of guidelines and ensure consistency of application.
- work closely with the Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre to ensure effective and efficient maintenance of the CWS database and records.
- consult outside organisations on the guidelines and system and invite external scientific help as and when necessary.
- act as mentor to other organisations or individuals submitting a CWS proposal or wishing to challenge identification of a site.
- vet proposals from a scientific perspective and advise planning authorities and other bodies accordingly.
- Support local planning authorities in the defence of CWS through the planning process by providing expert evidence and witnesses as and when required.

The CWS Panel does not have any formal planning responsibility.

The membership of the CWS Panel

“ A panel of relevant experts with a good knowledge of ecological processes and a sound understanding of local flora and fauna and its relationship to international, national and regional biodiversity – both in its current and historic state.”

The group will include suitably qualified and experienced representatives from:

English Nature, The Environment Agency, The Wildlife Trust, Bedfordshire Natural History Society, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Ecology/Nature Conservation staff of Bedfordshire County Council, Luton Borough Council, Bedford Borough Council (inc. Bedford Museum), Mid Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire District Councils, and the Ivel and Ouse Countryside Project, North Chilterns Trust and Greensand Trust.

Decisions will not be made without the input of representatives from at least five of the member organisations, one of which will be the Wildlife Trust.

Chair and secretariat to be approved by the Biodiversity Forum and for the period 2004 to 2006 to be as follows:

Chair: Dr Trevor Tween, Luton Borough Council

Secretariat: Keith Balmer, Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre for Bedfordshire and Luton

The role of members of the County Wildlife Sites panel members

- To represent their organisation on the Panel, in respect of the organisation's functions related to nature conservation and ecology.
- To scrutinise the scientific content of the information used in CWS proposals for accuracy and precision and assess whether the criteria have been applied correctly.
- The Local Authority representatives, will ensure, as far as is possible, that all services within the Local Authority that they represent have access to an accurate and regularly updated CWS alert system.

The Role of the Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring centre

- Maintain an accurate and up to date ecological database for all CWS.
- Manage and make available to the CWS panel CWS selection guidelines, operating procedures condition assessments and other relevant data which will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the panel and the CWS system.
- Regularly update all agreed holders of CWS alert systems (appendix 2) as and when CWS are identified, altered or deleted.
- Maintain a record of all Panel meetings.

John Comont 9/3/05